

international
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An American summer

Mexico: a new country?

Mexico has had a political earthquake that shifts the balance of forces in the country. The victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in the Mexico City mayoral election, and the stunning defeats for the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the congress have changed the Mexican political landscape.

Cárdenas's victory in the Mexico City mayoral election already makes him almost inevitably the PRD candidate for president, and front-runner against all comers.

For almost 70 years, since its foundation in 1929 the Institutional Revolutionary Party has dominated Mexican politics. There were decades when no other party won a single important office in the country. The PRI held power through fear, favours and fraud, and when necessary through terror. This election marked a step forward for democracy.

The EZLN rebels in Chiapas state called on indigenous communities to boycott the election, and closed a large number of polling stations, pointing to the impossibility of a fair election with Chiapas under brutal martial law.

Since the elections, the Zapatistas have launched an ambitious programme to capture the political initiative. This month, 1,111 representatives of the EZLN "base communities" will converge on Mexico City. And, a two years of preparation, "civic Zapatistas" will formally launch a non-violent mass movement, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN).

The Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International) again won one seat, through their electoral alliance with the PRD. [JD]



• Mexico's ruling party has recognised its partial defeat in the July 6 elections, surrendering control of the federal capital, and a majority of parliamentary seats to the opposition. If the electoral dynamic, and social pressure, continues, the 2000 elections could see the definitive end of the one-party state.

José Martínez Cruz*

The triumph of PRD leader C. Cárdenas in Mexico City has given new momentum and energy to a wide range of struggles.¹

The elite, including President Zedillo, is gradually abandoning the single party state model. The PRI is still meshed with the state, but it no longer has a majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. For the first time, Mexico's parliament is not subordinate to the President. What Vargas Llosa calls the "perfect dictatorship" is being replaced by an authoritarian presidential regime.

The weakening of the PRI-state bureaucracy is a great step forward for the democratic movement in Mexico. This may boost the currently low level of protest against neoliberal reforms, privatisation, and the NAFTA free trade agreement with the USA and Canada.

Broad sectors of the population have, once again, indicated their desire for democratic change, through the ballot box, without provoking a civil war. The EZLN ('Zapa-

tista') guerrillas in Chiapas have understood this dynamic. So, cautiously, it seems, have the more 'traditional' guerrillas of the EPR.

Some of us had argued that the Mexican regime was incapable of self-reform, and that the PRI would never accept the results of an election that reduced their power this much. This was not the case. Surprisingly, the regime recognised Cárdenas' victory in Mexico City.

This is not the first time the Mexican regime has absorbed, a direct blow from below. When the Zapatista uprising began in January 1994, the President halted the military counter-offensive after only ten days, in the face of determined resistance from the Mayan population of Chiapas state, and massive demonstrations of solidarity in the *mestizo* (Spanish-speaking) north.

The government's strategy has since been to sign, but not respect, a series of accords with the rebels, while maintaining a low intensity war against them.

This combined strategy of militarisation and superficial democratic change is designed to give the system a few more years breathing space. Meanwhile, the crisis of the system gets deeper and deeper. Despite the buoyancy of the financial markets, the boat is still taking in water.

None of the democratic advances of recent years are undo-able. The semi-corporatist system is still present, though many of its components are in crisis. Single-party states are not decreed out of existence. Nor is democracy ever installed solely through the ballot box. As in so many other transitional regimes, the monster can still lash out in its death-agony.

The crisis is also visible in the trade unions, a pillar of the PRI regime. The recent death of union boss Fidel Velázquez increases the internal instability of the state unions, which are increasingly threatened by dynamic militant unions.

The dark side

Mexico's "democratic transition" is accompanied by a dark side: hundreds of assassinations, political prisoners, persecutions, and political "disappearances." Fifty human rights groups recently came together in the *Red de Organizaciones Civiles de Derechos Humanos* to publish a damning report, "All rights for everyone" (*Todos los Derechos para Todos*).

"The need for control, so as to ensure the successful introduction of the neo-liberal model, has resulted in authoritarian policies, to impose "order." One key policy is the growing involvement of soldiers in civilian posts in the judicial system. This has two goals: eradicating corruption (as far as possible), under US pressure. The second goal of this militarisation is to gradually increase public tolerance of military practices.

The logic behind this creeping militarisation is described by Carlos Fazio as the "Third Link" in Mexico's new relationship with the USA. US-sponsored militarisation complements economic and political co-operation to ensure the introduction of the neo-liberal model in Latin America.²

The introduction of soldiers - trained to kill, rather than restrain the enemy — has led to an increase in violent repression. The same thing happened in the 1970s. Most of the hundreds of political "disappeared" of that period were victims of military units like the *Brigada Blanca*, assigned to police duties. Across Latin America, the transfer of police powers to the army has been one of the warning signs of a *coup d'état* or authoritarian rule.

More than 5,000 soldiers are officially assigned to police duties, in 28 of Mexico's states. The real figure, including plain clothes and 'dirty war' units is certainly higher. And this figure does not include the massive military presence in Chiapas state.

The Mexican regime is lurching towards authoritarianism. Either the army will support the political elite in its current project, or the generals will make a direct alliance with the major capitalists, short-circuiting the 'normal' political process, and imposing military or authoritarian rule in order to guarantee economic stability. In both scenarios, the army needs to become much more present in political life. This explains most of the media noise about the need for strong police measures to combat the wave of criminality. The real problem for the elite is that the social mobilisation is a threat to the power of

the current governmental elite and, in this sense, a threat to economic stability.

In Mexico City police and para-military forces have increased their wave of "social hygiene" attacks against street children. In regions where the EPR is thought to operate, the whole adult male population of selected villages has been arrested. According to the report, "there are many cases where civic groups and social militants have been threatened or persecuted in various ways, to pressure them to stop their activities, particularly their activities in defence of human rights." These threats range from anonymous telephone calls and threatening letters, to beatings kidnappings and torture by unidentified groups or the police robberies in which documents are taken, and valuables ignored. At least 50 journalists have reported that they have been followed by unidentified men. Over the last seven years, over 600 members of the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD) have died in violent or suspicious circumstances.

Low intensity war

This complex strategy, developed by the USA after their defeat in Vietnam, combines political, diplomatic, economic, psychological and ideological pressures, over a sustained period, in a context of low-intensity military-police repression. This "war without front lines" makes little distinction between civilians and rebel protagonists. The goal of the regime is to win the "hearts and minds" of the civil population, to legitimate the *status quo* as the lesser of two evils.

This strategy is particularly visible in Chiapas state. In the Zapatista-controlled north, there is a real civil war. In the rest of the state, there is a massive "decline in respect for human rights, increase in political violence and inter-communal conflict, all of which is weakening the social fabric. These are the consequences of the counter-insurgency strategy which has been implemented in Chiapas and other states of Mexico, to defeat the organised opposition."

According to the Report, this counter-insurgency plan has four aspects.

- State tolerance of the illegal actions of paramilitary groups controlled by local landlords and PRI "bosses."
- An inadequate judicial system, which fails to offer even minimum guarantees of impartiality, and acts in a consistently discriminatory fashion, favouring the partners of the government, and seeking to eliminate its opponents.
- militarisation of the territory, under the

The author is a leading member of the Trotskyist PRT. In the July 6 election he stood as reserve candidate to Patria Jiménez, lesbian activist and PRT member, who was elected to the chamber of deputies for a Mexico City constituency on the PRD list.

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Markets reassured by left victory

International capital reacted enthusiastically to Cárdenas's victory. The Mexican Stock Market continued its record-breaking rally.

"This has to be very positive and healthy and is going to generate confidence in Mexico," Hugh Pace, president of Goodyear Mexico told the *Wall Street Journal* shortly after the election.

Why should Mexican and international capital apparently be so delighted with the victory of Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas and the PRD? Quite simply because the PRI has not been very effective recently. The January 1994 Chiapas Uprising led by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) provoked a national political crisis, followed in December of 1994 by the devaluation of the peso, and the "tequila effect" which threatened the international banking system.

Those two events were followed by appearance of a second guerrilla organisation, the People's Revolutionary Army (EPR) and the subsequent militarisation of several Mexican states -- Chiapas, Tabasco, Guerrero, Oaxaca.

In addition military-style conflicts between and among drug dealers, the police and the army led to the militarisation of northern border states such as Chihuahua.

Taken altogether, the PRI appeared by 1997 to be leading Mexico -- the neighbour of the United States and one of its most important economic players--into

an enormous crisis. The U.S. could not permit Mexico to become a Colombia or a Peru. Political and social disturbances threaten the orderly operation of banks and corporations and jeopardises investment.

The rising level of discord and disturbances in Mexico led international capital, and the United States government which acts as its agent in Mexico, to understand that the Institutional Revolutionary Party's seventy-year old regime had exhausted itself and no longer served to keep things in order. So things would have to change.

Top leaders of the PRI also perceived that their ability to control the old system was breaking down. Despite enormous repression--like the killing 500 PRD activists between 1989 and 1997 and the militarisation of several state--the PRI was losing its grip.

Bankers and businessmen, the U.S. government, and the PRI came to the conclusion separately and together that the time had come for a new political system in Mexico. The PRI would have to give up its one-party rule in Mexico, not in order to bring about democracy, but in order to protect capital.

The National Action Party (PAN), a junior partner to the PRI during the Salinas years, had lost the credibility which might have made it the primary benefactor of political power sharing. So, the PRI had no choice but to include Cárdenas and the PRD. [DLB] ★

control of the intelligence services.

- public works projects by the armed forces, to improve their image among the population.

Low intensity war has had a terrible effect on the people of Chiapas. According to *La Estación Norte*, a non-governmental mission in Chiapas, "over the last two years, more than 4,000 people have become displaced. About 300 people have died, and 100 have been imprisoned. The number of beatings and injuries cannot be estimated."

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), through its *Subcomandante Marcos*, announced that its members and supporters in Chiapas would not vote because of the continued military occupation of the area; on-going attacks by "white guards" who beat, rape and murder indigenous activists; and the failure of the government to fulfil earlier agreements.

In many areas protesters made it impossible for the National Electoral Institute (IFE) to put up voting booths. Out of 3,520 voting booths to be installed, only 2,910 were installed in Chiapas. About 35% of the electorate either did not or could not vote.

In the rest of Chiapas, the Civic Alliance (*Alianza Civica*) which engaged in election watching confirmed "serious violations of voters' rights." According to *Subcomandante Marcos*, the EZLN called for a boycott, but would "respect the decision of those who did vote."

Nevertheless, and despite the real problem of landlord violence, a large number of social organisations led by Zapatista and PRD supporters decided to participate in the elections, usually calling for a vote for the PRD.

What now?

There is still no legislation on the rights of indigenous peoples. President Zedillo sabotaged the San Andrés Sakamcheen negotiations with the Zapatistas on a constitutional recognition of Mexico's pluri-national and pluri-lingual reality. One of the conse-

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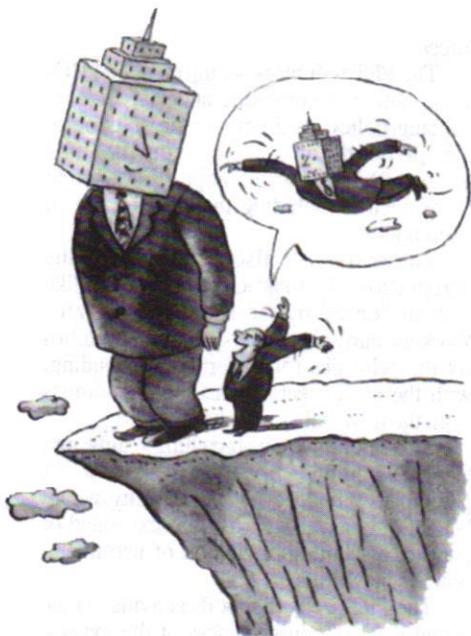
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quences of the new elections is that the new majority of "opposition" forces could pass a law like that proposed by the Cocopa co-ordination of indigenous groups, even without PRI support.

Although the national balance of forces still favours the right, the left has emerged from these elections particularly strong in some regions. The *cardinista* movement linked to Cárdenas' bid for the presidency was more spectacular than the PRD campaign in these elections. But this elections represented a deeper movement — they took place in a more developed and better organised civil society, with a deeper level of rejection of the ruling class ideologies. Nevertheless, the conservative opposition PAN is still gaining ground against the PRI in the north and centre of the country.

In Mexico City, Cárdenas won 47% of votes (1,860,000), double the score of the PRI candidate Alfredo Del Mazo and three times higher than the PAN candidate Castillo Peraza. The PRD also won 29 of the 30 seats in the Federal District's Representative Assembly, and 38 of the capital region's 40 seats in the national parliament.

The Trotskyist PRT signed a pre-electoral agreement with the PRD, as the result of which PRT member Patria Jiménez, a leader of the country's lesbian and gay movement, was elected to the Chamber of Deputies on the PRD list. Though the party has no representatives in the Congress or in Mexico City's special parliament, it intends to "assume its responsibilities with respect to the programmatic agreement with the PRD."

According to Jiménez, "we are not automatically part of the new government... The Cárdenas government is neither a class force nor a socialist one. That has been clear for a long time. But it is a democratic local government, with a multi-class composition, confronting the PRI national government. Strong PRD support in the capital will enable the party to press forward with some elements of its programme: public works, job creation, modification of economic policies and budgets. With social programmes as the

top priority."

No-one expects the PRD to seek a radical rethinking of the neo-liberal agenda. PRD leader López Obrador says that the party only seeks to "file the roughest edges of neo-liberalism."

But the PRD victory does mean a step forward for the movement against neo-liberalism. Particularly in the field of opposition to privatisation and defence of the social security system. The PRD's parliamentary base may prove an important ally in campaigns to reverse or slow down the privatisation of pension funds.

Cárdenas cannot prevent President Zedillo from continuing his neo-liberal orientation. But his relative strength will enable a large-scale confrontation over the orientation

of the economy, and the social priorities of the country.

A few modest propositions

In any case, the PRT will combine its parliamentary work with extra-parliamentary activities. The party has not ruled out participation in the administration of the capital region, though this would have "strengthened the democratic struggle, and put our socialist stamp on that struggle." Cárdenas has four months to form the Federal District's new government, which will take office on 5 December 1997.

One area of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary confrontation will be over the national government's creeping introduction of military control over the various police

The results

The Institutional Revolutionary Party suffered a devastating defeat, losing control of the congress for the first time in 70 years.

In the Chamber of Deputies the PRI will have 240 representatives, the left-wing PRD 122, the conservative PAN 120, the ecologists (PVEM) 11, and the Workers Party (PT) 7. The PRD is now the second most important party in the Chamber.

In the Senate, 32 out of 128 senators were up for election. The PRI now has 76 Senators; the PAN, 32; the PRD, 16; the PVEM 1; there are two independents and one vacant seat following the death of a senator.

For the first time since the 1920s, the Mexican President and the PRI will not

have an automatic majority in the legislature.

The rightist National Action Party (PAN) succeeded in winning two governorships. Their victory in Nuevo Leon, a conservative northern state, had been expected, but the PAN victory in Queretaro was a surprise. Historically the PRI, through its Mexican Confederation of Workers (CTM) has held control of this central manufacturing state.

In total, 57.1% of those eligible voted. 22.4 million people did not, or could not vote. [DLB] ★

The Zapatistas and the "new left"

The Chiapas Uprising of January 1994, led by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) created a new left in Mexico. Because it arose as an armed movement outside of the state and the legal, parliamentary parties, and because it took its stand with the poorest and most oppressed people in Mexico, that is the Mayan Indians of Chiapas, the EZLN enjoyed enormous moral authority.

Many leftists who had become disillusioned and dissatisfied since the collapse of the old left and since the failures of the PRD rallied to the EZLN. Even more important, many Indians, peasants, and workers, and above all many young middle class students, who had never had any political experience now supported the EZLN. Thus the Chiapas Rebellion and the EZLN created a "new left" outside of the political parties.

After the National Democratic Convention (CND) held in August 1994, this new left split into two factions. The Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN,

claiming 10,000 members), continues to support the Zapatistas. The second faction, the Broad Front for the Creation of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN), a coalition of poor peoples organisations, has become sympathetic toward Mexico's second major guerrilla organisation, the Peoples Revolution Army (EPR). The EPR virtually endorsed Cárdenas, and thus despite its armed organisation, becomes oddly enough a political satellite of the PRD.

The strength of the EZLN is that it continues to talk about the need for organisation from below to force changes in the political system. When Cárdenas and the PRD become the establishment, Marcos and the EZLN-FZLN will still be the opposition. The EZLN remains the most important group on the new left, and what it says and does in the next few months could be very important for defining the Mexican left for the next decade. But the Zapatistas remain in what Marcos has called a moment of *indefinición política*. A moment which presumably cannot last forever. [DLB] ★



PRD

Reasonable and respectable?

During the last few years, the PRD has taken several steps to reassure bankers, businessmen, and the U.S. government.

First, the PRD became a member of the Socialist International, the world federation of social democratic and labour parties. By doing so, the PRD signalled that while it wanted reforms, it was not dangerously radical.

Second, the PRD held occasional meetings with U.S. legislative and executive organs, including the National Security Council. Such meetings were intended to convey the PRD's program, including its demands for democracy and a more progressive economic agenda, but also to make clear the party's pragmatism, its reformist character.

Third and most important, perhaps, was the PRD's proclamation of its acceptance of capitalism and even neo-liberalism. In May in New York, Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas told an assembly of bankers that he was prepared to follow the Chilean model. New York financiers reported that discussion was key in swinging capital to Cárdenas.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, president of the PRD, met with the Mexican Co-ordinating Council of Entrepreneurs at the Industrialists Club on June 11 to

try to convince the country's commercial, financial and industrial elite that his party represented a reasonable approach to Mexico's problems.

"Let nobody make a mistake," said López Obrador, reading from a prepared statement, "we are not against those who with tenacity and effort risk capital, create jobs, obtain legal profits and are committed to the development of Mexico..."

"We are not advocates of a moratorium [on paying the foreign debt], nor is our economic program the extreme opposite of the government's. We are not talking about a night and day change. It is only a question of getting rid of some of the sharp edges of neo-liberalism and giving it a social orientation."

Cárdenas and the PRD succeeded in convincing the important players--the international bankers and the U.S. government above all--that they could be trusted. The U.S. government and the banks then put pressure on Zedillo and the PRI to accept political power sharing. [DLB] ★

forces.

The PRD will propose, through the PRD-led coalition, a commune and district-level policing policy, as a democratic solution to the problem of public security. The democratic rights of the population have to be respected, including through the use of referendums.

The party will also be proposing the introduction of a participatory budget, like that introduced by the left within Brazil's Workers Party, in which local communities fix the priorities for government spending, with the aid of technicians and economists from the town hall.

This is one way of breathing reality into Cárdenas' promise that "all will govern." A participatory budget for Mexico City would be a strong power-base for the next round of conflict over the introduction of neo-liberal policies in Mexico.

The PRD seeks to root its activities in the actual level of consciousness of the masses, participating in mass struggles with the goals of strengthening the left camp, creating new, higher forms of organisation of mass struggles, and supporting wherever possible unitary demands. The focus is on direct parti-

Small parties collapse,

The Institutional Revolutionary Party's pseudo-socialist satellite parties saw their electoral support collapse. The Greens, however, increased their vote.

The Partido Cardenista (PC, former PFCRN or PST) and the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS) both received less than 2% of the vote, and consequently lose their registration or ballot status.

Another PRI puppet party, the Workers Party (PT), headed by Alberto Anaya, fell from being the fourth to the fifth national political party. Anaya and the PT, once creatures of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, have apparently finally understood the political changes taking place in Mexico, and announce that they will no longer form alliance with the PRI.

The Mexican Democratic Party which descends from the *Sinarquistas*, Mexico's own quasi-fascist party of the 1930s, also got less than 2% and lost its registration. Out of tune with the times, this vestige of goose-stepping Mexican fascists seems to have gone out of business.

Posters saying "Don't vote for a politician vote for an ecologist!" touched the heart of the contempt which Mexicans have for the political fraud which permeates the political life of their country.

And the slogan "Mexico needs more green and less red" dramatised the violence which citizens suffer at the hands of the police and military. To hammer the point home, the Mexican Ecological Green Party (PVEM) held its

icipation and direct democracy. The perspective is one of rupture with the party-state, which will go far beyond the levels which those who are negotiating an "orderly transition" with the old regime expect.

Mexico is not in a process of democratic transition. Neither President Zedillo nor the PRI is committed to democracy. Democratic gains have been won through mass struggle, including the electoral rejection of the PRI, and through the existence of groups like the EZLN and EPR, which have opted for the armed struggle.

The old system is in irreversible decline. Those who stand with the exploited and oppressed can look to the future with hope and optimism! ★

Notes

1. In 1988, Cárdenas won most votes in the presidential election, but was cheated of victory by the PRI candidate, Salinas.
2. *El Tercer Vínculo. De la teoría del caos a la teoría de la militarización*, Carlos Fazio.

except for the Greens

closing rally at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, where hundreds of students were murdered on October 2, 1968.

Above Mexico's streets dangled untold thousands of plastic banners of the other parties. PVEM was alone in sacrificing name recognition to its pledge to avoid using plastic. Instead, the ecologists relied on wall paintings and smaller numbers of paper and cloth posters.

Throughout Mexico, PVEM received well over a million votes, entitling it (by proportional representation) to a federal Senator, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, an outspoken critic of the PRI. The party also won ten seats in the Chamber of Deputies. According to results reported in the daily *La Jornada*, PVEM fell below 5% in only one district in the capital. In low income District 4, the party polled 14%.

PVEM is weakest in the northern states bordering the US. But the higher vote in Mexico City may well set the trend for elections in 2000. During the next few years, resistance to US efforts to dump toxic and nuclear waste in northern Mexico may provide PVEM the opportunity it needs to grow. Its history of anti-nuclear organising is older than its existence. In the early 1980's, the group which would later become PVEM began environmental politics by opposing the nuclear power plant planned for Vera Cruz. An increase in cross-border contacts with US and Canadian greens is expected. [DLB/DF] ★

The PRD and the social movements

The PRD was founded in 1989 through the merger of two tendencies. Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas and the Democratic Current of the PRI merged with the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM), formerly part of the Communist Party. Cárdenas brought his own radical base in the form of militant peasants from Michoacan. The PSUM brought to the marriage not only the Communist Party's reformist tradition, but also former guerrilla groups and other more radical tendencies.

Since that time, the PRD has attracted many movement activists. Among those elected in July, for example, were three leaders of the debtors movement, *El Barzón*, lesbian activist and Fourth International supporter Patria Jiménez; two members of the Broad Front for the Creation of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN); a leader of the Tepoztlán struggle against the creation in that

town of a private Golf Course; and a former candidate for secretary general of the National Teachers Union (SNTE).

One of the two FAC-MLN leaders elected to congress was Benito Miron, an advisor to the Mexico City bus drivers of *Route 100* (SUTAU), an independent union which spent over a year in a desperate struggle with the PRI-government of Mexico City.

The PRD has never had much of a strategy towards labour. But during this election, things began to change. For example, a group of executive, legislative and judicial employees of the Federal District placed an advert in newspapers on July 2 expressing their support for Cárdenas, "because he has been the only candidate who has solidified himself with our struggle, has listened to us and has made our demands his..." [DLB] ★

What's left of the Mexican left?

After ten years of regroupment and confusion, most of the Mexican left has collapsed into the mainstream parties. Dan La Botz asks whether the Zapatistas can break the mould.

When Carlos Salinas de Gortari was elected president in 1988, he and his brother Raul began to draw various leftist groups, mostly Maoists, into their National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL) and then either into the PRI or into the puppet Workers Party (PT).

In 1988 most of the Communist left joined the National Democratic Front (FDN) supporting the campaign of Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas. Those on the left who attempted to resist the trend to electoralism and reformism were increasingly marginalised. There was a clear decline in electoral support for Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, presidential candidate of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT).

Then, in 1989, when Cárdenas organised the Party of the Democratic Revolution, former Communists, ex-Castroite guerrillas, some Maoists and some Trotskyists joined. Thus most of the left

in Mexico dissolved itself into the new centre-left, nationalist and social democratic PRD. Many of those former leftists kept their former parties alive as organised tendencies with the PRD, hoping to fight for socialism within or through the PRD. But the various left groups with in the PRD impaired the PRD's effectiveness as a social democratic electoral party, while, in general, failing to carry out any meaningful socialist propaganda or agitation.

The crisis of the left deepened with the collapse of "Communism" in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Many former Communists and other leftists lost a clear sense of political identity and purpose. ★

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Inside the UPS strike

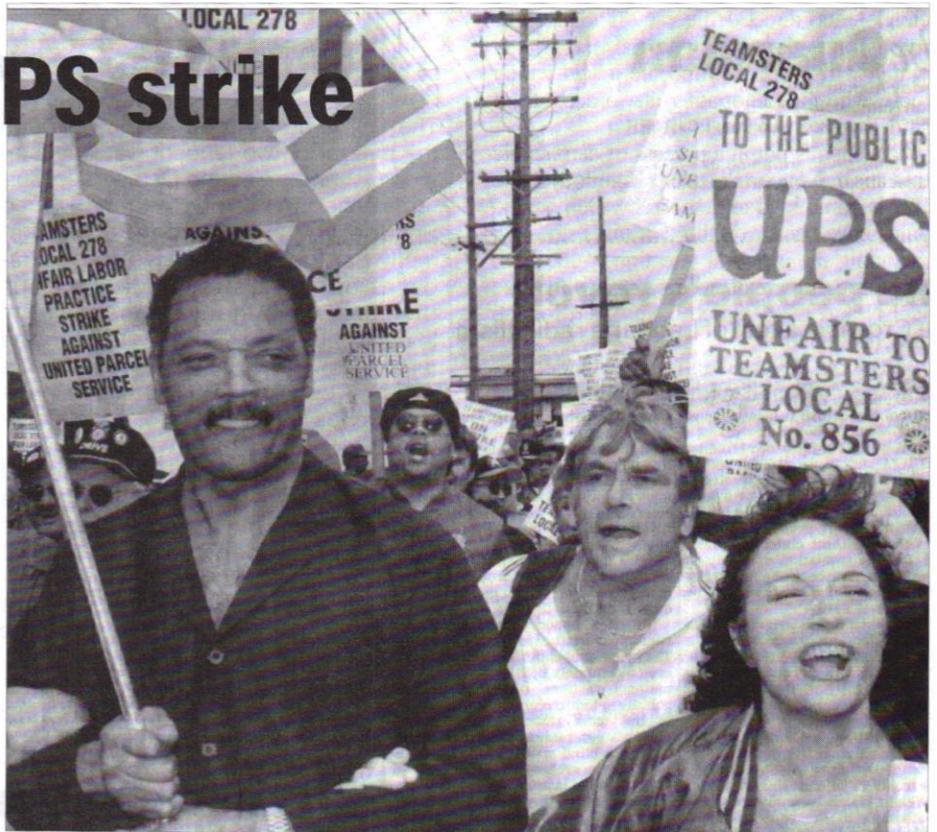
We went to press after the UPS strike settlement was announced, but before the final details were published. Based on press reports and speaking with knowledgeable observers, it seems clear that the Teamsters Union won its demands for 10,000 new full-time jobs and significant wage gains—although a huge gap remains between full-time and part-time hourly rates. The union also retains control of the industry's multi-employer pension fund. The main concession on the union side appears to be signing a five-year contract instead of the normal three years.

The extent of this victory can be appreciated by recalling that only ten years ago, in 1987, the Teamster leadership, then in the hands of the anti-reform Old Guard, imposed a rotten UPS contract on the members even though fifty-two percent voted "No." The present victory demonstrates the power not only of the strike, but of union democracy.

Martha Gruelle

The Teamster strike at United Parcel Service was the largest strike in the United States in a quarter century. All thanks to the "new militancy" that John Sweeney promised when he took over as president of the AFL-CIO trade union confederation? Not really. The real origins of the Teamsters' strike are in the twenty-year movement, led by the caucus Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), to eject the corrupt Hoffa leadership, democratise the union, and fight for "decent contracts and an activated membership."

The leadership of the AFL-CIO is somewhat more active than in previous years. But their strategy does not include strikes like this one. John Sweeney would probably have preferred for the Teamsters to throw their efforts into organising a company like Federal Express, UPS's main competitor, rather than taking on a giant like UPS in a head-on confrontation over part-time work. But the Teamster leadership is more on a somewhat different course from the AFL-CIO leadership. Though they are, of course, organising at Federal Express too!



While the UPS strike was partly about the future of living-wage jobs in the United States, it was also a test. How well had management done on winning the loyalty of its work force, and how well have the new democratised union and TDU counteracted UPS Corporate Culture?

UPS policies predate recent versions of "team concept" (though the company has also launched team concept programs in the last few years). But Big Brown makes its full-time workers part of the team in other less "warm and fuzzy" ways.

The crisp, uniformed image and "tightest ship" slogan influence both the public's and workers' view; the brown shirts carry status (and some say sex appeal), and evoke efficiency. UPS consistently uses internal promotions to capture the aspirations of workplace leaders—the current CEO was once a driver.

The cultural, some say cultist, atmosphere of reward for self-sacrifice is combined with a constant scrutiny of workers' pace. This keeps many of them working through breaks. Meanwhile, decades of comfortable relations with Teamsters International leaders have led less politically sophisticated workers to think that management *chose* to pay drivers decent pay and

benefits.

Until the early nineties, the union did almost no internal organising, while the bargaining unit grew to include more and more part-timers—younger, more exploited, and for obvious reasons less trusting of the union. When the strike started, part-timers comprised about sixty percent of the unit.

The company's risky bet

UPS is one of the smartest companies around. So why did they provoke this strike? The company seemed to be betting they'd won the hearts-and-minds of the workforce. That there would be significant scabbing as the weeks wore on. They lost the bet.

Members were shocked to learn that of the 43,000 new jobs created since 1993 35,000 are part-time. The union's flagship issue—the demand to turn part-time into full-time jobs—turned out to be wonderfully unifying, as well as a cause for widespread public sympathy, a rarity in today's industrial disputes. One public opinion poll suggested that 55% of the population supported the strikers, with 27% for the company.

UPS started part-timing work in 1968. That was before they negotiated a national contract. In 1968, the company got Teamster President Jimmy Hoffa (Senior) to agree to

"This victory is in part a culmination of two decades of Teamster reform. Teamster members worked hard to get our union ready to fight and win on big issues like good, full-time jobs. A decade ago our International officers were orchestrating secret deals with UPS management, and were forcing UPS Teamsters to accept contracts that were rejected in a vote by the majority. They were making deals to allow unlimited part-time labour. That's now in the past. Now we have a union leadership and membership that can win a major victory for all of labour."

Ken Paff, National Organiser for Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

TDU comment Who won this war?

The agreement appears to fall about 90 percent on the union side. We won because we built a reform movement over two decades that got our union in a place to lead this fight.

We won because we elected a Teamster International leadership willing to fight, not sell out. We won because a contract campaign was waged for six months. We targeted the right issues, we took them to the members and the American people, we unified the members- in short, our union did what a union should be all about.

We won because we reached out and made this the best supported strike in decades. We won because UPS Teamsters stuck together and surprised

the company-which underestimated the unity, determination and will-to-win of Teamster members!

Now we move forward to spread this spirit, this victory. We can start with the upcoming national freight contract and move on to every part of the Teamsters and the labour movement. Now we move forward to build that reform movement – to bring out the best in unionism, and to make possible innovative struggles, fresh leadership and Teamster victories. If we do that, this will be only the first of a string of new Teamster victories that help make labour into a growing, dynamic force. ★

Teamsters for a Democratic Union, PO Box 10128, Detroit, Mich. 48210-0128. Tel. (+1. 313) 842-2600

Court orders new leadership election

A federal official has overturned Teamsters President Ron Carey's re-election, following an eight-month investigation into alleged fund-raising abuses by his campaign. The effect of the decision is to force a new election between Carey and his opponent, James P. Hoffa, son of long-time corrupt union boss Jimmy Hoffa.

The ruling came just four days after the Teamsters declared victory in their strike against United Parcel Service.

Ron Carey narrowly defeated Hoffa in December. As a result of a 1988 deal to end corruption in the 1.4-million-member union, the election was underwritten with \$22 million in public funds and held under the auspices of a court-appointed officer.

Barbara Zack Quindel, a court-appointed federal election overseer, has exposed a complex network of schemes to funnel illegal donations to Carey's campaign, including a plan to swap Teamsters contributions to political candidates and organisations in exchange for donations to Carey.

Martin Davis, a consultant to Carey's campaign, even told William Hamilton, then the unions political director, that the Democratic National Committee (DNC) had made unspecified commitments in exchange for more than \$1 million in contributions to state and local party affiliates. DNC officials deny there was any such arrangement.

Hamilton resigned suddenly in July, saying he would no longer co-operate with the federal grand jury in New York. The FBI has charged Davis with exploiting the Teamsters' general treasury and hiding illegal donations to Carey's election fund.

According to activists on the left of the union, Carey's big mistake was in hiring consultants who usually work for the Democratic Party and are used to sleaze.

Carey has said he will fire any Teamster who had any connection with the dirty money. The campaign paid the money back in March 1997.

Labour reformers pinned their hopes on Carey when he was first elected in 1991. He has thrown out the heads of 72 locals he said were corrupt, sold the unions corporate jets and ended the free lunches and other perks at headquarters.

But he failed to unite rank-and-file members, beating Hoffa by less than 4 percentage points in a mail-in ballot last December, in which only about one-third of Teamsters voted.

The Hoffa forces claimed that the illegal campaign contributions tipped the close election in Carey's favour and demanded a re-run.

Hoffa supporters have close ties to the Democratic Party (even its most "liberal" wing, such as Congressman John Conyers from this area) as well as the right-wing politicians. *The Wall Street Journal* has also been campaigning for a re-run.

Regulations for the re-run are even stricter than last December. Neither candidate can take money from anyone other than a Teamster.

This means that Hoffa will have far more access to big money than Carey. But the incumbent will have Teamsters for a Democratic Union behind him. And, of course, his reputation for successful leadership of the UPS strike. [JD/AP] ★

APEC versus

Leaders of states responsible for 50 per cent of the world's population, half the world's gross national product and 70 per cent of world trade come together in Vancouver next month for the APEC Economic Leaders Summit. APEC opponents will also converge in the city to mobilise, protest and make their voices heard — "Against APEC and For Humanity"

Harold Lavender

APEC achieved global renown in 1993, when the United States hosted a well publicised "economic leaders meeting" in Seattle. Since then, APEC has been moving towards the creation of an open regional free-trade bloc. The goal has been set to achieve full free trade or tariff liberalisation in the developed countries by 2010 and in the so called 'developing countries' by 2020.

APEC is not as tight a grouping as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the European Union. Each APEC member economy is only required to produce an action plan towards compliance with APEC's goals. Commitments are described as "non-binding". This is formally true — APEC has no enforcement powers or dispute resolution process. However, it does apply enormous pressure on members to open up their economies and speed up the removal of restrictions. New members are accepted only if they fully comply with the APEC agenda. This includes:

- minimal controls on big business
- unrestricted foreign investment
- unlimited export of profits
- privatisation of state assets, utilities and infrastructure
- competitive (i.e. low cost and de-unionised) and flexible (i.e. temporary, part time contract-based) labour markets
- destruction of sustainable community-based production in favour of costly and ecologically unsound cash crops for exports
- rampant exploitation of natural resources

Such economic policies have anti-people, anti-social consequences. They deepen inequality around the world, increase poverty for women and indigenous peoples, cut real and social wages, intensify unemployment and attacks on workers rights and sharply reduce the quality and access to public services, health care, and education.

Not surprisingly, many of the region's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are critical of APEC. Parallel summits have been

TDU comment

The new deal

• Jobs

10,000 new full-time jobs created by combining (and thus eliminating) part-time jobs. This is in addition to normal job growth due to attrition and expansion. This tracks the union pre-strike proposal. The company offered 200 per year in their "Last, Best and Final." Five full time jobs will be created from every six full-time equivalents of part time work. This was the union's proposal. The company had demanded that four jobs be created from five equivalents.

• Pensions

The company was defeated in its attempted take-over of pension moneys. Increased money into our union pension plans, and health & welfare plans, will provide pension hikes as indicated earlier in union and TDU bulletins. This tracks the union pre-strike proposal.

• Subcontracting

Limits on subcontracting along the lines of the union pre-strike proposal.

• Wages

Five annual increases of 62c/hour for full timers and 82c/hour for existing part

timers. This is more than twice as high as the company's "Last, Best and Final" proposal of five annual increases of 30c/hour and two bonuses. The union's pre-strike proposal was 65c/hour.

• Safety

The new agreement follows the lines of the union pre-strike proposal. In particular, the company cannot increase the weight limit without first bargaining with the union.

A solid victory

The union's main concession was to agree to a five, rather than four year deal. The company's 163 page "Last, Best and Final" offer of July 30th turned out to be "First, Worst and Bogus."

Among the take-aways and concessions which the company was unable to introduce were: reducing picket line rights; expanding use of part-time labour to deliver ground packages; institutionalising the "team concept"; gutting innocent-till-proven-guilty rights; and increasing ways to subcontract jobs. ★

Source: TDU Press release, August 19, 1997.

part-time work in the Midwest, while Eastern locals including Ron Carey's struck over the issue. By 1982 UPS used part-timers everywhere, there was a national UPS-Teamsters contract, and it wasn't too hard to get International officers to agree to a second-tier wage for part-timers.

UPS part-timers do the behind-the-scenes work of sorting packages and loading them on the little brown trucks for delivery. It's intense, dangerous work, lifting and placing thousands of parcels of wildly varying size and weight.

A high proportion of sorters and loaders only last a few days or weeks. Those who stick it out, and avoid injury, may get trained to drive the delivery trucks — where they're still pushed to run through the workday.

From there they have a chance at the less-draining intercity tractor-trailer runs (called "feeders" in UPS parlance). But it's a pyramid with a huge base relative to the number of full-time driver jobs.

The Teamsters fought to slow or reverse the sharp expansion at the bottom. Even though the UPS sorter and loader jobs are fairly good on the pitiful scale of part-time pay — around \$9 an hour plus health benefits — the call for full-timing struck a cord. The union also wanted good raises, including the first increase in the part-timer starting rate in over fourteen years.

The Teamsters put their case for "decent full-time jobs" to a public increasingly sensitised to the growing problem of part-time, contingent work. Every young worker and every parent of a twenty-something knows that it is hard to find full-time, decent-paying work that will last. (Recent strikes at General Motors, too, have focused on turning contract work into regular jobs.)

Meanwhile, in demanding control of UPS workers' pensions from the Teamsters multi-employer benefit funds, the company aimed to differentiate its treatment of feeder drivers, who tend to be older and have sometimes organised for higher pensions, from the rest. And handling the investment of several billions of the workers' dollars would surely be a handy thing for management, even if they couldn't keep all the dividends.

The point of multi-employer pension funds is mutual protection. When the freight industry consolidated in the eighties, the contributions paid by UPS and other successful companies helped ensure retirement income for thousands whose companies closed and left a debt to the pension fund. Now UPS asked its union employees to turn their backs on other Teamsters, and bet that Big Brown will stay just as healthy over the next thirty years as over the last.

Teamsters retorted that since UPS has had problems getting their paycheques right; why trust them with a pension fund?

Events showed how deeply strike senti-

ment and union consciousness ran among UPS Teamsters. Fewer than three percent broke ranks in the first week.

By holding strong, with widespread public support on their side, strikers shut down the company's only profitable operation. A business which it couldn't possibly move overseas. Even in America today, fifteen days on strike proved to be enough. ★

For more information: see the July issue of *Labor Notes*, and Alexander Cockburn's article from the August 11th issue of *The Nation*! This article reprinted from issue #67 of *Against the Current*.

Note

1. Teamsters for a Democratic Union was formed in 1976, to fight for "reform of our union, decent contracts and an activated membership." TDU supported the Ron Carey election campaign, and many TDUs are on the union's executive board. The current is a "sandwich," with a militant presence in the Teamsters leadership, and a rank-and-file movement. Unfortunately, the union has a lot of old guard still left in the middle hierarchy.

UPS health and safety record

UPS has a rate of occupational injury three times higher than the transportation industry as a whole. The company is one of the most persistent violators of hazardous materials regulations.

A class action lawsuit has even been filed against UPS for violating the rights of disabled workers. Workers who suffer eye injury are entitled to be transferred to other jobs, but UPS has refused or failed to accommodate their disabilities.

Unlike its competition in the package delivery business, UPS has even refused to invest the \$55 per vehicle it would cost to equip their fleet with articulated mirrors at the rear of the trucks. As a consequence, children have been injured and killed because drivers were unable to see them behind their vehicles.

UPS has consistently stonewalled union demands for appropriate safety equipment such as decent seat belts, seats, and tires, and has refused to

retire from their fleet trucks that have only single cylinder brakes.

Packages presently can weigh up to 150 pounds (68kg). The company has refused to bargain over weight limits, reserving the right to require drivers to unload, alone, packages that sometimes exceed 200 pounds (90kg). When challenged, management told the union that if the driver needed help, s/he could ask the customer to assist. Young, inexperienced workers are becoming disabled for life from injuries received at UPS, often their first real job.

One UPS employee is killed on the job every month. In Chicago a new employee serving his 30 day probation died of heat exhaustion while unloading a truck during a Chicago heat waves. The company was fined \$5,000. ★

Source: Carolyn Robinson, the first (and only) woman to serve on the national UPS negotiating team for the Teamsters. She chairs the sub-committee on safety & health.

humanity

used to criticise APEC's agenda and advocate policy alternatives. And last year, for the first time, there was strong mass opposition to the APEC summit in the Philippines. This opposition was fuelled by the Ramos government, which decided to open up the Philippines on a very fast schedule, well ahead of suggested APEC target dates, with all the resulting consequences.

There were different perspectives as to how respond. In the end, five different counter-conferences were held. This year in Vancouver, there will be "only" two.

The People's Summit is a larger, much better funded and more politically moderate parallel conference organised by the Canadian Labour Congress and a coalition of NGOs ' a kind of official opposition. This draws on the legacy of previous NGO conferences, including the Manila People's Forum and its plan of action, which details the responsibilities of APEC governments to uphold commitments made in other fora and provides possible alternatives to the current APEC agenda.

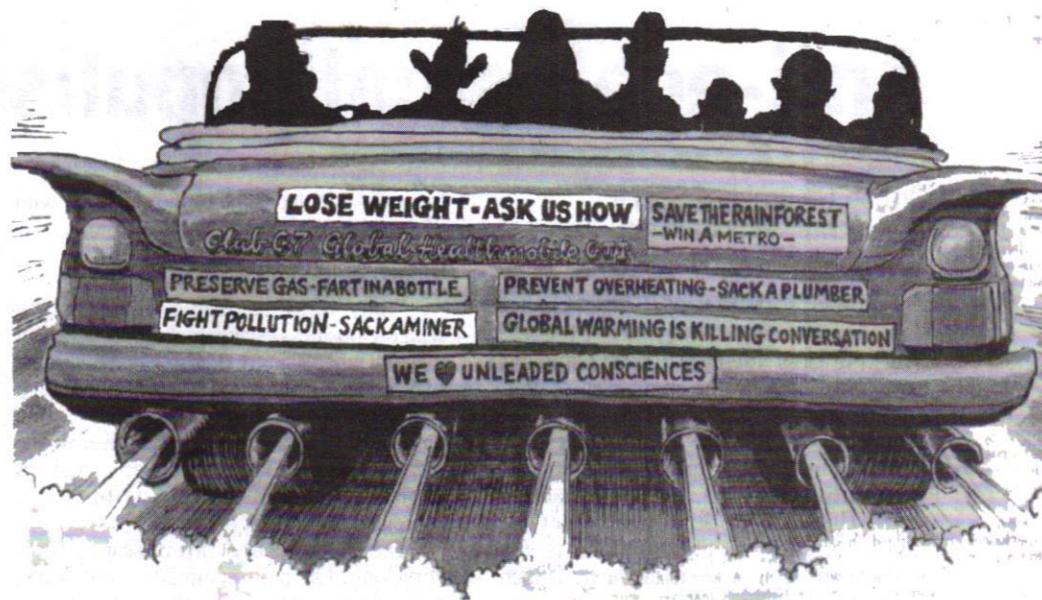
No! to APEC will host a more radical anti-imperialist conference, which rejects APEC in its entirety and sees itself as continuing the resistance begun at the People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalisation in Manila last year.

Not every one is happy with the holding of two parallel "alternative" conferences. Some groups involved in the People's Summit favour saying openly No to APEC (which, if you read the fine print is not at all the position of the People's Summit organisers). Some people who agree with the No! to APEC position either want to participate in both, or favour a dialogue where feasible to build the necessary unity to defeat APEC's agenda.

But political differences over ways of organising the roots of the problem and whether to push reform or organise in direct opposition to imperialism mean that the two conferences will be quite different. In fact, they face opposite political problems. What will the People's Summit do with its critique of APEC? It is one thing to use this critique to organise to struggle against APEC. But is quite another thing to lobby the Canadian government to change the character of APEC. As if APEC could ever become democratic and accountable! On the other hand, what does it mean to say No to APEC? How can we build mass support for this position. And what kind of alternative is really being posed?

Who "wants in" on APEC?

The direction of the People's Summit is towards critical engagement with or reform of APEC. This direction explicitly expressed in a paper submitted to Canada's foreign affairs department and being circulated on e-



mail by the policy working group of the Canadian Organising Network for the 1997 People's Summit on APEC.

After critiquing the current globalisation process, the paper states that NGOs recognise that for globalisation to be a positive process, an effective system of global governance is required. It argues that the creation of adequate governance mechanisms must be more inclusive and participatory that is more democratic than in the past. This involves reforming and strengthening the existing system of intergovernmental institutions and improving collaboration with private and independent groups. It will foster global citizenship and work to include poorer marginalised and alienated segments of national and international society. Finally, it will work to subject the rule of arbitrary power ' economic, political or military ' to the rule of law within global society.

The paper argues that the input of civil society is necessary to make APEC accountable. It calls on the Canadian government, along with its partners in APEC, to show an openness and willingness to engage the people of their countries in all facets of the APEC process. It argues political commitment and structural reform are required as an evaluation and reorientation of APEC's limited agenda. Later, the paper makes a series of policy suggestions as to what the Canadian government can do to meet the challenge of civil society and change the APEC agenda.

What about the union?

Many Canadian trade unionists say they are opposed to APEC. Unfortunately, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) a sponsor of the People's Summit, only criticises APEC with the aim of reforming it. Within the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the Canadian Labour Congress is part of the Asia-Pacific Labour Network (APLN) of ICFTU affiliates which meets prior to APEC leaders meetings.

At its 1996 meeting in Manila, APLN

issued a statement, 'A Trade Union Vision for APEC,' that announced its desire to "harness the APEC objective of the internationalisation of markets to the improvement of the conditions of work and the life of citizens of our populous regions."

While recognising the reality of globalisation and perceiving APEC as a means of enlarging markets, the APLN statement warns that increased competition can drive down wages and living conditions if economic change is not managed with the involvement of trade unions. It goes on to say that unions have a significant role in the development of best practice/high-performance industries and enterprises and calls for an equal partnership with socially responsible employers on the basis of ILO principles of tripartism and respect for union rights.

The declaration calls for sustainable development through increased employment, education and training for improvements in the quality and remuneration of employment. It also calls for progressive human resource development measures and measures to eliminate commercial exploitation of children. It concludes by stressing that the APLN wants representation on selected APEC committees, continuation of annual meetings with the host of the APEC leaders summit and the creation of an APEC Labour Forum as part of the official APEC. ★

For more information contact:

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Notes

1. APEC started out as a consultative body. The first ministerial meeting was held in Australia in 1989. The grouping includes 18 member economies (political leader are referred to as economic leaders, a clear indication of the APEC's contempt for any democratic control): Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Canada, the US, Mexico and Chile. A moratorium has been placed on new memberships, but a whole series of states have applied to join, including India, Russia, Vietnam and Peru.

Anti-ecological populism

British Columbia's Social Democratic Premier is trying to build popularity by splitting the workers. **Harold Lavender** reports

Working class voters in British Columbia, especially outside the main city of Vancouver, vote for the social democratic New Democrats (NDP) at the local and provincial level, but increasingly turn to the new right-wing party Reform in Canada's federal elections. How can working people act like labour-oriented social democrats one moment and right-wingers the next? Is there a common denominator?

The motor force for many voters appears to be anti-elitist anger. Their vote is a protest against the increased economic insecurity and lack of control of their lives, and the narrowing of parliamentary democracy in an age of corporate control. But this anger can take many forms, including reactionary forms that focus on scapegoating and reinforce prejudices.

Right-wing populism has a long history in British Columbia, expressed in a series of Social Credit governments. When the *Socreds*, plagued by innumerable scandals, fell apart, many people thought more conventional politics would prevail. Instead, the negative impacts of capitalist restructuring are fuelling a major revival of right-wing populism federally and perhaps even at the local and provincial level. According to a recent opinion poll, the British Columbia Reform Party (not affiliated to the Reform Party of Canada), which currently has no leader and only two seats in the legislature, is

the most popular party in the province with 35 per cent support.

What's going on?

Many working people don't identify with big business establishment interests. But they also increasingly don't identify with the liberal social welfare state. They oppose high income taxes, and they don't look to the unions as a political force. This layer of the working population does not see a crisis of capitalism but instead tends to blame "special interests" for the crisis.

The Reform Party's list of scapegoats is very long: Quebec separatists, immigrants and visible minorities, native militants and aboriginal fishers, environmentalists, feminists and affirmative action, gays and lesbians, the shiftless and unemployed poor ripping off the welfare system, a judicial system that favours criminals' rights, youth crime, politicians who rip off the system for fat pensions and habitually lie, the central government in Ottawa that doesn't care about British Columbia, the Americans, and so on.

Scrapper Glen

The NDP federally and in most provinces been very reluctant to appeal to raw anger with the status quo and try to take it in an anti-capitalist direction. As a result, in many people's minds the NDP and the union bureaucracy have become part of the establishment.

But British Columbia NDP leader Glen Clark has taken a slightly different tack. In 1996, he managed to secure the NDP's working class base and his own re-election by

"drawing a line between Howe Street [the Vancouver Stock Exchange] and Main Street [middle class working families]".

There was an element of class rhetoric in the election campaign. Once in office this rhetoric disappeared. Occasionally, the NDP does opt for pro-labour and progressive measures, especially when they don't cost the provincial government too much or escalate the deficit – which would lead to a terrible hue and cry in the big business press.

This year, the NDP introduced Bill 44, amending the Labour Standards Act to make it much easier to unionise in the construction industry and reverse the huge inroads made by the non-unions firms in recent years. Big business howled, small business howled, and there was dire talk of the economic consequences. As a result, the bill was withdrawn. Not much of a surprise – in the previous NDP administration, Clark as finance minister proposed tax changes that would have hit wealthy homeowners, but quickly retreated in the face of the outcry of the rich.

Nevertheless, in British Columbia the NDP remains tightly intertwined with the labour bureaucracy. It seeks to balance neo-liberal cutbacks to government spending against preserving its alliance with the British Columbia Federation of Labour. The public sector is being reduced, but without openly declaring war on the unions, as in Canada's most populous province, Ontario.

Similarly, the NDP is willing to partially stand up for certain issues such as education and health (as opposed to welfare benefits for the poor, which have been chopped) when it believes it has a large electoral base. It is even willing to take some stands in favour of issues like choice on abortion and gay and lesbian rights where it has a constituency and feels there is a social majority.

Allies and enemies

Critics are warning that the forest industry in British Columbia cannot be sustained at its present rate. But the NDP government wants people to believe that the forest industry can offer growing employment, and claims that forestry can be a 'sunrise' rather than a 'sunset' industry. The NDP job strategy is a three-pronged alliance between the forest industry, unions like the Woodworkers and the British Columbia government. This is now being concretised in the form of the Jobs and Timber Accord. In the previous administration, the NDP made some concessions to defuse mass protests against eco-destructive logging practices by creating more park land (though generally not on the most productive timber areas) and introduced some regulation through the Forest Practices Code. Now, in the name of creating jobs, the NDP is willing to bow to the multi-national companies' cries for deregulation and to gut its own



Reds and Greens

British Columbia's NDP government pits unionised workers against environmentalists. Harold Lavender explains.

regulations.

Who are the enemies of this multi-national industry-labour-government alliance that is supposed to make British Columbia prosper? According to the corporate press, it is environmentalists who question the ecological sense of such measures, especially militant environmental groups like Greenpeace that engage in direct action and dare to make alliances with Americans and other outsiders against British Columbia's economic interests. This theme is being fanned by Clark who called Greenpeace and its allies 'enemies of British Columbia'.

The salmon fishery is also very vulnerable. The NDP did very little to counter a racist campaign against 'special rights' for native people (the recognition of an inherent aboriginal right to fish) which saw the Reform Party make major inroads. The British Columbia NDP has taken up the populist campaign against Ottawa's anti-community, anti-worker restructuring plans and demanded that British Columbia have control of the Pacific coast fisheries.

Pathetic record

But the NDP has not been willing to clean up British Columbia's act. Logging and hydroelectric dams have destroyed spawning grounds and damaged the ecological base of the fishery. Nor to challenge corporate control.

Deregulation and a lack of rules clearly contributes to the potential eco-destruction of west coast fishery in both the US and Canada. But what is the cause? The Clark government again invokes the "traditional" enemies of British Columbia: the Americans for plundering the resource, stealing Canadian fish and robbing British Columbia fishers of their livelihoods; and Ottawa for failing to stand up to the US in defence of Canadian interests and for selling out the people of British Columbia.

This NDP government is ready to try to undercut the provincial Liberal and Reform parties by standing up and fighting, on selected popular issues.

This tactic may succeed in winning back some votes from resource-industry workers, and in the case of the fight for a new salmon treaty it may appeal even to parts of the left. But on what basis and to what end? In flirting with confused populist sentiments in British Columbia and with national chauvinist and backward working class prejudices, the NDP is playing a very dangerous game.

The attempt to undercut Reform with a populist appeal is self-defeating in the longer run. It does not point the way to a new vision of an ecologically sustainable society free of corporate tyranny. Instead, it undercuts strategies and future possibilities of solidarity. The right, not the left, stands to gain in the long term. ★

Across British Columbia, a war is being waged. Conrad Black's servile media, the multi-national forest companies, the Forest Alliance, the 'wise use' movement, the Reform Party, the International Woodworkers of America and British Columbia Premier Glen Clark have joined together in a pro-capitalist united front against the allegedly job-killing Green movement. Environmental groups like Greenpeace that use militant tactics to defend the ancient temperate rain forests are labelled enemies of British Columbia.

And yet, ecological destruction is not just happening somewhere else. Canada has miserably failed to meet its targets on reducing greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide released from fossil-burning fuels. In British Columbia, logging and fishing interests are driving the region's fantastic natural resources below the point at which they can replenish themselves. Much of the land being clear cut (stripped of all trees) is unceded aboriginal territory.

The environmental movement, by direct and militant struggle, has forced the NDP government to make some changes, including an increase in protected areas, and some regulations, at least on paper. But these measures are in no way enough to protect real biodiversity or the health of the fishery. And the limited new regulations are already being gutted in a bid to improve forest company productivity.

The forest company-IWA-Glen Clark alliance would have us believe that environmentalists are a threat to worker's livelihoods. In fact, the new "green" regulations meant that forest companies were even forced to create some new jobs and skills!

Regulations are not job killers, but the ceaseless drive for productivity is. Seeking more ways to make a buck, corporations sometimes move to low-wage economies. But when they are constrained to pay union wages, as in British Columbia, they move to replace labour with machines. The forest companies can now cut far more trees with far fewer workers and the IWA membership has been cut in half. Meanwhile, the current cut rate is estimated at 130 to 150 per cent of what is sustainable.

British Columbia was founded as a company province. Crown land (never ceded by treaty) was granted to timber companies in the form of tree farm licences. The earth and forest, which should be the common treasury of all, became the private treasury of companies like Mac Blo, Interfor, Fletcher Challenge, Slocan Forest Products and

other local and multi-national corporations. Reds and Greens have common cause in challenging the tenure of these companies over our resources.

Direct action?

Encouraged by Premier Clark's statements, logging industry supporters have turned to counter-blockades, threats and acts of violence. Even the Woodworkers union mounted a blockade of its own against opponents of logging in the Stoltmann wilderness. The police chose not to interfere with these blockades or charge any of the participants. What a contrast with the *Mounties'* willingness to clear women and children from the Slocan Valley community blockades.

The government also gave funds to native band councils that took a pro-logging stand, fuelling the violence. Nuxalk nation band council chiefs led a mob of anti-environmentalists to attack the MV Starlet, a fishing boat owned by local environmentalists invited to the region by Nuxalk activists, and burned a flag given by one of the hereditary chiefs.

The Woodworkers union has become a public relations front for the companies. But the companies are not returning the workers' favour. Workers rallied to back Interfor against the environmentalists, but that didn't stop the company from making layoffs. Fletcher Challenge thanked its anti-environmentalist workers by demanding unlimited flexibility in work scheduling, provoking a strike.

Those on the left who argue that the ecosystem cannot be militantly defended as long as there is unemployment are wrong. But it *does* matter what kind of an alternative the ecological movement poses. If Canada's environmentalists continue to seek alliances with "Green" capital, and speak of a future constituted by small business, tourism and [poorly paid] service sector jobs, then they are unlikely to attract local workers and their communities.

Fighting for an ecological future means questioning the entire existing organisation of society. Re-organising work (a shorter work week with no loss in pay). Expanding public services and the social safety net. Expanding democratic community control and recognising First Nations rights to sovereignty.

In other words, to achieve its objective, "Greens" must join with the left in a common challenge to the stranglehold of capital. And whatever the limits of the environmental movement, "reds" need to support "green" direct action campaigns. ★

Source: Summer 97 issue of Socialist Challenge (see p.36)

The 1997 São Paulo Forum

Fifty-eight parties from 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries participated in the 7th São Paulo Forum, the annual gathering of the continental left.

José Martínez Cruz

The first São Paulo Forum took place in 1990, at the initiative of Brazil's PT. Their goal was to seek alternatives to globalisation, at a time when, more than ever before, it was clear that no left-wing project can exist in a purely national framework.

This year's festival had a festive atmosphere, thanks to the recent electoral success of Mexico's PRD (see pages 2-7), El Salvador's FMLN and Haiti's Lavalas movement.

This year's meeting took place in Porto Alegre, the south Brazilian town famous for its "participative budget" and other innovative policies of the Workers Party (PT), which has governed locally since 1989. Citizens can receive information, give their opinion, discuss and decide on the main elements of the municipal budget. Under *Prefeito* Raúl Pont, a prominent leader of the left in the PT, the town symbolises transparent government in the interests of the majority, with participatory democracy, pluralism and tolerance.

The town gave the Forum a very warm welcome. Though the majority of local and national media, particularly television, either ignored the event or focused on the most conflictive moments. The Forum was preceded by a range of well-attended events, including a homage to Che Guevara, and the launch of the Landless Movement (MST)'s new magazine *Terra* (Land)

Today's challenges

Workshops included racism • solidarity with Africa • the indigenous question and the left • the new challenges facing indigenous people today • autonomy and self-determination • cultural identity and land • territorial rights, pluri-ethnic and plurinational states • human rights • municipal politics • local government and democratic socialist strategy • the city as a space for citizenship and democracy • the participatory budget • municipal management, social movements and innovative public policies • environment • ecosocialism v. neo-liberalism • agrarian reform and resistance to neo-liberalism • culture • democratising the media • small and medium enterprises • the role of Members of Parliament in the construction of alternative politics • women and economic policy • Christians, and youth.

The workshop on women was particularly well prepared and well attended. It challenged the parties present to explain the limited recognition of gender questions in

their programmes and practical activities.

The strategic questions facing the left were discussed very unevenly. Obviously, with the recent electoral successes in a number of countries, there was much discussion on the experiences of the continent's larger progressive parties in their management of cities like Montevideo, San Salvador, Belo Horizonte, Belem and Porto Alegre. Delegates also discussed the challenges facing C. Cárdenas, the new PRD mayor of Mexico City.

Unfortunately, the idea that the left can govern responsibly, without financial disaster or a political dead-end, and continue gaining electoral support, tended to confuse the debate on the strategic perspective for taking power. Though, obviously, experiences like Porto Alegre show ways of accumulating forces and experience, within an explicitly socialist perspective, disputing hegemony in all areas of the political confrontation, and maintaining a process of popular participation which goes beyond the institutional mechanisms, and ultimately questions the legitimacy of neo-liberal policies.

Two major currents of the left were present in the conference: those who call for "realistic" activity, accepting the framework of globalisation, and restricting themselves to reforms, and those organisations which have kept their socialist orientation and class independence, refuse to renounce revolution, but accept the possibility of participation in institutional politics, in an attempt to link the political and social struggles, in a process of accumulation of forces which will make it possible to modify the international panorama.

A radical upturn

The current period is characterised by a growing number of workers struggles: the general strike in Ecuador, the teachers strike in Colombia, land occupations by the landless and roofless of Brazil's MST, the upsurge in Argentina, the student strikes in Nicaragua, guerrilla action in Colombia, the marches of the Paraguayan campesinos, Cuban resistance to the *yanqui* blockade, to say nothing of the general strike in Korea and the war of liberation in Zaire. All these struggles show the increasing resistance of the peoples to neo-liberal policies.

This being so, the documents elaborated by the Forum's Working Group, made up of the largest parties, failed to capture the dynamic of popular and democratic alternatives to neo-liberalism, and the significance of these struggles in the socialist perspective. The Working Group documents certainly contain important reflections on diverse aspects of the social, political and economic situation which we are living in Latin America, but their extreme generality was frustrating for most of the parties present.

The São Paulo Forum does not consider itself to be a "New International," with a high level of political and ideological agreement. Nevertheless, the range of references and perspectives is wider each year. And this is making it increasingly difficult to reach agreement, and even more difficult to pass any kind of resolution by consensus.

Despite the growing contradictions within the Forum, it again showed itself to be a plural, open space, allowing reflection on our diverse political situations, and encouraging exchange, contacts and co-operation. In the country where the Forum is held, this co-operation obviously goes beyond the narrow circles of full-time party workers, involving militants in each host country. This has been particularly true in El Salvador (1996) and Porto Alegre. It will surely be true in Mexico City, which is preparing to host the 8th Forum in the summer of 1998.

The left is a minority

In other words, the São Paulo Forum has a contradictory character. It is a tool forged by the co-operation of diverse and unequal forces, linked by their democratic and popular struggle. But clearly socialist forces do not have a majority in the Forum today. Still, the debates between left and right in the forum are often similar to those inside the larger parties, like Mexico's PRD, Uruguay's Frente Amplio, and Brazil's PT.

The documents produced by this 7th Forum are a reference, but by no means are they binding on the participating organisations. On a number of themes, the final document will only be issued at the end of the year, after further consultations between a number of parties.

The final declaration was successfully amended from the floor to include references to the socialist perspective, anti-imperialist struggle, the gender question, and the diversity of forms of struggle and resistance to neo-liberalism. The document stresses the need to "create conditions for universalising the struggles of the excluded in a system which advances through the globalisation of the power of the powerful... Our goal is an alternative globalisation from that of those 'above.' A globalisation by and for those 'from below,' which will give us the energy, the echo, the flexibility and the intelligence necessary to overcome completely the affront which neo-liberalism represents for our peoples."

The declaration covers in 136 points themes on which there is no consensus in the Forum. Themes like the role of the state; socialisation and control over national wealth; the role of new technologies; foreign investment; macro-economic stability; strengthening national currencies and economic equilibrium.

During the debate, the declaration was

amended to incorporate passages on new social movements; the emergence of indigenous struggles and excluded sectors; the role and weight of the foreign and domestic debt and the importance of campaigns against its repayment; the need for the Forum to assume a co-ordinating role in continental campaigns against repression, militarisation, for political prisoners, and concerning the thousands of "disappeared."

The sharpest debates came at the end of the Forum, and concerned those organisations which have opted for armed struggle. But a serious discussion of institutional violence, and the various forms of resistance which peoples who reject the legalism of the powerful can take was avoided. Mexico's PRD vetoed the invitation of the Basque group Herri Batasuna as an observer to the Forum, following the murder of a Basque town councillor for Spain's ruling conservative party by ETA. The forum finally condemned the Peruvian regime's armed assault on the Japanese embassy, but still refused to accept the Tupac Amaru movement (MRTA) into the Forum. This, together with the refusal to admit the Argentine group Todos por la Patria, illustrates the contradiction within the Forum. The formal argument that any member organisation can veto the admission of any new group from the same country is used to avoid any discussion in open plenary, in which the Forum as a whole could decide to accept the organisation in question.

While more and more obstacles are created to prevent the participation of guerrilla organisations, parties in government, and neo-liberal medicine has become more guarded, uncritical treatment from the Forum's most influential members, in the Working Group. This was demonstrated this year in the Forum's treatment of the Partido de Liberación Dominicana, Panama's PRD, Venezuela's MAS and Chile's Socialist Party (PS).

Conclusion

The 7th Forum revealed the bright lights and the dark shadows of the Latin American left. In this epoch of regroupment and reorganisation of anti-capitalist forces, this pluralist international space has a progressive role to play. It is clearly in the interest of revolutionary Marxist forces to maintain a forum where we can meet with other democratic and popular forces, and discuss and exchange experience in a pluralist environment.

But it is also necessary to encourage a greater convergence between those organisations which might see themselves as the left wing of the Forum. Not just so that we can present ourselves in a more coherent way, but

so that we can encourage greater political activity in the struggles which are developing across the continent.

Like a number of international meetings which have taken place in recent months, the São Paulo Forum shows the contradictory progression of a left which, with errors and doubts, is starting to re-accumulate experiences which can help us reorganise our forces at the international level. ★



Brazilian landless leader murdered

On August 12 a Brazilian federal judge dismissed murder charges against four young men from wealthy families who fatally assaulted Galdino Jose dos Santos, a leader of the Pataxo indigenous nation, in Brasilia on April 20. Dos Santos was in the capital for demonstrations by the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and for meetings with officials, including President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The defendants found Dos Santos asleep at a bus stop, doused him in gasoline and set him on fire; he died after he was taken to a hospital. Judge Mello reduced the charges to "causing bodily harm," saying that the defendants didn't realise that dos Santos might die. Two of the accused are sons of Brazilian judges.

Meanwhile, the MST has announced that it will resume land occupations in Pontal do Paranapanema, in the western part of Sao Paulo state, despite threats of violence by landowners. The organisation, with 2.5 million members, uses land invasions as a way of forcing agrarian reform measures. The MST had observed a three-month truce in Pontal de Paranapanema after promises by the state government to get land for thousands of campesinos (peasants).

On Aug. 9 Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, former president of the leftist Workers Party (PT), proposed that Brazil's governors should emulate the tactics of the MST and of Sao Paulo's homeless organisations. State governments have come up short following tax law changes and wage increases they gave to end a strike by police in 10 states. Saying that a "passive position doesn't get you anywhere," Lula suggested that the governors should occupy the presidential palace, Planalto, to demand federal assistance. ★

Source: Committees In Solidarity with Latin America & the Caribbean (CISLAC), PO Box A431, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia. www.peg.apc.org/~stan/cislac/

Indigenous strike in Ecuador

Ecuador's indigenous and *campesino* (peasant) movement shut down the country on Aug. 11 and 12. Members of the state-run Campesino Social Security and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) blockaded highways to demand that the government go forward with a Constitutional Assembly during 1997.

Congress had postponed the calling of the Assembly, which was approved in a referendum on May 25 of this year, until August 1998. The protesters are preparing to build for a "social uprising" if the government

doesn't agree to indigenous and campesino demands for the Constitutional Assembly to be held on Oct. 12, and for neither the executive or legislative bodies to be invited.

Deputy Napoleon Saltos of the New Country-Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement (NP) insists that protests will continue until October when the "Popular Assembly" called by broad social sectors is to be held.

Saltos explained that by seeking to postpone the Assembly, President Fabian Alarcón was hoping people would lose interest in the process. Because of this, said Saltos, the grassroots sectors would continue with their plans for a parallel alternative Assembly this October.

NP deputy Leonidas Iza, has asked for Church mediation, "to help overcome the gap between the government and the social sectors, who are angry that the transition government has failed to fulfil the mandate of the national protests" in February that drove out President Abdalá Bucaram.

CONAIE representative Antonio Vargas criticised police and military repression during the strike; at least one person was killed, eight were injured and 20 were arrested. ★

Argentine general strike

Despite a lack of active support from opposition political parties, a national general strike staged by Argentina's opposition unions on August 14 shut down public transport and schools in Buenos Aires and several provinces.

The strike was called by the Congress of Argentine Workers (CTA) and the Movement of Argentine Workers (MTA); it was not endorsed by the pro-government General Workers Confederation (CGT). Strike organisers had harsh words for CGT leaders, who recently pacted with the government to sign a labour flexibilisation agreement that strips power from unions and grants more flexibility to companies to hire and fire workers.

This was the fifth general strike against the government's economic policies since President Carlos Saul Menem was re-elected in 1995.

Argentina's two main opposition political parties — the Radical Civic Union (UCR) and the centre-left Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO) formally endorsed the strike, but did not actively participate in protest action. The centre-left daily Clarin suggested that the new alliance was "more concerned about showing itself as guaranteeing economic stability than about participating in a strike against the [neoliberal economic] model."

Clarin reported nearly 70 highway blockades across the country, and more than 30 strike soup kitchens and demonstrations. Interior Minister Carlos Corach estimated

"only" 27% of workers stayed away from work. The main adhesion to the strike came from workers affiliated with the CTA and the MTA—primarily state workers, metalworkers, drivers, judicial workers, teachers and university professors. By contrast, employees of banks and private businesses—mainly affiliated with the CGT—were at work as usual. Corach called the strike "the least successful and most violent of all the strikes" against Menem. He said there were 278 conflicts, including highway blockades, bus burnings (184 buses were damaged), demonstrations and four telephoned threats. Corach reserved his harshest criticism for

Buenos Aires mayor Fernando de la Rúa of the UCR announced that city employees would not get their pay docked if they participated in the strike.

While in other provinces roadblocks were staged by unemployed workers and unionists, in the area around Buenos Aires it was groups of radical leftist activists who blocked major thoroughfares. In the area around La Plata, capital of Buenos Aires province, about 50 militants of the leftist group Quebracho burned several buses and clashed with some 200 police agents, who used tear gas and rubber bullets; 75 people were arrested and a young woman was injured by a rubber bullet. ★

Source: *Clarín*, 15 August 1997

Feminist brigade to Cuba

An International Feminist Brigade will travel to Cuba from September 20 to October 2, 1997. This first of its kind Brigade is jointly sponsored by the Federation of Cuban Women and the US group Radical Women. In Havana, *brigadistas* will meet with women's organizations, government officials, and activists from the lesbian/gay, Afro-Cuban and Chinese-Cuban communities. Visits will be arranged to schools, day care centres, hospitals, housing projects and other sites of interest in the capital. Two days spent in nearby provinces will provide *brigadistas* a view of conditions in the countryside and an opportunity to work alongside Cubans in the fields and factories.

A highlight of the tour will be a two-day Solidarity Conference in Havana where *brigadistas*, Cuban activists and community leaders will plan international actions to defend and support Cuba's right to build a socialist country.

Crucial time for Cuban women

The lives of the Cuban people are harshly affected by US policies of harassment and the vicious embargo. Additionally, the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc has deprived Cuba of its major trading partners and resulted in severe shortages of medicine, paper

goods, cooking oil, gas, and building materials.

Cuban women are most affected by the economic troubles. Factory closures have increased unemployment among women. As a way to sustain their families, many are turning to low-paid domestic labour — cooking, cleaning, taking care of children — or making crafts. Moreover, the rise of international tourism has revived the sexual exploitation of women. On top of all this, women continue to be the main care givers and organizers in the home. ★

For more information, write to: Feminist Brigade, 5018 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118 USA, Phone 206 722-6057, Fax 206 723-7691, Email: franrose@aol.com

Roberto ¡Presente!

Fourth International supporter Roberto McLean Torres was shot dead by paramilitaries in Barranquilla, Colombia, as he returned home on the evening of July 11th. He would have been 39 years old in November. His last 24 years were dedicated to the struggle, in youth, student and political organisations. He won a reputation as a struggler. A proud black Colombian, Roberto fought to bring basic services to his barrio.

His struggle for a better society brought him to the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria*, the Colombian section of the Fourth International. As a revolutionary, he tried always to promote unity in action. When the section dissolved, he concentrated on regional initiatives. He was the Organisational Secretary of Barranquilla's *Movimiento Ciudadano* (Citizens Movement), which may soon win its third term in the town hall. Roberto brought all his creativity and determination to the creation and nurturing of organic structures of popular distrust of the two-party system. His strength was in organisational work.

He was a delegate to the Fourth International's 11th World Congress, and a number of other international gatherings.

His only sin was to belong to the political opposition in a country which, unlike Roberto, cannot tolerate differences. A country with one of the worst records in human rights violations, the second most violent country in the Americas, and the third most corrupt country in the world.

The Fourth International deeply regrets his passing away, and shares the pain of his departure with his family and companions. ★

Canada: Socialist Action conference

Speakers at the second Socialist Action conference, in Toronto Canada on Jul 18-20, described "the state of the fight back against the neo-conservative agenda" in the Canadian state. Socialist Action Editorial Board member Joe

Flexer emphasized the need to expose the 'debt' myth, and to challenge the present union and NDP mis-leaders with the demand for general strike action to bring down the bosses' governments and fight for a Workers' Agenda.

Montreal SA member Robbie Mahood explained "Why Socialists Defend Québec's Right to Independence", and how threats to partition Québec are part and parcel of the bosses' agenda to divide working people while escalating the social cutbacks and the rate of exploitation.

Jeff Mackler, National Secretary of Socialist Action in the United States, spoke on "The CIA - Crack Cocaine Connection" and "The Relevance of Trotskyism in the Fight for Socialism Today".

SA members voted to focus their activities on mass action against Bill 136 in Ontario, and the capitalist agenda of cutbacks and union busting across the country; preparing solidarity for a possible postal workers' strike this Fall, and in support of Quebec self-determination; and attempting to build class struggle rank and file groups in the unions and the NDP to fight the right wing leadership and to advance a Workers' Agenda.

Socialist Action has members in Kingston, Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener, Guelph, North Bay and other Ontario centres, as well as other Canadian cities. The conference was attended by about 30 militants, including guests from the USA. [BW/JD] ★

Cuba Youth Festival a big success

The 14th World Youth and Students Festival, held in Havana, Cuba from July 28 to August 5, was a big success, surpassing organisers' initial expectations. A total of 12,326 delegates from 132 countries attended, representing more than 2,000 national organisations.

The Festival represented both continuity with previous such events -organised by the Communist Party youth groups and organisations in their orbit- as well as new world political realities and the recognition that today's progressive youth movements are characterised by a broad pluralism.

Attendance was greatest from the Americas. The U.S. delegation was the largest international contingent -849 delegates- despite White House threats of jail sentences and fines for violating the ban on travel to Cuba. Then came Mexico (with 644 delegates) and Argentina (561); large delegations were also present from Germany, Angola, North Korea, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Spain, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. Delegations from Eas-

tern Europe, including countries where the ex-CPs are in power, were noticeably weak.

In addition to a wide range of social and cultural activities, political discussion and debate marked the 10-day event, both as part of overall Festival activities as well as through dozens of impromptu meetings organised by different participating national organisations. Thus, roundtable discussions were held on the Middle East, Kurdistan, the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas, gay rights, feminism and women's issues and ecology, as well as meetings promoting Stalin's legacy called by the Belgian Workers Party and other groups from a Maoist background or those held by supporters of the Fourth International from Europe and Latin America.

While traditional Festival themes such as world peace and the rights of young people were included, major emphasis was placed on anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles and support for revolutionary Cuba. The example and timeliness of Che Guevara was a constant, from the opening day march to the closing rally. All these issues, as well as a heavily applauded call for defending women's rights everywhere, were approved in a final declaration read at the 35,000 strong closing rally in the Pan American Stadium.

The final declaration also ratified the commitment to continue the Festival movement, without defining any concrete organisation forms such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Proposals on where to hold the next festival have thus far come from Russia, Palestine and South Africa, but neither a place nor date have yet been set.

All Havana was organised for the Festival. Delegates stayed with Cuban families, thus allowing them to get a first-hand view of life in Cuba and interact with the local population in neighbourhood parties and visits to schools, workplaces, childcare centres and hospitals. Thousands visited the provinces in a special Solidarity train and by bus and plane. Delegates' registration fee and special fund raising activities financed the Festival, with the Cuban Young Communist Union providing the efficient organisational muscle. ★

by Fernando Zamora

Marxist magazines meet

The fourth Latin American Conference of Marxist Magazines took place on May 1-4 in Florianopolis, Brazil. The meeting was a continuation of interchange and joint work begun in May 1995, where an Interchange Protocol was begun among several Marxist magazines from the region.

★ Latin America

The meeting was organised by the Brazilian groups *Praxis* and *Critica Marxista*, and various departments of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. The meeting was sponsored by the Santa Catarina regional CUT, the PT/SC, the PCdB, PCB and the unions APUFSC, SINERGIA, and the Doctors' Union of Santa Catarina.

The theme for the 1998 meeting will be "150 Years After the Communist Manifesto." Argentinean magazines will investigate the possibility of holding the meeting in Buenos Aires. A bi-lingual publication of the conference papers was also planned, together with the pre-faces from the earlier editions published in the region.

The following magazines from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay participated in the conference or joined the list for interchange and communication:

- Trabajo y Capital, Uruguay, address in Brazil Guillermo Faldadori fola@cce.ufpr.br tel(041)26322913
- Periferias, Argentina, Av.Rivadavia 2358 5 'B' izq. (1034) Buenos Aires, tel/fax (541)9543671/72 asambi@microtar.com.ar
- Principios, Brazil, R.Admiran Barbosa 53, Bela Vista, Sao Paulo CEP 01318-020, agrincipios@ax.ibase.org.ar
- Critica Marxista, Brazil, A/C Prof. Caio Navarro de Toledo, IFCH, Dto. de C.Politicas, Unicamp, 13081, Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Revistas marxistas cubanas en Brasil, Ileana Hodge Limonta (Cuba), Rego Freitas 501 ap 32, V. Buarque, Sao Paulo, CEP 0122-010, Brazil
- Alfaguara, Uruguay, Casilla de Correos 1616, CP 11000, Montevideo, Uruguay, Telefono (5892)959141/558431, Fax (5892)964256
- Raizes, Brazil, Univ.Fed.Paraiba, CH, Mestrado en Sociologia, Av.Aprigio Veloso 882, 58.109.970 Campina Gde. PB (083)3101051
- Doxa, Argentina, Maria A.Gutierrez, Cordoba 559 2 Piso (1414) Buenos Aires, tel/fax (541)7725463, mariagut@clacso.edu.ar
- El Cerebro de los Vivos, Argentina, Rivadavia 2358 5 izq. (1034) Buenos Aires, tel (541) 9543673/ 7715463/ 9513416 aaboron@mail.retina.ar
- Praxis, Brazil, Av.Alfonso Pena 748 sala 1613, Centro, Belo Horizonte, MG (5531) 2222493 rvpraxis@gold.com.br y eliton.azevedo@gold.com.br

Electronic Viewpoint

Some of the articles for the next issue of **International Viewpoint** are already viewable at our web site. We are slowly adding a downloadable archive of articles published in previous issues

www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.html

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The following member magazines were unable to attend.

- Critica de Nuestro Tiempo, Argentina, Casilla de Correo 3509, Correo Central (1000) Buenos Aires
- La Marea, Argentina
- Apuntes del Mannana, Argentina, Piedras 989/95 (1070) Cap.Federal, tel/fax 3311480
- Cuadernos de Debate and Praga, Brazil
- El Rodaballo, Argentina, Dean Funes 446 (1214) Buenos Aires, tel 93225533
- Cuadernos del Sur, Argentina, Casilla de Correos 167, 6b, (1406) Buenos Aires

The following magazines were urged to continue and deepen their involvement with the network

- Salud Problema y Debate, Argentina, Terrada 237, 1406 C.Federal, tel/fax (541)7474074/8231372
- Teoria & Praxis, Brazil, Rua C 126, Qd 235 Nro 8 Jardim America Cep 74225, tel 287344/22946799 Goiana
- Brasil Revolucionario, Brazil
- Espacios, Ecuador, Casilla Postal 17107169 Quito, tel

506175

- Actuel Marx, France, CNRS, 19 Boulevard du Midi 92000 Nanterre, tel (1)47245219 fax(1)469950351
- Le Marxisme d'Aujourd'hui, France, BP 276 F 38407 St.Martin-d'Heres, Cedex
- Vientos del Sur, Apartado Postal 70176 Mexico 04510 DF, fax 6716873 andraca@servidor.unam.mx
- Against the Current, USA, 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210, (313)84110180, fax (313) 8418884, cfc@igc.apc.org, Home page <http://www.labornet.org/solidarity>
- Papeles de la Fim, c/Alameda 5 2da izq, 28014 Madrid, tel 4201388 fax 42002004
- Alternatives Sud, Belgium, Av.Snt.Gertrude 5,B-1348 Louvain-La-Neuve

Further information is available from the secretary of the network, currently the magazine *Alfaguara* in Uruguay, or via the **PRAXIS** web page.

rvpraxis@gold.com.br y eliton.azevedo@gold.com.br

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No.1 The Place of Marxism in History. Ernest Mandel (40 pp. £2, \$3.50, 20 FF)

No. 2 The Chinese Revolution - I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook. Pierre Rousset (32 pp. £2, \$3.50, 20 FF)

No. 3 The Chinese Revolution - II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power. Pierre Rousset (48 pp. £2.50, \$4, 25 FF)

No. 4 Revolutionary Strategy Today. Daniel Bensaïd (36 pp. £2, \$3.50, 20 FF)

No. 5 Class Struggle and Technological Change in Japan since 1945. Muto Ichiyo (48 pp. £2.50, \$4, 25 FF)

No. 6 Populism in Latin America. Adolfo Gilly, Helena Hirata, Carlos M. Vilas, and the PRT (Argentina), introduced by Michael Löwy (40 pp. £2, \$3.50, 20 FF)

No. 7/8 Market, Plan and Democracy: the Experience of the So-Called Socialist Countries. Catherine Samary (64pp. £3, \$5, 30FF)

No. 9 The Formative Years of the Fourth International (1933-1938). Daniel Bensaïd (48 pp. £2.50, \$4, 25 FF)

No. 10 Marxism and Liberation Theology. Michael Löwy (40pp £2, \$3.50, 20 FF)

No.11/12 The Bourgeois Revolutions. Robert Lochhead (72pp. £4, \$6, 40FF)

No. 13 The Spanish Civil War in Euzkadi and Catalonia 1936-39. Miguel Romero (48pp. £2.50, \$4, 25 FF)

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France's Socialist government

Unlike Britain's New Labour, France's Socialist Party actually made some radical promises before winning last May's parliamentary election. But over the summer, action on these promises has been mixed at best.

La rentrée, the first weeks of September, may set the tone for a new period of social confrontation.

Raghu Krishnan

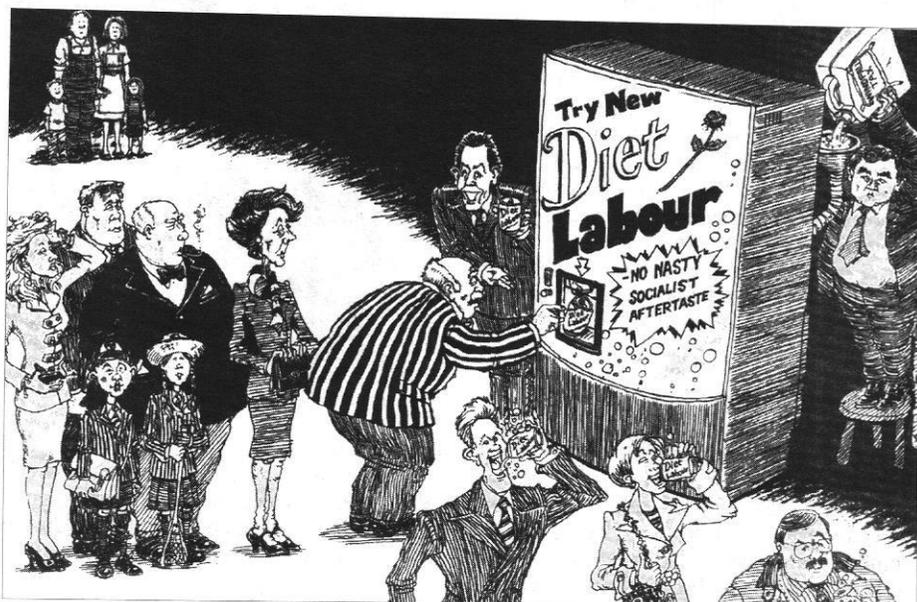
French President Jacques Chirac and his outgoing right-wing alliance government were handed a major defeat in legislative elections held on May 25 and June 1. The rightist alliance (made up of the neo-Gaullist RPR and the centre-right UDF) received only 36% of votes (the lowest mainstream right-wing score since the late 1950s). Their parliamentary presence fell from 484 to 255 in the 577-seat lower house, the National Assembly. The neo-fascist National Front (FN) improved on its 1993 score, polling just under 15% and winning one seat in the new Assembly.

The left-wing alliance, led by new Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's Socialist Party (PS), returns to power after suffering a major defeat in 1993. This time, the Left alliance includes the Green Party (making its first appearance in the Assembly) and relies on the Communist Party (PCF) for its majority.

Strange as it seems, Jacques Chirac called these elections nearly a year before the required date. The Right felt it had a much better chance of winning elections now than in 1998. Polls taken in late April after the dissolution predicted they would win, albeit with a reduced majority. The free fall of Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé in the polls since late 1995 seemed to be levelling out.

The right-wing and its big business backers thought the time was ripe to renew the government's mandate. Delaying such a renewal, they argued, would mean going another year without implementing aggressive austerity measures. They knew that it would be utter folly to go the polls in 1998 after implementing such measures in 1997.¹

Chirac was preparing to use a new streamlined right-wing majority government, over which he would have more control, to carry out a major "neo-liberal" turn.² Public sector cuts and labour market restructuring are increasingly demanded by employers and financial circles, to say nothing of the letter and spirit of the 1991 Maastricht Treaty on European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Maastricht deadlines for the single



currency, to be adopted in 1999, were approaching fast. The sooner a shock therapy could be applied, the better.³ Chirac also wanted to cut short investigations into corruption involving his party, the RPR, especially in the ranks of the Paris party machine he built up over many years as the city's mayor.

On all counts, Chirac's cynical and monarch-like manoeuvre has failed.⁴ His stature has been diminished accordingly as the country settles for the first time into a "cohabitation" between a right-wing president and

a left-wing lower house.

Thanks to France's 1958 Constitution, Chirac will have the right to dissolve the National Assembly again in April 1998. The Right sees this as an opportunity to take advantage of the crisis it expects will soon engulf the new Left government. Alternatively, Chirac could call new presidential elections, which would have the same effect, since a re-elected right-wing president could then organise new legislative elections. Many right-wing leaders are leaning towards the presidential option, in the hope of getting rid of Chirac and the Socialists.⁵

The new mood

The victory for the Socialist Party (PS) alliance can be seen as a direct if rather "imperfect" extension of the strike and social movement that rocked the country in November and December 1995. That movement — the biggest since May 1968 — forced the Juppé government to abandon parts of a reform package aimed at attacking public sector pensions, and cutting back the railway and health care systems.

Most of all, however, December 1995 was a major boost for social movements, trade unions and critical left-wing economic and political thinking. A striking feature was the majority support these protest actions received in opinion polls.⁶

This new volatile social and political climate was exemplified by the outbreak through 1996 and 1997 of confrontational struggles in atypical sectors, such as among truck drivers, actors and musicians, bank workers and hospital interns.⁷

Another example was the mass movement that developed earlier this year against the second wave of draconian immigration legislation introduced since the Right's victory in 1993 (the Debré laws preceded by

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★ France

the 1993 Pasqua laws). Debate and passage of this xenophobic legislation coincided with municipal election gains for the FN. This sparked another round of protests and organising — against both the FN and government complicity with it. The movement signalled the beginnings of a break with 15 years of failed attempts to weaken the FN's appeal by toughening immigration and citizenship legislation.⁸ For this rebirth of a radical anti-fascist and anti-racist consciousness in a significant minority of the population, the French owe a great deal to the courageous struggle of organised groups of undocumented immigrants, the *sans-papiers*, which began in earnest in 1996.

A further example of the new climate was the success of a feminist organising conference attended by 2000 women and men earlier in the year.

Can Jospin deliver?

How well does this new government represent the aspirations and dynamism of the different forces that have burst onto the scene since late 1995? How far can it be expected to accompany and lead the dynamic of December 1995 and the election victory, rather than disappoint and break it? In answering these questions, the first error to avoid is that of drawing hasty comparisons between the PS victory in France and the Blairite Labour victory in Britain.

In the first place, the social and political situation in France does not resemble that of post-Thatcher Britain. It was precisely in response to the beginnings of a Thatcherite turn that the French unleashed the December 1995 protest movement and threw the Right out of office.⁹

In the second place, the PS has not made a Blairite turn, although it did oversee France's neo-liberal shift from the mid-1980s onwards. The Blair victory against the Tories was also his victory over "old Labour" and the critical Left. This is not true of the PS victory in France. The difference between the two leaders' approaches was apparent at the meeting of European social democracy held in Sweden in early June. Jospin is on the left — and Blair is on the right — of a "social democratic" movement that looks more and more like Clinton's Democratic Party.¹⁰

In recent times, the PS has been nursing its wounds from its 1993 electoral drubbing and adopting a more humble profile in the face of protest and strike movements that have jealously guarded their independence and voiced their criticisms of the PS record in office in the 1980s and early 1990s. As a result, it has been more permeable to critical thinking around such key questions as European construction, privatisation, unemployment, taxation, ecology, immigration and women's involvement in political life.

One need only look at the PS election campaign and the initial pronouncements of the new government to see that we are dealing with a political dynamic that is at odds with the neo-liberal and authoritarian measures being applied almost everywhere else.¹¹

The PS campaigned for and has announ-



ced the suspension of the *Superphénix* fast breeder nuclear reactor and mammoth Rhine-Rhone canal project. It campaigned for and has announced an increase in the minimum wage. These are real gains.

Promises...

To reduce unemployment, the PS campaigned for a reduction of the working week to 35 hours with no loss in pay and the state-funded creation of 700 thousand jobs for youth. It also campaigned for: a review of and probable halt to all privatisations in process and under consideration; a halt to public sector layoffs; the re-establishment of the law requiring government approval for "economic" layoffs; the lowering of value-added taxes on consumer goods and increased corporate taxes; and the abrogation of new pension legislation that creates private pension funds at the expense of the (compared to other countries) generous public system.

In his inaugural speech to the National Assembly on June 19, Jospin said he would respect all these pledges, causing great consternation on the Right and in business circles.¹²

One can find fault easily enough. What immigration legislation will replace the abrogated laws? And what will become of the "illegal" immigrants not legalised in the current round?¹³ Similarly, Jospin announced that the 35-hour workweek would only be implemented by the end of the first mandate in 2002 — whereas such a reduction has to be implemented all-at-once and across-the-board to have the desired effect.

Credibility

But the main problems lie elsewhere. First, credibility. The French saw too many PS promises broken in the 1980s, and it remains to be seen if the renewed PS has abandoned the manipulative and treacherous legacy of the 1980s and of the deceased former president (and PS leader) François Mitterrand.

Second, Europe. The Maastricht single currency convergence criteria and the post-

convergence austerity-driven Stability Pact will play an overriding role in determining government policy. Lest one forget, it was a PS government that signed the Maastricht Treaty in late 1991 and campaigned stridently for the "yes" side in the referendum on Maastricht in late 1992. Progressive economic measures run the risk of being sacrificed on the altar of the single currency, since it is difficult to see how these measures can be implemented without increasing the public deficit in the short term.¹⁴

The new government's first policies have been less than encouraging. Take Jospin's renewed acceptance of the convergence criteria and the single currency Stability Pact at the Amsterdam summit of EU states in mid-June.

The PS has also betrayed what the electorate had understood was a promise to prevent the modern Renault auto plant at Vilvoord in Belgium from closing down. Since the French state holds 46 percent of Renault shares, the government could have vetoed the decision to close. But Jospin refused to do so. He argued that France no longer lived in an era of "state-administered" economies.¹⁵

Public opinion is being prepared for the "discovery" of a worse inherited deficit than the outgoing government was willing to admit. The new government might use this as a cue to abandon much of its progressive economic agenda in its September budget address.¹⁶

The European dimension

The French delegation to Amsterdam provoked a mini-crisis, by threatening not to endorse the Stability Pact. It only did sign when agreement was reached on the addition of a clause on job creation, on the holding of a jobs summit in the autumn and on the establishment of a political counterweight to the European Central Bank.¹⁷

Not much of a victory, to be sure. But the mini-crisis revealed differences within the PS itself. Not to mention the critical stance of its PCF and Green allies. It also focused attention on the difficulties faced by Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Germany, like France, is highly unlikely to meet the convergence criteria. And Kohl's tough stand on Maastricht is increasingly losing ground to the trade unions, the opposition social democrats and public opinion in general.

The Chancellor has been left with little room for manoeuvre. On the one hand, there is growing opposition within the population to the single currency. This opposition comes in both progressive and chauvinist hues. On the other, there is the unrelenting monetarist orthodoxy of the German central bank and financial circles.¹⁸

Germany and France have entered a period of ruling crises and major show-downs, of the type Britain went through in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Strict respect for the criteria is virtually impossible in the two key European Union (EU) countries and is rapidly losing favour with public opinion. Coupled with the defeat of Chirac and the Right, this makes for a window of opportunity for the Left government in France.

Will it seize this opportunity? Only time and the unfolding political and social struggles will tell. The trade unions and social movements have already declared that there will be no honeymoon with the new PS government. A rally of more than 70 thousand people was held in Paris on June 10 (at the same time as another large rally in Bonn) to demand action on unemployment.¹⁹ The Communist Party has launched a "citizens forums" initiative — hundreds of grassroots committees throughout the country that could be another vehicle for mobilising the population to force the government to keep its promises.²⁰

The European dimension will be crucial for creating a better relationship of forces for the Left in each country. Protests against the closing of the Renault car plant in Vilvoord, Belgium marked a starting point for cross-border organising. So did the pan-European march for jobs that converged from all corners of Europe to Amsterdam during the EU summit. The declaration of 331 progressive European economists against the EMU, published in newspapers across Europe on June 12, is another step in the right direction.²¹

Jospin's junior partners

For all their dynamism and combativeness, however, the forces of protest and resistance in post-1995 France are ideologically and organisationally fragmented and have not rallied around any common political project to the left of the PS.

The French Communist Party (PCF) has only benefited slightly from the new climate. It has consolidated its electorate at just under 10% and increased its seats from 23 to 38, thanks to its central involvement in recent struggles and changes in its image and practice. But the Party seems unable to move decisively out of the electoral stagnation and decline that have plagued it over the last two decades.²²

The Party will continue to have great difficulties making inroads on its own as a credible political alternative in the new trade union and social movement sectors and among youth. This is partly a result of the collapse of the "socialist bloc", and partly due to the decline of sectors of the economy where the PCF's working class base was strongest and most effective. It is also in part a result of the suspicion with which the Party is viewed due to its former bureaucratic practices, and in part a function of its own internal divisions and lack of clarity.

A majority wants to modernise the party's image and has opened it up to exchanges with forces to its left and to its right. This project includes frequent vague references to "transforming" the party and "going to the citizens". It has changed the party's stance on key issues such as immigration, bringing it more in line with the demands of grassroots movements. Party leader Robert Hue has undertaken a critical review of the party's past. This majority's attitude toward the PS is ambiguous — a desire to govern along with it, mixed with principled political mistrust, fear of being cut off from its own

base and of losing further electoral ground to the PS.

There is also a "conservative old guard," with a hostile attitude to other forces on the left. This current's loyalties are with former leader Georges Marchais.

A third current, the *Refondateurs* (Refounders), based primarily in the Marseilles region, has gone furthest towards recognising the need for a new "radical pole" in French politics to the left of the PS and with direct links to the social movements.²³

For now, all three currents retain an overriding loyalty to the Party. Despite the party's internal divisions, there have been no significant defections into the neo-liberal orbit of Western European social democracy and the

centre-left. This contrasts with the situation in neighbouring countries, and makes the PCF as a whole a central player in the creation of a genuine left alternative.

In the new political landscape, the party has opted to balance ministerial participation in the PS government with a call to its base and the population at large to mobilise and remain vigilant. If the new government strays still further from its election promises, it will be very difficult for the PCF to maintain such an approach without sharpening divisions within its own ranks. Or falling further into the orbit of the PS and discrediting itself in the eyes of the population. This difficult test could come sooner than expected. It will provoke tremendous soul-searching within a

Unemployment initiatives this autumn

A number of initiatives are under way to continue the momentum of the European Marches against Unemployment, which culminated in a demonstration of 50,000 activists from across the continent in Amsterdam, Holland on June 14th.

- EuroMarch organisers are planning a "regional" demonstration in Luxembourg to coincide with the Luxembourg Summit on Employment of European heads of state on 20-21 November. They hope to attract 3-4000 militants, mostly from a 250 km radius, covering Belgium, Holland, and parts of France and Germany. This and other initiatives will be discussed at an open planning meeting to be held in Luxembourg on 4-5 October.
- The European Network of Unemployed (ENU) will meet in Scotland in mid-November.
- The *Alternativa sindical* current in Italy's CGIL trade union confederation is organising a meeting of left currents in Europe's trade unions.
- Several Italian groups have organised a national and European meeting in Venice on 13 September (see p 19).
- A wide range of organisations is expected to participate in the counter-summit which will accompany the EU Summit on Employment. Some trade unions are considering participation in some sort of 'alternative' event. Activities are also planned by the networks of economists opposed to the neo-liberal strategy dominating the European Union. According to Christophe Aguiton of the EuroMarch secretariat "it is also important to organise national and local events to coincide with these initiatives, so that the whole network remains motivated and involved." [JD] ★

Sweden

Salvation for Europe's jobless?

An important conference for unemployment activists will take place in Västervik, Sweden on 3-7 September. Peter Lindgren reports.

The conference is supported by the ECG Europe network, and is a continuation of the conference in Manchester, Britain in March this year. Participants are expected from several north European countries. The stated goal is to "in a positive way share the experiences of various organisations and find means both nationally and internationally to fight unemployment".

While welcoming the initiative, the Socialist Party (Swedish section of the Fourth International) warns that the conference is unlikely to fulfil its potential.

The Salvation Army is co-sponsoring the conference, together with an unemployed organisation and the *Broders-*

kapsrörelsen ("Brotherhood movement") of the organisation of the Christian Social Democrats).

The conference will also be received at a dinner in the Town Hall and offered a tour of Västervik. It seems that relatively little time during the four days will be spent on important discussions.

On the other hand, the Social Democratic Minister of Labour, Ms Margareta Winberg, will participate - though only for one hour. She is expected a rough time since she is planning to cut the country's unemployment insurance funds. ★

For more information contact fax/☎ (+1 46) 490104 69, or e-mail <peterlindgren@swipnet.se>

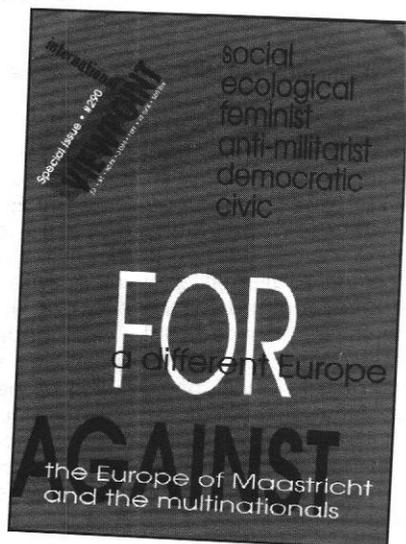
★ France

party on which the PS government depends.

As for the Greens, they sacrificed most of their political independence in exchange for an electoral agreement with the PS that brought them four seats. With this political "debt" to the PS and their modest overall election results (less than four percent), it will be difficult to resist pressures for compromise with the new government.²⁴

At the end of the day, the task of forging an inclusive radical political alternative for critical-minded sectors remains an urgent one. The goal is to force the PS government's hand and to prepare for eventual disappointment and the turbulence that follows. The PCF, the left of the PS, the Greens and points left — alongside the social movements, unions and left-wing currents in academia — all have a pivotal role to play.²⁵

Let there be no mistake. If the progressive dynamic of the past one and a half years is broken by some combination of PS betrayal and unfavourable political and economic circumstances, it will not be the



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critical Left that gains the upper hand.²⁶ If the new government cannot significantly reduce unemployment while preserving the population's social and democratic rights, the door will be left wide open for the worst elements in French political life — purveyors of a poisonous brew of mean-spirited neo-liberalism, xenophobic stupidity and baton-wielding authoritarianism.²⁷

The political Right is in disarray and smarting from a well-deserved defeat at the polls. For the moment, the "left" (in the person of Philippe Séguin) has taken over the leadership of the RPR, much to President Chirac's dismay.²⁸ But the initial signs of a rightward realignment can already be detected. The rank and file and some leaders of the main right-wing parties are already pleading openly for closer collaboration with the neo-fascist FN. The maths is not very difficult: together, the Right and far-right won a slight majority of the popular vote in the elections. The lack of a stand-down agreement between the two camps probably cost them 40 seats. Forty seats with which they would now be back in power.²⁹

The FN has adopted a long-term, national level. It increasingly sets its sights on taking power, alone or in alliance with major splits it expects from the traditional Right. In the meanwhile, it takes one municipal government after another in the south of the country. It is only kept out of parliament (it has one seat) by an undemocratic voting system. The far right has learned the lesson of December 1995, and has turned its attention to setting up FN trade unions and soup kitchens in order to boost its "social" image.

Much of the FN vote can no longer be described as a mere "protest" vote, but rather as a vote "for" the party's brand of radical xenophobic and authoritarian populism. It now has real roots in the urban, working class areas where it does best.³⁰

Within the FN itself, a realignment is underway. Long-time leader Jean-Marie Le Pen is losing ground to a slicker and politically more astute wing around California-educated Bruno Mégret. Mégret wants to take full advantage of the crisis in the mainstream Right, without abandoning the most extreme elements of the FN programme and ideology. He expects to test this strategy in key Left-controlled areas in regional elections to be held in 1998.³¹

The Left victory in France is a defeat for the Right and the neo-liberal project. It

creates real opportunities for those seeking a progressive response to the challenges of capitalist globalisation and restructuring, in the European Union and beyond. Failure, however, could pave the way for a defeat of historic proportions. ★

Notes

1. "Un 'nouvel élan' de façade," Jean-Michel Thénard, *Liberation*, April 22, 1997.
2. Ever that shameless champion of neo-liberalism, *The Economist* saw a Right victory as "a chance over the next five years to shove the country irreversibly along the path to reform." "Chirac and Juppé hope for change," *The Economist*, 24 May 1997. The following week, it expressed its dismay over first-round result in "Those mutinous French," *The Economist*, 31 May 1997.
3. Honest neo-liberal commentators now say there is no economic justification for the rapid creation of the single currency as such. Rather, the "external constraint" of the Maastricht criteria (and now the Stability Pact) has become a much-needed pretext for national governments and corporate sectors unable to use the normal democratic channels to win domestic public opinion over to their regressive programme of austerity and restructuring. For a summary of the views of neo-liberal maverick Elie Cohen, see "Dans l'état de l'euro," Bernard Cassen, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1997.
4. The institutions of the Fifth Republic concentrate tremendous power in the hands of the president. Chirac's dissolution was widely criticised as an unprecedented abuse of these powers. "Le bon plaisir," Jean-Michel Colombani, *Le Monde*, April 23, 1997.
5. "Jacques Chirac tente de rétablir son autorité sur les partis de droite, Jean Louis Saux, *Le Monde*, July 3, 1997. Chirac's seven-year mandate ends in the year 2002. The 1995 presidential campaign created a tremendous amount of bad blood within the Right. Chirac adopted a "social", more traditionally Gaullist image to outflank the front running rightist candidate for the post, the more explicitly neo-liberal Edouard Balladur, who served as prime minister between 1993 and 1995.
6. See this author's "December 1995: the first revolt against globalisation," *Monthly Review* #48, May 1996.
7. "D'un décembre à l'autre," Daniel Bensaïd, *Le Monde*, December 13, 1996.
8. "La République, l'extrême droite et nous," Gérard Noiriel, *Le Monde*, March 12, 1997.
9. There are three stages in the neo-liberal project: first, the liberalisation of capital and commodity flows; second, the privatisation of state-owned companies; third, drastic cuts to social security and labour-market regulations. France, Germany and much of continental Western Europe are seen as being "stuck" somewhere between the second and third stages. This has provoked the ire of the OECD and the World Economic Forum. See "L'Europe continentale de nouveau épinglée pour les rigidités de son marché de travail," Françoise Lazare, *Le Monde*, May 23, 1997; and "Les fausses vertus du libéralisme en Europe," Yves Durrieu, *Le Monde*, April 29, 1997.
10. "Le 'centrisme radical' de Tony Blair," Philippe Marlière, *Le Monde*, May 6, 1997; "Lionel Jospin et Tony Blair, deux gauches pour l'Europe," Olivier Schneid, *Liberation*, June 7, 1997; and "Strategie della rosa," Raffaella Menichini, *Il Manifesto*, June 7, 1997.
11. "Changeons d'avenir, changeons de majorité: nos engagements pour la France," PS election programme, *Le Monde*, May 3, 1997.
12. "Les principaux points de la déclaration du Premier ministre Lionel Jospin," *Agence France Presse*, June 19,

Ex-Yugoslav human rights seminar

The Croatian Helsinki Committee for human rights held its Second International School on Human Rights from August 24 to 31, 1997 on the island of Lastovo.

Croatian activists were joined by colleagues from Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Monte-

negro, Kosovo and Sandjak).

The primary aim of the school - financed by the Swedish Helsinki Committee and the Open Society Institute from Zagreb, Croatia - is the practical education and harmonisation of working methodology of activists for human rights in the field, and a mutual exchange of experience. [CHC/BK] ★

1997.

13. The new policy will be released in the autumn. The new Minister of the Interior, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, has said it will be "firm but generous". He is hostile to the letter and spirit of the Pasqua and Debré laws, is against expulsions, and wants Islam to acquire some type of official status, of the kind Christianity and Judaism currently enjoy. "M. Chevènement: pour une 'politique républicaine'," interviewed by Philippe Bernard and Nathaniel Herzberg, *Le Monde*, June 26, 1997. In the meantime, the national police force's (CRS) favorite sport of attacking protesting undocumented immigrants continues, as do the expulsions. "Sans-papiers: expulsion violente à Paris," *L'Humanité*, June 30, 1997.

14. Given the tremendous weight and mobility the financial sector has acquired, many wonder if any progressive economic measures are feasible without national and coordinated regional policies aimed at tightly restricting capital movements. "Quelles marges de manoeuvre pour une autre politique?," Thomas Coutrot, *Le Monde*, May 10, 1997.

15. "Renault ferme Vilvorde, désespère la gauche," Isabelle Mandraud and Hervé Nathan, *Libération*, June 30, 1997. Renault shares rose 13 percent following the announcement of the factory closing.

16. "Lionel Jospin face à un lourd déficit des comptes publics," Laurent Mauduit, *Le Monde*, June 20, 1997.

17. "Amsterdam: le pacte signé mais l'emploi fait son entrée," Okba Lamrani, *L'Humanité*, June 17, 1997.

18. "Un chancelier en équilibre instable sur l'euro," Lorraine Millot, *Libération*, June 14, 1997.

19. "Le bulletin de vote ne suffit pas," R.L. and Isabelle Mandraud, *Libération*, June 11, 1997.

20. "Une initiative nationale des communistes," PCF statement, *L'Humanité*, June 10, 1997.

21. "È un abbaglio," 331 economists against the EMU, *II Manifesto*, June 12, 1997.

22. "Les communistes confortent leur influence mais butent sur le seuil symbolique des 10%," Ariane Chemin, *Le Monde*, May 27, 1997.

23. "La campagne du PCF met en concurrence deux 'lignes' très différentes," Ariane Chemin, *Le Monde*, May 22, 1997.

24. "Des députés Verts? Pour quelle politique?," François Duval, *Rouge*, May 29, 1997. Four seats also went to allies in other ecological parties. The charismatic and respected Green Party leader Dominique Voynet was made a minister, so the seat is now occupied by her non-Green alternate. Voynet and the party were initially opposed to her joining the cabinet, in the interests of maintaining a strong Green presence in the Assembly. Rumour has it that enormous pressure was brought to bear by her new PS "allies".

25. A section of former PS-leaning Left intellectuals threw their support behind the PCF in these elections, due to ongoing bitterness over the Mitterrand experience and hostility to the Socialists' pro-Maastricht stand. Most social movement and trade union leaders merely called for a vote against the Right, and hoped a Left victory would be followed by a "June 1936 scenario" in which the population would go on the offensive to force the government to act more quickly and decisively than it had planned to. See "Les intellectuels de gauche, éprouvés par la fin du mitterrandisme, se mfient du PS," Ariane Chemin and Agathe Logeat, *Le Monde*, May 9, 1997; and "À gauche du PS, on compte sur 'les gens' pour imposer le changement," Ariane Chemin and Michel Noblecourt, *Le Monde*, May 15, 1997.

26. Although divided and largely stagnant in organisational terms, the far-left and critical Left remain viable currents with a small but real presence and influence in French political life. This contrasts with the situation in most Western countries, and is linked to the persistent influence of the generation that radicalised during and in the decade following May 1968.

The critical Left is made up of small groups like the Red and Green Alternative (AREV), the Convention for a Progressive Alternative (CAP), and the left-Republican split from the PS, the Citizens Movement (MDC), which is led by the current Minister of the Interior Jean-Pierre Chevènement. The Refondateur current in the PCF can also be included in this category, as can left currents in the Green Party.

The far-left is made up of three groups of Trotskyist origin, Workers Struggle (LO), the Workers Party (PT), and the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). Of the three, the LCR is most open to working with other left groups and participating in broader social movements. It has real roots in the trade union movement, especially in new formations like SUD, the radical FSU teachers federation and the "In Struggle" wing of the CFDT confederation. Its main public spokesperson, Alain Krivine, was a key figure in the May 1968 student revolt and is well-connected to the various strands of the political, social movement and academic Left.

LO candidate Arlette Laguiller polled more than five percent in the 1995 presidential elections and the party averaged three percent in this year's legislative elections. However, LO is extremely hostile to working with other groups, going so far as to boycott the "petty-bourgeois" and "pro-PS" mobilisations against racism and fascism earlier this year. When coupled with its highly secretive and rigid internal regime and its largely demagogic, "workerist" attacks on the PS and PCF, this kind of

behaviour makes it difficult to see how it will ever translate its electoral success into a serious project for building a radical left alternative. For more information about the LO campaign and results, see <http://worldnet.fr/~lo-uci>.

The PT is the least-known and weakest of the three, although it carries some weight in the FO trade union confederation. Like LO, it is hostile to working with other groups and in social movements, although it recently compromised on its traditional Stalinophobia to build a demonstration against the Maastricht Treaty with the conservative wing of the PCF.

Taken together, the far-left and critical Left scored between five and ten percent in a large number of constituencies, and as much as 20 percent in a few places. This does not include those *Refondateur* and MDC candidates that actually won their seats.

Clearly, these forces will have to overcome their divisions if they hope to influence political life in proportion to their collective strength and the apparent receptiveness of a section of the electorate. See "Une nouvelle donne politique," C. Piquet; and "Gauche alternative, un espace significatif," Pierre François, *Rouge*, May 29, 1997. 27. Much could be said about the explosive economic and social situation in the country. Corporate profits have dramatically rebounded since 1995, yet wealth is distributed in an increasingly unequal fashion, while unemp-

loyment, part-time employment and homelessness continue to grow inexorably. See "En 1996, les grandes entreprises francaises ont retrouvé la forme," Martine Orange, *Le Monde*, April 19, 1997; "Plus de 6 millions de pauvres," Nicole Péricaut, *Libération*, June 28, 1997; and "Chômage: la maxi-hausse après les minibaisses," R.L., *Libération*, July 1, 1997.

28. "Juppé passe la main, Séguin attaque Jospin," E. Aeschmann & Gilles Bresson, *Libération*, June 28, 1997.

29. "S'allier au Front national, la dernière tentation à droite," Renaud Dély and Vanessa Schneider, *Libération*, June 19, 1997.

30. A recent book on the progression of the FN is *Le Front national en face*, M. Soudais, Flammarion 1996.

31. "Mégret fait ses offres à la droite," Rémi Broute, *L'Humanité*, June 11, 1997. Many are bewildered by the FN's deep hatred for President Chirac, who the FN has even accused of being "in the pay of French Jewry". This is linked in part to Chirac's (largely dishonest and failed) attempts to embody the anti-fascist and Bonapartist features of the Gaullist legacy. Chirac was also the chief architect of the mafia-esque world of Parisian politics and city government contracts. He is therefore a symbol for FN leaders, who like to portray themselves as anti-corruption crusaders. If the Right gets the discredited Chirac out of the way, this will eliminate another obstacle to closer co-operation with the FN.

Britain

Uniting against communalism and racism

A new campaign seeks to overcome tension between Sikh and Muslim youth in Britain's south asian diaspora. B. Skanthakumar reports

A Rally for unity among South Asian communities in Southall, London, took place on August 17th amid official celebrations of India and Pakistan's fiftieth anniversary of independence. The Rally was a response to recent tension and outbreaks of violence between gangs of Sikh and Muslim youth which has polarised both communities and introduced new difficulties to communities increasingly stratified on class lines.

The initiative against communalism drew controversy among so-called community leaders as well as Sikh organisations agitating for independence from India. The Sikh separatist (*Khalistani*) movement was prominent in protests and picketing of all celebrations of Indian independence in Britain among which it mistakenly included the August 17th event.

Violence

Several days before the Rally, the offices of the anti-racist Southall Monitoring Group (SMG) were fire-bombed and its Director, Suresh Grover, was the target of death threats and a vicious poster campaign. Fortunately no one was hurt.

The Rally was one of the first initiatives of a new organisation, SMG-Unity, which campaigns locally against communalism and racism.

The Rally was well attended. Speakers included local Labour MP, Piara Singh Khobra, and women from the large local refugee community from Somaliland.

Britain's mainstream media claims that communalism is being imported from the sub-continent into the diaspora in Britain and beyond. But according to SMG-Unity member B. Skanthakumar, "young people (usually males) drawn to

these obscurantist ideologies know little of society or politics in South Asia having been born or grown up in Britain. Few have even visited those countries.

"Instead these communal identities are appropriated to fill the void created by racism and insecurity. These political-religious movements offer an illusory 'alternative' to the daily problems of unemployment, poor and overcrowded housing, low wages and the loss of educational and recreational facilities through council cuts. They offer solidarity and support, based on communal loyalties and identity politics.

"Meanwhile, class based organisations have failed to attract and mobilise youth across ethnic and religious divides to struggle against oppression and injustice whatever its form and whomever its subject. This is the challenge ahead of SMG-Unity."

October 12th March for Unity

On October 12th, a March for Unity through Southall will take place. It will be led by the Hillingdon Hospital Strikers and accompanied by drummers from the Dhol Foundation. Current supporters include cricket player Imran Khan, authors Tariq Ali and Hanif Kureishi, and, from Indian, Indira Jaisingh and Achin Vanaik.

According to the organisers, "In facing down the reactionary forces in our own communities and in our constant battles for self respect and dignity this March is a manifestation of our resolve. It deserves the active support and mobilisation of the left and labour movement." ★

Contact SMG-Unity at PO Box 304, Southall, UB2 5YR, Britain. © (+44 181) 843 2333, fax 813 9734.

Labour party (re)formed

As Thailand convulses under its worst economic turmoil in decades, a group of union leaders are organising what the political spectrum here has always lacked: a party to represent labour interests. The party will target low wages, a central plank of the Thai elite's "competitive" strategy.

Given Thailand's long history of repression of working class movements, the party faces an uphill climb in a political scene dominated by big business and the military.

Satya Sivaraman*

The new organisation, called the Thai National People's Party, is a reincarnation of the Labour Party that made its debut in the general elections of November 1996, but failed to win any seats. Party leaders blame their poor performance on obstacles like late registration by government officials. Under Thailand's complex electoral laws, the Labour Party has to seek fresh registration since it did not win seats in the last elections.

The new party does not have the money or muscle of Thailand's 10 mainstream political parties, which are either part of the ruling coalition or in the opposition. But it comes at a what may be the right time — when a major crisis is looming on the country's labour front.

Many workers have been laid off or forced to take pay cuts since early 1996, when the Thai economy slowed down after nearly a decade of fast-paced growth. The flotation of the Thai baht on July 2 led to the currency's devaluation by nearly 25% and spurred fears of runaway inflation.

The Thai Ministry of Labour expects more than 40,000 workers to be laid off during 1997 alone. The figure is projected to more than double next year, when the full impact of the economy's troubles will become evident.

While traditional industries like textiles are shedding jobs due to a fall in exports, many companies in newer sectors like property and finance are expected to declare bankruptcy due to excessive exposure to foreign and domestic debt.

"We are very apprehensive about the future and feel that the best way to represent workers' interests is through a new political party — mere trade unionism is not enough any more," says Pakdee Tanapura, advisor to the new party and the National Labour Congress of Thailand (NLCT).



Apart from overcoming obscure laws that prohibit unions from undertaking political activities directly, the party will help clear misconceptions about the true nature of workers' problems, he said.

Wages are the central question

Thai businessmen and foreign investors have repeatedly blamed what they see as high minimum wages for falling exports. But union leaders argue business costs have gone up more due to corruption among politicians and government officials and less due to minimum wages, which after the devaluation are less than five dollars a day in the Bangkok metropolitan area and even lower in the provinces.

In May, union leaders like Chin Thubplee, founder of the new party and NLCT chair, demanded a hike of 64 U.S. cents in minimum wages across the country. These demands are likely to rise because of the baht's devaluation and inflationary pressures on prices.

The Bank of Thailand recently reported that the minimum wage in nominal terms rose by only 7% between 1985 and 1995. "Wage restraint: was a main factor in the price competitiveness of the manufacturing sector. Still, Thai businessmen, particularly in labour-intensive industries like footwear, toys and garments, successfully lobbied the government to allow the import of large numbers of even cheaper foreign labourers.

Competition from migrant workers, estimated at one million over the past decade, is resented by Thai unions. Activists fear that if not properly controlled, such anger may boil over into anti-immigrant violence as the economic crisis worsens.

Decades of repression

In the 1930s and 1940s, Thailand had an

active labour movement with several large strikes, a labour federation claiming 70,000 members and an active communist party. But since the late 1940s, successive dictatorships have either suppressed unions or manipulated them for political aims by showering them with privileges. To prevent the politicisation of workers, military rulers passed special laws banning unions' association with political parties. "Historically successive Thai governments have prevented any mature political leadership from emerging within the country's labour movement," says Voravidh Charoenlert, labour economist at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. Thai bureaucrats and managers have traditionally viewed unions as a "fifth column" for communist party activists.

The political space open to the labour movement has expanded only since the late 1980s, due to the changing political and economic climate. Given the chance to vent grievances for the first time in decades, the number of strikes in the private sector has also risen sharply since then. Still, Thai unions lack unity nationwide. This weakness that means workers are unable to monitor implementation of labour laws, and to take full advantage of the new political freedoms.

Thailand's rate of unionisation remains one of the world's lowest. Even in the industrial sector, only 1.7% of some 16 million workers are organised. The figures are even lower in agriculture, which employs more than 17 million people. Even these small number of unionised workers do not have a single voice. According to Thailand's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, by the end of 1995 there were 19 labour union federations and eight labour union councils.

"With the new political party we hope to unite labour under a common platform to address the various problems facing us," says Chin. He admits the task will not be easy. But he believes more workers are frustrated with current leaders and want new political direction.

At the same time, union leaders fear that any increased political activity by workers' groups could become an excuse for authoritarian measures by conservative elements in the Thai government and military against unions and activists. Political assassinations were routine in the sixties and seventies. And even in the nineties several Thai worker and farmer leaders have been assassinated by suspected police agents. Chin says the Thai government has already drawn up a list of 10 union leaders, including him, for the police to keep watch on. Such harassment could be the prelude to increasing conflict between workers and the authorities, especially if Thailand's economic woes worsen.

* The author works for InterPress Service. Source and Copyright: InterPress Service (1997).

Solidarity against the World Bank/IMF

On 15-26 September, 180 finance ministers and 2,000 journalists will converge on Hong Kong for an World Bank/IMF meeting.

The Hong Kong **Solidarity against the World Bank/IMF** coalition will organise its own, parallel activities.

Gerard Greenfield*

The campaign is particularly important because the World Bank will release two new reports during the Hong Kong meeting. The first report, *China 2020*, will be released on September 16th. This report celebrates the success of China's market reforms while demanding even more deregulation and privatisation over the next two decades.

The widespread privatisation of state-owned enterprises in China in 1997 alone will see 50 million workers laid off. At the same time, the social security system is being commercialised and privatised, and migration from villages to the cities is being encouraged as the solution to growing unemployment! There are already 100 million *floating* migrant workers looking for work!

These neo-liberal policies are underpinned by the fact that China is now the World Bank's *biggest debtor*. Many of the reforms being imposed on workers this year (including privatisation, the dismantling of the social security system, and the end of job security) conform to the specific demands made by the World Bank in its report on China last year. The WB/IMF has found a real partner in the Chinese government in their campaign to generalise neo-liberal attacks on the working class.

A second report will deal with poverty in East Asia. While admitting that poverty is increasing in East Asia, the World Bank argues that effective poverty alleviation requires even greater privatisation of social welfare. The bank denies any contribution of labour market deregulation and unemployment to this new poverty.

The campaign organised by Solidarity against the World Bank/IMF will also focus on Hong Kong. In the World Bank's celebration of the "East Asian miracles", the Bank has argued that structural adjustment in the former British colony was a painless experience for workers. It is claimed that all of the workers who lost jobs under the mass plant closures in the 1980s easily found jobs in the service sector!

The campaign will highlight the real crisis faced by unemployed workers in Hong

Kong, and the lack of income and job security in the casualised service sector. This will link up with ongoing local protests against the "freezing" of new labour laws (including the right to collective bargaining) by the territory's new government. ★

Thailand/Hong Kong

Whose money? Whose crisis?

The Hong Kong coalition **Against the World Bank/IMF** issued the following statement concerning IMF "aid" to Thailand

Hong Kong's Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa's has announcement that Hong Kong will commit US\$1 billion to "rescue" the Thai economy from crisis. This money will be lent to the IMF, which will lend the money to the Thai government.

The IMF conditions are strict. The Thai government must promise to privatise public enterprises and public utilities and sell state assets, including land. The government must cut its spending on health, education and social welfare. Thailand must open up its economy to even more foreign investment and give foreign investors even greater freedom to destroy the environment and exploit workers. Government must cut subsidies to farmers and remove any protection of small farmers from big agri-business. Finally, the government must agree to reduce workers' wages to make the economy more "competitive".

What sort of "rescue" package is this? How will raising the cost of living and making more workers and farmers unemployed solve the problems faced by the Thai people?

This "rescue" package will only benefit the wealthy — rich landowners, business tycoons, bankers and financiers and foreign multinationals. Financial stability will protect their interests and their profit. But when this is all over it is the ordinary Thai people who will have to pay this money back, through higher taxes and government charges in the future.

In other words, Tung Chee Hwa pledged US\$1 billion for the IMF to blackmail the Thai government. The deal will only postpone the current financial crisis and create an even greater crisis when the people of Thailand are forced to repay the loan.

What about the crisis here in Hong Kong? Every year the number of people in poverty is increasing. In the last 10 years the rate of inequality grew faster in

Hong Kong than in any other country in the region. The majority of the people of Hong Kong are finding it more and more difficult to earn a living wage and are struggling to maintain their livelihood. Housing rights are still denied to many people in poverty, while thousands more people are still waiting for decent public housing.

Workers who lost their jobs when factories shut down and moved to Guangdong [in mainland China] several years ago are still not able to find decent jobs with reasonable wages. Every year thousands of workers undergo "retraining", and after they have finished what awaits them? More unemployment. Young workers face low wages and endless part-time jobs, without learning any skills for their future. Older workers are discriminated against because of their age, and their skills and experience are completely ignored.

Does this sound like a place so rich that it can hand over money to the IMF for its business dealings? The working people of Hong Kong and Thailand face serious social and economic problems. But the solution is not to pretend that Hong Kong is so wealthy that it can gamble with the IMF. This money is better spent on increased social welfare, pensions, public housing, unemployment support and job creation in Hong Kong.

Most important of all, Hong Kong should not be financing a scheme in which the people of Thailand are threatened and forced to follow the policies of the IMF. The IMF's policies will only lead to more poverty and unemployment in Thailand, and make people's daily struggle to earn a living even more difficult.

Hong Kong should not be lending money like some sort of gangster state involved in the IMF mafia's threats and bribery. Such policies will only lead all of us further down the road to crisis. ★

Organisers welcome letters of solidarity, which will be publicised as part of the campaign. Please send messages to: Fax: 852 2454 6094 (Attention Au Loong Yu) or <cauly@chevalier.net> *Gerard Greenfield works at the Asia Monitor Resource Center in Hong Kong

Mandela versus Suharto?

B. Skanthakumar

In Occupied East Timor there has been an upsurge in armed activity in recent months. Shortly before the rigged Indonesian general elections on May 29th units of FALINTIL, the armed Timorese resistance, launched bold attacks on army and police units killing over fifty of them.

The timing of this campaign suggests that it was aimed at disrupting the fake electoral process and at demoralising further the Indonesian military stationed there. It appears to have succeeded in both those objectives.

Meanwhile in a number of large towns the unarmed resistance which operates as a clandestine front of all East Timorese groups organised attacks on polling booths and was involved in street fighting with police and army personnel.

Indonesia's army of occupation responded in its customary way. It launched punitive raids on villages in areas of FALINTIL activity terrorising their inhabitants. Many have been beaten, arrested and taken to torture centres to extract information and false confessions. The whereabouts and fate of others abducted or arrested is unknown.

The absence of foreign journalists and independent human rights monitors and the censorship of local publications and broadcast media make it difficult to establish an accurate picture of the ground situation.

Fresh detachments from the feared *Kopassus* (Special Forces Command) unit headed by President Suharto's son-in-law Major-General Prabowo Subianto have been rushed from Indonesia.

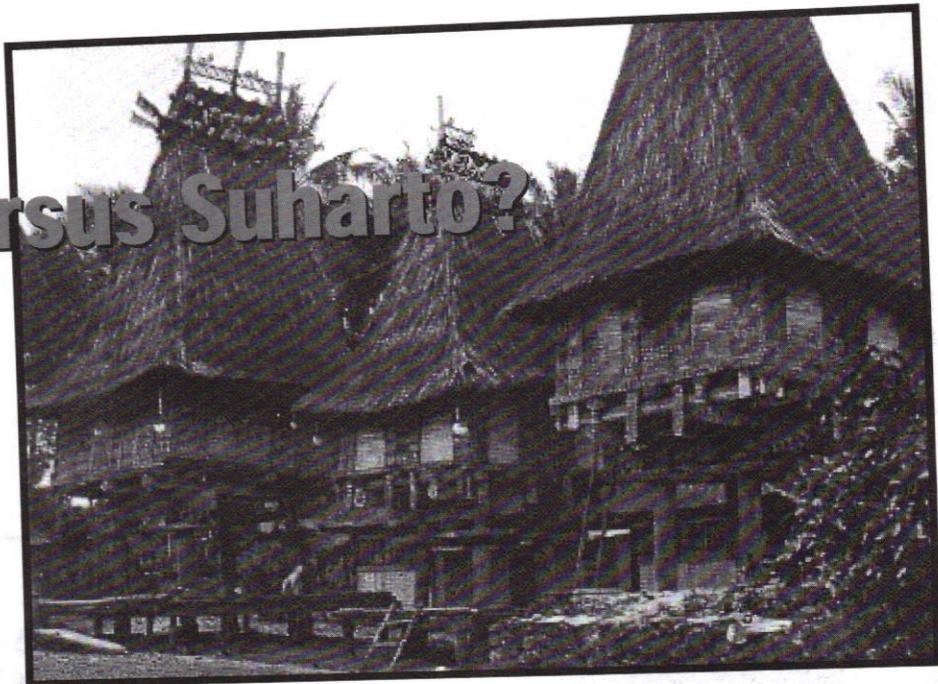
The capture on June 25th and probable death in custody of David Alex, the legendary second-in-command of FALINTIL, is a blow to the resistance forces and the Maubere people as a whole.

The military claim that Alex died from injuries sustained in his capture but other sources claim that he was either tortured to death or murdered in some other way. He was buried under tight secrecy and his family members were not shown his body nor have military authorities acceded to requests for exhumation and an autopsy of his body.

South African involvement

The state visit of South African President Nelson Mandela to Indonesia in mid-July focused attention on international efforts to mediate on East Timor but has also deflected attention from the gross violations of human rights and tyranny of the Indonesian regime in East Timor itself.

Mandela has visited Indonesia once before. In 1990 on a fund raising mission for the then recently unbanned African National Congress he called on Suharto, who donated US\$10 million.



Mandela was criticised in South Africa and in international anti-apartheid circles for soliciting money from one of the bloodiest and most corrupt of South-East-Asia's autocrats.

In an effort to make amends he has recently made some high profile statements on the situation in East Timor and publicly called for the release of FALINTIL leader. Xanana Gusmao who is serving a twenty year prison sentence.

While in Jakarta, the South African President sought and obtained an unprecedented private meeting with Gusmao to assure him of his personal support.

However many East Timor campaigners are sceptical of both Suharto's good faith and Mandela's good offices. They note the close business links between Indonesia and South

Africa which inevitably involve Suharto, his family and cronies. As well as the evident interest that the South African arms industry enthusiastically supported by the ANC-led Government has shown in the Indonesian 'market'.

With the US Congress blocking arms sales and Britain's Labour Government facing pressure over its sale of Hawk aircraft, the Indonesians are looking to South Africa and Russia for their purchases.

There are rumours that the regime may agree to Gusmao's early release and exile to Europe to lessen the consistent condemnation of its occupation and brutalities in East Timor. However Gusmao himself has reportedly said that the issue at stake is not his own freedom but the freedom of his people and the independence of his country. ★

Australia

Fast track deportation

Australia's conservative government plans to deport East Timorese refugees, who it now says are Portuguese citizens. **John Tully*** reports.

The deportations, if successful, would mark an all-time low in Australian grovelling to the Suharto dictatorship in Jakarta. Ever since the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, Australian governments have in effect been complicit in the genocide which has seen the territory's population fall by over one-third. Australia is one of only a handful of countries which recognise Indonesia's *de jure* sovereignty over East Timor. Since 1979 Australia has claimed that the East Timorese are Indonesian citizens.

The deportation plans were described by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer as 'absurd and hypocritical' when they were unveiled by the former Labour government in 1995. For its part, Portugal has refused to consider taking the refugees unless they want to go there - and none do.

The 1,360 East Timorese are refugees by any standard. A representative

survey of 147 cases carried out by the Refugee Advice and Casework Service in Melbourne found that 46% had suffered serious assault; 33% torture; and 19% sexual assault. Of the 66% who had been imprisoned, nearly half had been repeatedly beaten during interrogation and 39% had family members killed by the Indonesians.

There is a bright side to this grim story. Over 11,000 individuals and organisations have pledged support for the refugees. Set up by Catholic nuns, but now embracing secular organisations too, Australia's Sanctuary Network is preparing (illegal) sanctuary, to prevent the deportations from going ahead. It is unlikely that the government will dare to take on such a mass movement of civil disobedience. But if it does, its despicable actions must be fought. ★

* Co-editor of the Australian socialist monthly *Militant*, and a long-time supporter of the Fourth International.

The greatest land grab since 1788

John Tully*

Australia was founded as a white settler society on the dispossession and genocide of indigenous peoples who had lived on the continent for up to 80,000 years before the 'First Fleet' arrived in 1788.

The total aboriginal population at that time can only be guessed at. It might have been as high as one million. What we do know for sure is that by the 1920s the aboriginal population had fallen to below 250,000. Opinion at the time spoke of 'smoothing the pillow of a dying race.' Hundreds of thousands of black people had died over the course of a little more than a century; some from disease and starvation; others in brutal massacres; others from heartbreak at the dispossession of their traditional lands.

Much of their land became freehold, owned and occupied by whites. Central to this process was the legal doctrine of *Terra Nullius*, which held that Australia was an empty continent in 1788! Large sections also became leasehold land, occupied for peppercorn (symbolic) rents by wealthy cattle owners. However, the British government did rule that Native Title could co-exist with leasehold. In 1848 the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, said that "these leases are not intended to deprive the natives of their former right to hunt over these districts or to wander over them in search of subsistence in the manner to which they have been accustomed."

Despite Grey's ruling, Aboriginal rights were crushed under the weight of racism armed with the doctrine of *Terra Nullius*. It was not until the 1970s that Black people began to win back some of their land. The process was speeded up in the 1990s by two important High Court decisions which invalidated *Terra Nullius*.

Racist hysteria

The Mabo and Wik decisions have sparked off a storm of racist hysteria. Although they quite clearly do not mean that freehold land can be subjected to Aboriginal land claims, many white Australians fear that they will be evicted from their suburban homes!

The Mabo decision ruled that Aboriginal peoples could make claims to land for which they could demonstrate an unbroken relationship. But only if the Crown had not granted 'exclusive tenure' to anyone else. If it had, then no claim can be made. The Wik decision merely established that the Wik people in Queensland had a legal right to make a claim for ownership of land leased by big mining and grazing interests from the Crown. It presents no threat to anyone - farmer or householder - who has freehold rights. In fact there are already agreements between traditional owners and mining companies in some



places. If the Wik claim were granted, the lease-holders would have to pay rent to the traditional owners, not to the Crown.

Millionaire squatters

All of this has been obscured and mystified by powerful white farming, mining and grazing interests, which are interlocked with political, media and industrial interests: a large section of the ruling class, in short. The big lease-holders, who pay around 33 cents per hectare for their land, have made gigantic profits over the years. They include in their ranks 24 federal conservative MPs and Australia's media barons Kerry Packer,

Rupert Murdoch and the Fairfax family, who between them lease millions of hectares.²

The Federal government is proposing to extinguish native title, but to pay compensation. But the big mining and farming interests go further. They want the unconditional 'extinguishment' of native title on leasehold land, without compensation to the indigenous peoples. In other words a return to *Terra Nullius* in what amounts to the greatest theft of Aboriginal land since white settlement. It is even likely that Aboriginal people would either be evicted from their traditional lands, or forced to pay rent to the land barons!

The hysteria over Wik has contributed to the surge of support for Pauline Hanson's far-right One Nation Party. Large numbers of rural National Party supporters may well join her organisation in protest at the government's "soft" line. ★

Note

* The author is co-editor of the Australian socialist monthly *Militant*, and a long-time supporter of the Fourth International.

2. Liberal Party President John Elliot's IXL controls almost six and a half million hectares. National Party Federal President Don MacDonald, controls over three million. And Hugh McLachlan, a cousin of the Defence Minister, controls 4,700,000 hectares. Industrial giant BHP and the insurance companies AMP and National Mutual between them account for over ten million hectares.

New Labour Party holds national conference

Australia's small New Labour Party was formed in November 1996 in Newcastle, New South Wales. Besides students, workers, small farmers and academics, it has recruited a growing number of union officials, particularly from the maritime, electrical and construction unions. Members come from the Australian Labour Party (ALP), the dissolved Communist Party, and various left groups. Many NLP members have never belonged to any party.

According to National Secretary Bob Leach, the party's main strength is its broad spread of opinion, from social democrat and left liberal to Marxist.

The party plans to stand parliamentary candidates, hopefully in alliance with the Greens and the Australian Indigenous People's Party. But it was clear from the mood of this year's conference that members want New Labour to be a grass roots activist party, participating in the social and other struggles.

The party has pledged support for the indigenous people's struggle for land rights; for the East Timor Sanctuary Network (see p.26); and for the fight for trade union rights. In an attempt to forestall bureaucracy and careerism, the

party's programme demands that all NLP parliamentary candidates pre-sign their resignations so that they can be evicted if they "rat" on party policy.

According to John Tully of *Militant* newspaper, "the conference, which was held in the Melbourne offices of the Electrical Trades Union, was extremely successful and bodes well for the future development of the party."

The most controversial debate was on the question of proscription of members of other political parties. In the end delegates agreed to refuse NLP membership to members of any party which stand candidates in parliamentary elections.

This clearly proscribes ALP members and possibly bans the Democratic Socialist Party, the largest far-left organisation in Australia.

National Secretary Bob Leach, from the Social Democratic wing of the party, stressed that the ban did not affect members of some Marxist groups including *Militant* and the Freedom Socialist Party. Nevertheless, these tendencies led a spirited, though unsuccessful struggle to keep New Labour open to DSP members. [JT] ★

The global financial crisis

On August 15 Wall Street suffered its largest decline since "Black Monday" in 1987. **Michel Chos-sudovsky** explains why global financial markets are so fragile, and the implications for the rest of us.

Black Monday October 19, 1987 will be remembered as the largest one day drop in the history of the New York Stock Exchange. The fall was greater than on October 28, 1929, the first day of the Wall Street crash and the beginning of the Great Depression. In the 1987 meltdown, 22.6 percent of the value of US stocks was wiped out, largely during the first hour of trading on Monday morning. The plunge on Wall Street sent a "cold shiver" through the entire financial system leading to the tumble of the European and Asian stock markets.

Almost ten years later on Friday August 15, 1997, Wall Street experienced its largest one day decline since 1987. The Dow Jones [index of shares in the largest and most traded companies] plummeted by 247 points. The symptoms were similar to those of Black Monday. "Institutional speculators" sold large amounts of stock with the goal of repurchasing them later. But the immediate impact was to provoke a plunge in prices. Futures and options trading played a key role in precipitating the collapse of market values.

The tumble on August 15, 1997 immediately spilled over onto the World's stock markets triggering substantial losses on the Frankfurt, Paris, Hong Kong and Tokyo exchanges. Various "speculative instruments" in the equity and foreign exchange markets were used with a view to manipulating price movements.

In the weeks that followed, stocks continued to trade nervously. Wide speculative movements were recorded on Wall Street; billions of dollars were transacted through the NYSE's Superdot electronic order-routing system with the Dow Jones index swinging spuriously up and down in a matter of minutes. Asian equity and currency markets declined steeply under the brunt of speculative trading. In a three week period the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index declined by 15 percent. The Japanese bond market plunged to an all time low.

Business forecasters and academic economists alike have casually disregarded the dangers, alluding to "strong economic fundamentals." G7 leaders are afraid to say anything or act in a way which might give the "wrong signals." Wall Street analysts continue to bungle on issues of "market correction" with little understanding of the broader economic picture.

Meanwhile, public opinion is bombarded

in the media with glowing images of global growth and prosperity. The economy is said to be booming under the impetus of the free market reforms. Without debate or discussion, so-called "sound macro-economic policies" (meaning the gamut of budgetary austerity, deregulation, downsizing and privatisation) are heralded as the key to economic success.

The realities are concealed, economic statistics are manipulated, economic concepts are turned upside down. Unemployment in the US is said to be falling yet the number of people on low wage part-time jobs has spiralled. The stock market frenzy has taken place against a background of global economic decline and social dislocation.

A new financial environment

Since 1987, a new global financial environment has unfolded. A renewed wave of corporate mergers, buy-outs and bankruptcies has paved the way for the consolidation of a new generation of financiers clustered around the merchant banks, the institutional investors, the stock brokerage firms, and the large insurance companies. In this process, commercial banking functions have coalesced with those of the investment banks and stock brokers.

From these transformations, the "institutional speculator" has emerged as a powerful actor, overshadowing and often undermining *bona fide* business interests. Using a variety of instruments, these institutional actors often dictate the fate of companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Totally removed from entrepreneurial functions in the real economy, they have the power of precipitating large industrial corporations in bankruptcy.

Their activities include speculative transactions in commodity futures, stock options and the manipulation of currency markets including the plunder of central banks' foreign exchange reserves. In the last two months they have "successfully" targeted Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines

. They are also routinely involved in "hot money deposits" in the emerging markets of Latin America and Southeast Asia, not to mention money laundering in the many offshore banking havens. The daily turnover of foreign exchange transactions is of the order of one trillion dollars a day, of which only 15 percent corresponds to actual commodity trade and capital flows.

Within this global financial web, money transits at high speed from one banking haven to the next, in the intangible form of electronic transfers. "Legal" and "illegal" business activities have become increasingly intertwined. Favoured by financial deregulation, the criminal mafias have also expanded their role in the spheres of merchant banking.

The concentration of wealth

This restructuring of global financial markets and institutions has enabled the accumulation of vast amounts of private wealth, a large portion of which has been amassed as a result of strictly speculative transactions. There is almost no need to produce commodities: enrichment is increasingly taking place outside the real economy, divorced from bona fide productive and commercial activities. In turn, part of the money accumulated from speculative transactions is funnelled towards the offshore banking havens. This critical drain of billions of dollars in capital flight dramatically reduces state tax revenues, paralyses social programmes, drives up budget deficits, and spurs the accumulation of large public debts.

In contrast, the earnings of the direct producers of goods and services are compressed. The standard of living of large sectors of the World population including the middle classes has tumbled. Wage inequality has risen in the OECD countries. In both the developing and developed countries, poverty has become rampant. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), worldwide unemployment affects more than 800 million people. The accumulation of financial wealth feeds on poverty and low wages.

The post-1987 period is marked by economic stagnation. In the OECD countries, GDP growth has fallen from 3.1 percent per annum in the 1980s to a meagre 1.7% in the 1990s. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have experienced negative economic growth rates. In the emerging economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, GDP collapsed in the early 1990s by more than 30%

Replicating 1920s policy failures

Wall Street was swerving dangerously in volatile trading in the months which preceded the crash of October 29, 1929. Under the Coolidge and Hoover administrations, *laissez faire* was the order of the day: in early 1929 the Federal Reserve Board declared that it "neither assumes the right nor has it any disposition to set itself up as an arbiter of security speculation or values."

The economics establishment largely upheld this verdict. The possibility of a financial meltdown had never been seriously contemplated. Professor Irving Fisher of Yale University stated authoritatively in 1928 that "nothing resembling a crash can occur". In 1929, a few months before the crash, he affirmed that "there may a recession in the price of stocks but nothing in the nature of a catastrophe".¹

The illusion of economic prosperity persisted: optimistic business predictions prevailed even after the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange. In 1930, Irving Fisher

stated confidently that "for the immediate future, at least, the perspective is brilliant". According to the prestigious Harvard Economic Society: "manufacturing activity [in 1930]... was definitely on the road to recovery"²

Financial deregulation

The same complacency prevails today as during the frenzy of the late 1920s: "The [1987] crash had left many people wondering what happened, why it happened and what can be done to prevent it from happening again". The broad economic causes of the crisis are not addressed. Echoing almost verbatim the economic slogans of Irving Fisher, today's economic orthodoxy not only refutes the existence of an economic recession, it also denies outright the possibility of a financial meltdown: "Happy days are here again ...a wonderful opportunity for sustained and increasingly global economic growth is waiting to be seized..."³

According to Nobel Laureate Robert Lucas of Chicago University, the decisions of economic agents are based on so-called "rational expectations", ruling out the possibility of systematic errors which might lead

the stock market in the wrong direction.

In the aftermath of the 1987 stock market crisis, the regulatory policy issues were never resolved. According to the various commissions set up by the US Congress, the White House and the New York and Chicago exchanges, the 1987 crash had been triggered by specific events leading to "reactive responses" by major financial players including institutional traders and dealers in mutual funds. No other reason was given. "Sound macro-economic policies" combined with financial deregulation were the irrevocable answers. The term "speculation" does not even appear in Wall Street's financial glossary!

A presidential task-force was formed under the chairmanship of Nicholas Brady (later to become Treasury Secretary in the Bush Administration). The institutional speculators overshadowing bona fide corporate interests, represented a powerful lobby capable of influencing the scope and direction of regulatory policy. The task-force took on an detached attitude pointing to the "adequacy" of existing regulations.

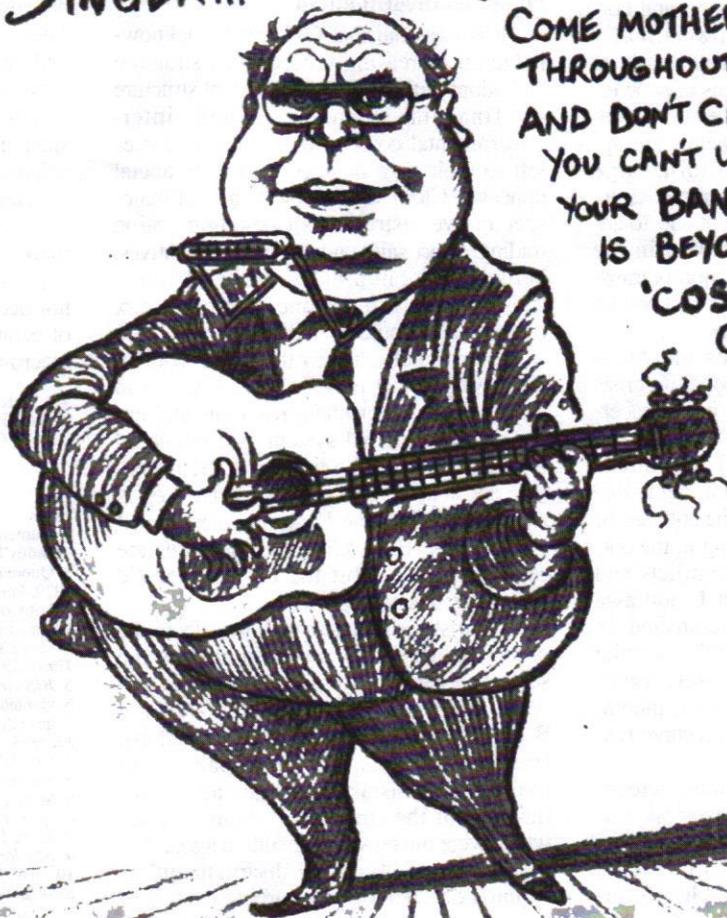
In the aftermath of the 1987 crisis, the policy errors of the 1920s were repeated.

Government should not intervene. The New York and Chicago exchanges were invited to fine-tune their own regulatory procedures which largely consisted in "freezing" computerised programme trading once the Dow Jones falls by more than 50 points.⁴ These so-called "circuit-breakers" have proven to be totally ineffective in averting a meltdown.

Recent experience amply demonstrates that the Dow Jones can swing back and forth by more than fifty points in a matter of minutes. The NYSE's Superdot electronic order-routing system can now handle (without queuing) more than 300,000 orders per day. This is an average of 375 orders per second, representing a daily capacity of more than two billion shares. When speed and volume have increased tenfold in relation to 1987, the risks of a financial instability are significantly greater. Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan admits that: "[while] technological advances have enhanced the potential for reducing transaction costs (...), in some respects they have increased the potential for more rapid and widespread disruption"⁵

Moreover, in contrast to the 1920s, today's major exchanges world-wide are

THE PROTEST SINGER...



"COME MOTHERS AND FATHERS
THROUGHOUT THE LAND
AND DON'T CRITICIZE WHAT
YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND —
YOUR BANK AND YOUR GOLD
IS BEYOND YOUR COMMAND —
'COS WE HAVE
CREATIVE
ACCOUNTING!"

John Horne
with lyrics by Bob Dylan
and Pete Dinklage

★ economics

interconnected through instant computer link-up. Volatile trading on Wall Street, "spills over" into the European and Asian stock markets thereby rapidly permeating the entire financial system, including foreign exchange and commodity markets, not to mention the markets for public debt. The demise of national currencies under periodic attack by institutional speculators will inevitably backlash on the trillion dollars Euro and Brady bond markets.

The fate of national economies

Under the brunt of an impending balance of payments crisis, several of the largest debtor countries in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe are facing the same predicament as Mexico. Following the Mexican 1994-95 crash, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Michel Camdessus intimated that ten other indebted countries could meet the same fate as Mexico requiring the application of potent doses of economic medicine: "we will therefore introduce still stronger surveillance to be sure that the convalescence goes well."⁶ However, by crippling national economies and requiring governments to deregulate, the IMF's "economic therapy" prevents the possibility of a "soft landing". "IMF surveillance" of debtor countries' macro-economic policy tends to further heighten the risks of financial meltdown.

The present economic crisis is far more complex than that of the inter-war period. Because national economies are interlocked in a system of global trade and investment, the impact of any crisis is potentially far more devastating. The technological revolution (combined with delocalisation and corporate restructuring) has dramatically lowered the costs of production while at same time impoverishing millions of people.

Macro-economic policies are internationalised: the same austerity measures are applied all over the World. In turn, large corporations have the power to move entire branches of industry from one country to another. Factories are closed down in the developed countries and production is transferred to the Third World where workers are often paid less than a dollar a day.

The social consequences and geopolitical implications of the economic crisis are far-reaching — particularly in the uncertain aftermath of the Cold War. In the developing World and in the former Soviet block, entire countries have been destabilised as a consequence of the collapse of national currencies often resulting in the outbreak of social strife, ethnic conflicts and civil war. In the former Soviet Union as a whole, industrial output has plummeted by 48.8 percent and GDP by 44.0% over the 1989-1995 period.⁷ In some cases, wages have fallen to less than ten dollars a month; in Bulgaria, old age pensioners receive two dollars a month.

Budget austerity, plant closures, deregulation and trade liberalisation have contributed to precipitating entire national economies into poverty and stagnation. In turn, the evolution of financial markets has reached a dan-

gerous cross-roads. The massive trade in derivatives undermines the conduct of monetary policy in both the developing and developed countries.

Dangerous cross-roads

The speculative surge of stock values is totally at variance with the movement of the real economy. Stock markets "cannot lead their own life" indefinitely. Business confidence cannot be "sustained by recession". The price to earnings ratio (P/E) on the S&P 500 has risen dangerously to 25.8, well above the P/E level of 22.4 prevailing in the months prior to the October 1987 crash.

In many regards, the stock market frenzy is analogous to the Albanian "ponzi" pyramid schemes. People who have invested their private savings will "get rich" while the market rises and as long as they leave their money in the stock market. As soon as financial markets crumble, life-long savings in stocks, mutual funds, pension and insurance funds are wiped out. The fund managers will not lose out because they are "looking after other people's money". Neither will the speculators: their purchases are financed ("on margin") using their broker's credit as well as other loans from the banking system.

More than forty percent of the American adult population has investments in the stock market. A financial meltdown would lead to massive loan default sending a cold shiver through the entire banking system; it would also result in bank failures as well as a tumble of pension and retirement savings funds.

Financial disarmament

It is essential that G-7 leaders acknowledge an increasingly dangerous situation and adopt without delay a coherent structure of financial regulation (and inter-governmental co-operation). Market forces left to their own devices lead to financial upheaval. Close scrutiny of the role of major speculative instruments (including option trading, short sales, non-trading derivatives, hedge funds, non deliverable currency transactions, programme trading, index futures, etc.) should be undertaken.

A report published by the Bundesbank in 1993 warned that trade in derivatives could potentially "trigger chain reactions and endanger the financial system as a whole".⁸ Regulation cannot be limited to the disclosure and reporting of trade in derivatives as recommended by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS). Concrete measures are required to prohibit the use of specific speculative instruments.

The risks associated with the electronic order routing systems should also be the subject of careful examination. Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board admits that "the efficiency of global financial markets, has the capability of transmitting mistakes at a far faster pace throughout the financial system in ways which were unknown a generation ago..."⁹

A form of "financial disarmament" is required directed towards curbing the tide of

speculative activity. (The term "financial disarmament" was coined by the Ecumenical Coalition for Social Justice¹⁰). In turn, the whole system of offshore banking including the movement of dirty and black money should be the object of tight inter-governmental regulation.

At the June 1997 Denver Summit, G7 leaders in a muddled and confusing statement called for "stronger risk management", "improved transparency" and "strong prudential standards". The de-stabilising role of speculative activity on major bourses was never mentioned. In contrast, the G7 statements by political leaders profusely heralding the benefits of the free market have generated an atmosphere of deceit and economic falsehood. "Business confidence" has been artificially boosted by G7 rhetoric largely to the advantage of the institutional speculator.

An alternative economic agenda

There are no easy policy solutions. The global economic system is affected not only by the forces of recession and financial restructuring but also by complex social, political and strategic factors. The evolution of international institutions (including the World Trade Organisation and the Bretton Woods twins) is also crucial inasmuch as these international bodies play an important role in overseeing and regulating macro-economic and trade policies, often to the detriment of national societies.

The World community should recognise the failure of the dominant neo-liberal system inherited from the Reagan-Thatcher era. Slashing budgets combined with lay-offs, corporate downsizing and deregulation cannot constitute "the key to economic success". These measures demobilise human resources and physical capital. They trigger bankruptcies and create mass unemployment. Ultimately, they stifle the growth of consumer spending. After all, "recession can not be a solution to recession".

Regulating the stock market is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. Financial markets will not survive unless there is an expanding "real economy". Though this will not occur unless there is a major revamping of economic institutions and a rethinking of macro-economic reform. ★

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Notes

1. Quoted in Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1983, p. 158.
2. Quoted in John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash*, 1929, Penguin, London.
3. Let Good Times Roll, *The Financial Times*, editorial commenting OECD economic forecasts, Jan. 1st, 1995.
4. "Five Years On, the Crash Still Echoes," *The Financial Times*, October 19, 1992.
5. *BIS Review*, No. 46, 1997
6. Quoted in David Duchan and Peter Norman, "IMF Urges Close Watch on Weaker Economies", *The Financial Times*, London, 8 February 1995, p. 1.
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8. Martin Khor, "Baring and the Search for a Rogue Culprit," *Third World Economics*, No. 108, 1-15 March 1995, p. 10.
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Asia Pacific solidarity conference

Sydney, Australia • April 10-13, 1988

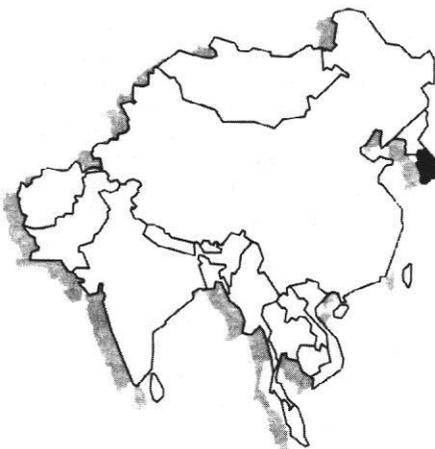
Issues and Topics

The struggle for democracy and the end of the Suharto dictatorship • Self-determination: East Timor, Sri Lanka, West Papua, Bougainville • Indigenous people's struggles and land rights in Australia and New Zealand • Labour and the struggle against neoliberalism • Neoliberalism and its social impact • APEC and counter-APEC • Asian Tigers and NICs – who's benefiting, who's battling • Women's liberation, development and democratisation • NGOs, political movements and the universities • Democratisation, development and social class • Global capital's economic police – the World Bank, IMF and WTO

Struggle and New Thinking

Governments, corporations, banks and international financial institutions, all talk of Asia and the as a region of miracle growth, of accelerated development, of economic boom. For millions of other people, the picture is different: political and social struggle for basic human rights, for a sustainable economic and social order.

These conflicts include the massive worker and student struggles in South Korea against new labour laws; a sharpening struggle against the dictatorship and cronyism in Suharto's Indonesia; the continuing uprising of the East Timorese people for self-determination; labour struggles and renewal in the Philippines in the face of the neoliberal Philippines 2000 offensive; the ongoing war on the island of Bougainville; and the conflict in Sri Lanka over the national rights of the Tamil people and authoritarian government.



Country Reports

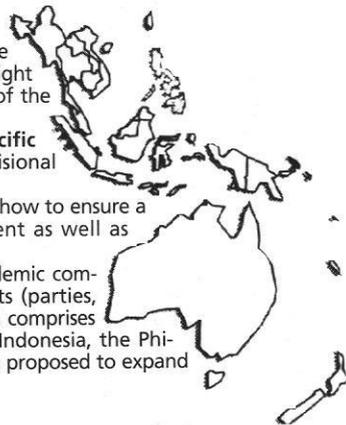
Australia • Bougainville • Burma • China • East Timor • India • Japan • Indonesia • Malaysia • New Zealand • Pakistan • Papua New Guinea • Philippines • South Korea • Sri Lanka • Thailand • West Papua

The Institute

During February to May 1997 a range of individuals involved in political movements, community organisations and universities consulted over the need for greater regional co-ordination and dialogue regarding the current struggles against authoritarianism, violations of the right to self-determination and the social and economic impacts of the world-wide neoliberal offensive.

An interim council was formed to establish the **Asia Pacific Institute for Democratisation and Development**. The provisional aims of the Institute are

- To promote research and disseminate ideas on the issue of how to ensure a socially just and environmentally sustainable development as well as rounded democratisation.
- To facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the academic community, the NGO community and the peoples' movements (parties, trade unions, campaign committees, etc) The interim council comprises academics, political leaders and community activists from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand. It is proposed to expand this initial list to include East Timor, Japan and South Korea.



Attacks On Democracy

The strengthening of authoritarian practices as a means of defending austerity and economic restructuring policies have become major concerns throughout the region. Laws to ban trade union organisers from worksites in Australia; outright bans on independent trade unions in Indonesia; restrictions and harassment of NGOs in Malaysia form a pattern of general resistance to democratisation by governments throughout the region.

Community Resistance

There are innumerable initiatives to fight this trend. New political movements have emerged in Indonesia; old movements are transforming themselves in the Philippines; an unofficial trade union movement can force the South Korean government to retreat; Malaysian democrats rally to the cause of the East Timorese; the Burmese democrats still refuse to surrender; and anti-neoliberal activists have been elected to the New Zealand parliament.

These are just a few of the many examples of democratisation initiatives in the region.

The Participants

Participants who have confirmed their interest include:

- Dr Syed Husin Ali, scholar, writer and president Malaysian People's Party (PRM); API interim council member.
- Renato Constantino Jr., founding convener Asia Pacific Coalition on East Timor (APCET); president, SANLAKAS, Filipino Federation of Democratic Mass Organisations in the Philippines; API interim council member.
- Dr Francisco Nemenzo, founding president BISIG, (Union for Socialist Ideas and Action); professor of political science, University of the Philippines; API interim council member.
- Anna Maria Nemenzo, convener Women's Health Movement, the Philippines; API interim council member.
- Jose Ramos-Horta, special representative to Xanana Gusmao; 1996 Nobel Peace Prize co-Laureate.
- A senior representative of the External Delegation of FRETILIN
- Nico Warouw, International Representative, Peoples Democratic Party of Indonesia; API interim council member.
- Edwin Gozal, Indonesia Centre for Labor Struggle (PPBI), Indonesia.
- Dr Sunil Ratnapriya, director, Sri Lanka Institute for Occupational Health and Safety; national executive member of the New Socialist Party of Sri Lanka; API interim council member.
- Matt Robson, MP, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson for the New Zealand Alliance; API interim council member.
- Max Lane, national coordinator of Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor; lecturer, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, School of Asian Studies, University of Sydney; API interim council member.
- Dr Helen Jarvis, Head, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, University of New South Wales; researcher on Cambodia killing fields project; API interim council member.
- Moses Havini, representative of the Bougainville Interim government.
- John Ondawame, representative of the Free West Papua Movement.

The conference aims to be a unique gathering of activists, researchers and academics. Your support, attendance and participation is what will make this conference a success. For more information contact the Conference Secretariat, P.O. Box 515, Broadway 2007, Australia. Tel: 61-02-96901320; Fax: 61-02-96901381

better-known works. Reading the selections Le Blanc has chosen will provide students with a good base of knowledge, a strong foundation for further learning. Books like *What Is to Be Done?* and *State and Revolution* are easily available in various editions. Also, the annotated bibliography included in *From Marx to Gramsci* will help guide those students and socialists who wish to continue and deepen their studies.

Le Blanc has not made an idiosyncratic or tendentious selection. He accurately highlights the revolutionary continuity that spans the century from *The Communist Manifesto* to the assassination of Leon Trotsky. Friedrich Engels, in his "Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx," noted that Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was "to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat."

That statement from Engels sums up the spirit which animates this collection of Marxist literature. Le Blanc's book, then, is a corrective to the prevailing trends in Marxology, of academic Marxism. Advocates of these views utilise Marxism only as a method of study, for analysis of literature, cultural studies, and so forth. However much Marxism may be applied in this way, Le Blanc rightly asserts the primacy of Marxism as an instrument of revolutionary political struggle, as Marx himself would have wished.

In Part One, a 122-page "Introduction to Revolutionary Marxist Politics," Le Blanc identifies and explains the essential concepts of revolutionary Marxist theory. Readers will find a carefully detailed outline of Marxism as a philosophy, theory of history, analysis of capitalism, and a political program leading to a vision of a socialist future. In addition, Le Blanc provides simple capsule summaries of Social Democracy, Stalinism, Maoism, fascism, and concepts like Marxist theories of imperialism, permanent revolution, uneven and combined development, and much more. In effect, Le Blanc's Introduction constitutes a concise Marxist encyclopaedia.

In this work Le Blanc presents no new or startling discoveries, nor does he advance any singular theory. This observation should not suggest a weakness in the content and design of the book, whose purpose is to provide readers with a solid grounding in Marxist theory. Originality in this domain would be capricious. Le Blanc firmly and clearly asserts the revolutionary tradition established long ago by the writers included in this volume. He develops a tightly woven, richly documented argument to show the underlying continuity of theoretical orientation and practical political perspective which unites the founders and builders of revolutionary Marxism. As he is widely read in the literature of and about Marxism, Le Blanc is able to draw on his extensive knowledge to illustrate the continuity and development of revolutionary Marxist ideas.

Clarity is the primary virtue of Le Blanc's prose style. Complex ideas are broken down and their basic elements are

enumerated, so that the theories can finally be grasped in their fullness. Le Blanc's writing style highlights the logic of the ideas under examination, developing these step by step. Each chapter in his historical overview is heavily and usefully footnoted. These numerous references are well integrated into the text. A reader does not feel that Le Blanc's encyclopaedic knowledge is demonstrated for its own sake; his plentiful references help to show the development, the controversial nature, or the multi-sidedness of the theories under discussion.

To do less would be to oversimplify, but Le Blanc is not guilty of condescending to his readers. Le Blanc's writing strikes and maintains a balance between simplicity and complexity: clarity in exposition that respects and reveals the depth of the theories. Much of the success of Le Blanc's historical overview is due to his ability to write in an informed and clear style.

As a result of these numerous qualities, this anthology is especially recommended for college students or participants in radical study groups. Socialist veterans, also, will find in this book a useful tool to sharpen their understanding of Marxist fundamentals.

Part One concludes with a timely question in a chapter entitled, "Does Revolutionary Marxism Have a Future?" Le Blanc concedes the failure of revolutionary Marxism in the late 20th century, acknowledging that it has failed to achieve the goals advanced by the theorists on whom we have focused our attention – Marx, Engels, *et al.*

Do these setbacks confirm the views of those who proclaim that History ends with a triumphant capitalism? Here Le Blanc considers the theoretical objections to Marxism raised by informed, prominent critics like Sidney Hook, Bertram D. Wolfe, and James Burnham. They considered Marxism as elitist and undemocratic, with Stalinism as the inevitable, if unintended, outcome of Marxist doctrine. Eventually they all rejected Marxism outright.

Marxists are able to refute these conclusions, and Le Blanc presents the necessary rebuttal in these words:

"The fact that post-capitalist societies created through popular revolutions have resulted in bureaucratic dictatorships instead of socialist democracies can be explained not by the impossibility of socialism or democracy but by specific historical circumstances which were not inevitable and which can be overcome. Socialism can only be realised on a world scale, and particularly requires that advanced industrial countries be involved in bringing it into being."

Le Blanc also considers the prognosis for Marxism in light of the fall of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He offers a coolly objective political assessment and does not minimise the problems that loom large for those who advocate the revolutionary Marxist perspective, noting especially that the power of a correct theory generally has much less impact on popular consciousness than the power of a mighty collapse.

Le Blanc does not predict the future, nor

does he promise that revolutionary Marxism will be transformed into a relevant plan of action. He does, however, convincingly demonstrate that Marxism is one of the most comprehensive and intellectually powerful prescriptions for social change ever developed, showing that the revolutionary Marxist perspective adds up to an approach to reality and a body of thought which is irreplaceable for those wishing to come to grips with the past and the future.

Marxism cannot be learned solely from books, and a cadre cannot be developed in the library. Experience in political movements and in the class struggle is also necessary to fully understand Marxist concepts and to develop revolutionaries. Yet Marxists do not exalt activism at the expense of theory. There is much to learn and there are many books to read. But if one book can be recommended as the starting point, it is this anthology. ★

Humanities Press, (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.) 1996, \$22.50, 350 pp.

Strife: Sex and Politics in Labour Unions. Edited by Barbara Pocock

This is a collection of essays about gender politics in unions in Australia, England, Canada and the US. It casts a searching eye over trade unions and challenges they face with respect to gender politics in organising, unions' industrial objectives, and in their internal culture.

The authors recognise the progress made in unions with respect to women. But they argue that taking that change past the policy stage, and to a new level which challenges union culture more fundamentally, remains a challenge in many places.

The authors are union activists and feminists. The questions they ask arise from the contest between their unionism and their feminism. The book reflects about the habits of unionism and their effects upon gender politics, including factionalism, the power of incumbency, merit versus experience, the definition of the 'good' union official, leadership and the training of leaders, pressures on women unionists - in the press, and in their lives, their public representations, questions of sameness versus difference and sexuality and sexual difference in the union ★.

Chapter titles and authors include: Gender, strife and unions. By Barbara Pocock • Gender and union organising in Australia. By Sally McManus • Organising and representing women: Lessons from the United States. By Margaret Hallock. • Moving on from masculinity? Australian Unions' industrial agenda. By Claire Thomson and Barbara Pocock • A rising voice: Canadian women get organised. By Julie White • Making democratic unions: From policy to practice. By Jude Elton • Sexual politics in trade unions. By Suzanne Franzway • Women union leaders: Mongrels, martyrs, misfits or models for the future. By Leena Sudano • Difference or deficiency: Gender, representation and meaning in unions. By Kathie Muir • Women's self-organising and union democracy in the UK: Proportionality and fair representation in UNISON. By Marian Mann, Sue Ledwith and Fiona Colgan. Allen & Unwin, June 1997 For further details contact Dr Barbara Pocock, Labour Studies, University of Adelaide, Adelaide South Australia, Australia 5005 Fax 61 8 8303 4346 email bpocock@arts.adelaide.edu.au

book notes

Devil's Pact – Inside the World of the Teamsters Union,

by F.C. Duke Zeller

reviewed by Charles Walker

This insider's account of sleaze and corruption at the highest echelon of the US Teamsters union bureaucracy confirms many of the rank and file's worst suspicions. The insider is Duke Zeller, formerly the communications director (for 14 years) of the USA's largest private sector union. The book is chiefly a portrayal of Jackie Presser, the one-time Teamsters president, mob associate, and FBI informant. (Presser's history was more extensively detailed in *Mobbed Up*, by James Neff, which has notes and an extensive bibliography, lacking in Zeller's book.)

In 1978, Zeller was employed as an assistant to Presser, with the approval of Frank Fitzsimmons, the union's president. Later, Presser told Zeller that "Fitzsimmons received a kickback on nearly every freight contract he negotiated. There wasn't anything Fitzsimmons did on any contract where he didn't get money... Fitz would stash the cash away beneath a loose floorboard, under a rug in his home, or in the lining of an old raincoat he had hanging in his closet." In 1981, Fitzsimmons died and was succeeded by Roy Williams, whose "election came 'politburo style' by unanimous vote of the general executive board, after a 20-minute meeting in Las Vegas. In 1983, Williams resigned following his jury conviction for conspiring to bribe a Senator. "The union picked up the entire cost of his defense. As a result, in salary, expenses, and benefits as general president in 1982, Williams received \$813,247." Later, he turned government informer, gaining his release from prison.

On April 21, 1983, Presser was unanimously chosen by the general executive board to replace Williams, overcoming some initial opposition. "Don't worry," Presser told Zeller, "I'm locked in through the boys in the East." Zeller adds, "The boys' were the Mafia." Vice President Jesse Carr totaled his spoils: "I got another plane, two new offices, a new secretary, the Western Conference of Teamsters, and more money. That's not bad for one vote."

Presser did all right, too: "His combined salary for all his union posts immediately jumped to \$548,000." Zeller testifies that "the drawers of Jackie's bedroom bureau were stuffed with money received as kickbacks from various union contracts. Whenever a Teamster watch, cufflink, flashlight, bookmark, or whatever was purchased, Jackie got a cut. And Presser believed that most of the general executive board were

doing the same." Jackie Presser's climb to the union's top began in 1966, when his father, Bill Presser, set up a new Teamsters local union in Cleveland and put his son in charge. The father was convicted in 1971 of embezzling union funds and extortion.

Nevertheless, the elder Presser stayed on in the union and later simultaneously held seven posts, including trustee of the multi-billion dollar Central States Pension Fund and Teamsters vice president, for a combined salary of \$145,541. Jackie Presser eventually replaced his father on the pension fund, and in 1976, he and other trustees were sued by the Labor Department because of "\$120 million in illegal loans made to Las Vegas casinos and organized crime figures." In 1980, President-elect Ronald Reagan "named Presser a senior advisor for labor and economic affairs on his transition team."

The Presser regime ended with his death from cancer in July 1988. His wife of less than three years receives \$7,500 a month from the Teamsters pension fund. At the time of his death, Presser was awaiting trial in a \$3 million suit. The Cleveland rank and filers who brought the suit claimed that Presser and another officer had defrauded the local union by hiring "ghost employees."

This was done even though in August 1985 "the FBI revealed that it had authorized Presser to make payments to the ghost employees on the union payroll." Presser was also a FBI snitch and "a major one at that. On a regular basis Jackie was passing information to assigned agents in the Bureau, detailing who among the Mafia and his fellow Teamsters was connected, disclosing information on friends and foes alike."

Zeller admits he shared in the good things of life enjoyed by the Teamsters upper crust: "an expense account, credit cards, and my own Teamstermobile" (a new Lincoln Town Car). Zeller also participated in the officials' lies and deceptions. For example, in 1984, Presser ordered Zeller to cook up a phony membership poll that would favor Reagan over Mondale. Four years later, the new president, Billy McCarthy, had Zeller phony up another membership poll, this time with George Bush the "winner" and Michael Dukakis the "loser." Perhaps Zeller partly wrote this book to get back into the Teamsters cookie jar. The book contains a full-page photo portrait of James Hoffa, Jr., the presidential candidate of the old-guard bureaucrats in the recent Teamster elections. And the last chapter, titled "Here's Jimmy Hoffa," reads, in part, like a press release from the Hoffa Jr. camp. Zeller depicts the younger Hoffa "as the white knight who many believed would ride into the 1996 campaign to save a Teamsters Union in distress." And Teamster President Ron Carey, writes Zeller before the votes were counted in December, "is fiercely resented

by a membership incensed not only by reports of his alleged mob connections but also by his self-aggrandizing dalliance as a real estate tycoon...." But thanks to the Teamsters rank and file, Carey has been reelected president, and Hoffa Jr. and Zeller are stuck with their current day jobs. ★

Birch Lane Press, Secaucus, N.J., 368 pp., \$24.95

From Marx to Gramsci: A Reader in Revolutionary Marxist Politics Paul Le Blanc, [ed.]

reviewed by Joe Auciello

The late Ernest Mandel, one of the Marxist activists and intellectuals to whom this new anthology is dedicated, once wrote that revolutionaries of our time would have to be "equally adept both on the barricades and in the library." In life, only the rare individual achieves this ideal, a goal more to be strived for than attained. Perhaps a book, rather than a person, can more readily blend the qualities of the political fighter and the university professor. That is what Paul Le Blanc has accomplished with *From Marx to Gramsci*.

This anthology, with thoughtful and ample selections from Marx and Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, and Gramsci, and a comprehensive introduction by Le Blanc, will be equally valuable to the scholar, student, and activist. It is a work ideally suited to the classroom and the class struggle.

The readings are carefully chosen and representative of their authors' notable theories and contributions to Marxism. The sample from Rosa Luxemburg, for instance, highlights her ideas of the mass strike, reform versus revolution, and imperialism. The selections from Lenin show his ideas about the party, nationalism, and the state. All of the selections are preceded by a brief biographical and critical note by Le Blanc which creates a useful context for the readings.

Given the limits of a one-volume anthology, Le Blanc has successfully exercised creative editorial judgement in his selections. The readings blend familiar and obligatory titles like *The Communist Manifesto* (deleting material that is only of historical interest) with lesser-known, shorter works that summarise the essential points of books which are too lengthy for inclusion. Hence, Lenin's classic *The State and Revolution* will not be found here, but his 1919 speech "The State" is included. Similarly, Trotsky's masterful 1932 speech "In Defence of the Russian Revolution" stands in for his massive *History of the Russian Revolution*.

These shorter, self-contained pieces convey the essential themes of the longer and

Conference reports

"Lean and mean" Fourth International youth camp

The fourteenth European youth camp in solidarity with the Fourth International was very successful, despite a drop in participation in relation to previous years.

Penny Duggan

The five hundred young comrades present showed from the beginning to the end their determination to open this "breach in Fortress Europe." Starting from discussion on the struggle against the Europe of Maastricht, the Schengen accords and other convergence criteria that are being imposed on us they arrived at the end of the week to more strategic questions: why and how to do away with the society of today.

They exchanged their experiences of struggle against budget cuts in education, against racism and fascism, for the defence of the environment, in order to arrive at the mutual understanding which is an indispensable basis for common work. After the mobilisation for the counter-summit in Amsterdam in June, they argued, the mobilisation must continue. And the links between the struggles and active forces in the different countries must be strengthened.

A commitment was made to try to build a youth network against neo-liberal Europe using opportunities which exist already, like the call by the youth of Italy's Refounded Communists (*Rifondazione*) in Italy for a demonstration in Venice on 13th September (p.19) and the planned demonstration at the European summit in Luxembourg in November. (p.21)

The programme of the camp had been decided by the representatives of the youth groups from 15 countries which co-organise the event every year. For some sessions, they called on older comrades. Daniel Bensaïd spoke on the relevance of the Russian Revolution, the importance of the life of Che Guevara and our project of a new society. Alain Krivine was also present and explained to comrades, most of whom were not even born at the time, the forms of the deep youth radicalisation of 1968 and how it had contributed to the development of the Fourth International.

The camp was held near Brioude in the French Massif Central. It was in this region that four Trotskyist resistance fighters were massacred by the Stalinist after their escape. This tragic episode was remembered during the camp by a tribute paid to one of the four, Pietro Tresso, founder of Italian Trotskyism,



But I told you Paula was a veggie

by Livio Maitan [to be published in a future issue of *International Viewpoint*]. We also invited Raymond Vacheron, a well-known activist in the region and co-author with Pierre Broué of a recent book on this event, to explain how he had reconstituted the history.

Latin America

Another high point of the week was the meeting on Latin America where Pola Ferrari, a young Uruguayan comrade, one of the central organisers of the camp organised in April 1996 by the Youth Front against Repression which brought together five thousand young activists in the Southern Cone, spoke to us about the situation in Latin America and the struggles of young people, of the landless peasants of Brazil, of the indigenous people in Mexico with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation...

These are only some of the forums, educational meetings, workshops and rallies that formed the political programme of the camp. At the final evaluation meeting all the delegations said that the debates had been well-prepared and were very interesting. This was also shown by the good level of activity in all the "political" activities of the camp (in the strict sense of the term.)

The camp is also an occasion to try to put into practice, during one week, a certain number of our principles. It is a place where racist, sexist and homophobic words and acts are banned. It is also a space which is self-managed by the young comrades. Even if they call on "adults" for a certain number of political or technical tasks, the leadership of the camp remains in the hands of the daily meeting of the representatives of the different delegations.

Thus young people from Portugal to Poland, from Sweden to Italy, learn to work together despite their cultural differences – whether political, foodwise or simply in daily life.

Women

Within the camp the women comrades have a place for themselves, to organise discussion, have parties or simply to be with

other women. And at the end of the women's day – a day when the theme of all the discussion is around women's struggles – the disco itself becomes a "women's only" space so that a big party ends this day with an affirmation of the strength and solidarity of the women in the camp.

Another much appreciated party during the week was that organised by the Portuguese comrades in solidarity with the third world, from which Western music was 'banned' in favour of Latin America, African and Asian music.

A lesbian and gay space

The last, and for many the best, party in the camp was that organised by the comrades from the gay and lesbian space. This is also a tradition of the camp. Throughout the camp there is a gay and lesbian space with discussions and exhibitions for all those who want to participate. The party in the disco has another dimension which is also to encourage everybody to think about their sexuality and some of their inhibitions.

In other words, a very successful camp this year, despite a certain drop in participation in relation to previous years.

Unfortunately the camp took place in the same period as two other initiatives attractive to young people interested in solidarity with the third world – the second Conference against neo-liberalism and for humanity, organised this year in the Spanish state, and in particular the World Festival of Youth and Students in Cuba, to which organisations present sent a message of solidarity.

For our Basque comrades there were also the important events which took place in their country in the days just before the camp which made it impossible for them to send even a small delegation.

However, for the first time there was a small Russian delegation which, together with ever-strengthening presence of our Polish comrades, helps us to make a reality of the breach in Fortress Europe.

With a big "thank you" to the French comrades for all their hard work, the delegations left, promising to meet again at the fifteenth camp in Denmark in 1998. ★

coming soon

Ernest Mandel Study Centre: Paris symposium on the Russian revolution

Two years ago, having lost our regretted comrade and friend, Ernest Mandel, we pledged to carry on the task of updating Marxism and enriching it which had been one of the main concerns of his life writes *Salah Jaber*. It is with this duty in mind that the Ernest Mandel Study Centre was launched (see Sept. 1995 issue.) In July 1996 the Centre organised a seminar dedicated to an evaluation and discussion of major aspects of Mandel's contribution to Marxist theory. (see Sept. 1996 issue).

Given the success of this first undertaking, we resolved to organise a yearly event, focusing on one of the key problems of Marxist theory in contemporary world, with a non-exclusive preference for topics to the study of which Ernest Mandel had contributed.

For 1997, the Centre planned to organise a seminar on the balance sheet of the 1917 October revolution, an issue to which Ernest devoted many writings, the latest and most complete being *Coup d'état or Social Revolution* (IIRE, 1992).

It turned out, however, that a symposium devoted to the same topic was being organised in Paris by *Espaces Marx*, a pluralistic Marxist research foundation linked to the French Communist Party and co-administered by some of the Parisian fellows of the EMSC like Michael Löwy and Catherine Samary. It was therefore decided to merge the two projects. The EMSC joins with *Espaces Marx*, the research centres of Paris VIII and Dijon universities and journals including *La Pensée* and *Critique communiste* in organising the symposium, to take place at Université Paris VIII on November 14-16.

This event is likely to be one of the major international gatherings of Marxists scholars and thinkers held in recent years. More than forty contributors (from France, Russia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, China, Cuba, Egypt, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Spain, and the USA) will discuss a varied list of topics related to the study of the October Revolution and its historical legacy. Scheduled participants include Samir Amin, Daniel Bensaid, Robin Blackburn, Samuel Farber, Marc Ferro, Janette Habel, Boris Kagarlitsky, Paul Leblanc, V.P. Volobuyev, and Claudie Weil.

The proceedings will be translated simultaneously into English, French and Russian. The registration fee is quite affordable (FF100 for individuals, FF200 if an institution is paying for you, FF50 for students and unemployed) and so is the cost of accommodation: beds in 2-to-3-bed rooms at a nearby hostel for only FF50 (\$9) per night

If you want to attend this important event, write to *Espaces Marx* (64 Bd Blanqui, 75013 Paris, France), attaching a check for the registration fee, plus accommodation if needed (in that case, specify which nights you are booking for). The check will be kept as a deposit and given back to you against payment in French cash on arrival. Meals will be paid on the spot

International LaborMedia '97

(Seoul, Korea, 10-12 November 1997)

In spite of a total lack of financial resources and experiences, we, Korean activists are trying to organise a conference on "Labour Movement and Media: Workers, Information Technology and Solidarity" and an international labour video and film festival in Seoul, Korea. The recent South Korean general strike showed not only the energy of the working class who want to fight against the capitalist attack on the global level, but also our ability to use communication media such as the Internet and video for information-sharing and strengthening solidarity on the national and international level. (See <http://kpd.sing-kr.org/strike>)

The conference will coincide with the annual mass rally organised by the KCTU (Korean confederation of trade unions, which organised the general strike in January). This will be a great opportunity to see and feel the impetus of the struggle of the Korean labour movement.

Registration Fee: evening of November 8 - morning of November 13 -- Including accommodation for five nights with all meals and participating in Worker's mass rally
Private room: 130 \$ • Pension: 250 \$ (30% discount for Underdeveloped Country, 10% discount for registration before 15 October).

Organisers (As of August 22nd): Labour News Production (LNP), Truenet, Task Group for Labour Information (TGLI), Social Information Networking Group (SING), Solidarity for Democracy and Progress (SDP), Korea research institute for worker's human rights and justice (KRIWRJ)

Organising Sponsor (As of August 22nd): Korea Confederation of Trade Unions(KCTU).

Contact: Seoul International LaborMedia '97 Committee
tel: +82-2-855-1913, fax: +82-2-858-1913,
e-mail: labormedia@mail.sing-kr.org [To join conference mailing list write to LM@mail.sing-kr.org]
Internet: <http://kpd.sing-kr.org/labormedia>

South Asia and the diaspora 50 years after the end of British colonialism

School of Oriental and African Studies*
Malet St, London. 18-19 Oct. 1997

Organised and co-ordinated by the British-based South Asia Solidarity Group, this unique conference will bring together key academics and activists from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Europe and North America. We will discuss the effects of globalisation on South Asia, and the intense organised struggles waged by powerful people's movements: a feature of all countries in the region today.

Speakers and participants will examine the new strategies and theoretical approaches emerging in these movements,

and the identities of class, caste, gender and nationality which these struggles are heightening and reshaping. Many of these speakers are well known activists in South Asia, but speaking for the first time in Britain.

Sessions include: workers struggles in the context of industrial restructuring and structural adjustment • globalisation, the nation state, militarisation and refugees communalism (religious sectarianism) and fascism • gender and identity in S. Asia and the Diaspora • the relationship between people's movements and NGOs • globalisation and South Asian culture and art • the changing nature of racism in the context of the new world order • the left in South Asia and strategies for the future.

Speakers include: Uma Chakravarti, feminist scholar and civil liberties activist (India) • Hassan Gardezi, editor of "Pakistan: the roots of dictatorship – political economy of a praetorian state" • Rustom Bharucha, theatre director and critic, writer on globalisation and culture (India) • Randhir Singh, influential Marxist thinker (India) • Anu Muhammad, writer on alternative strategies for development (Bangladesh) • Dalip Swamy, writer on India's New Economic Policies and civil liberties activist • Dipankar Bhattacharya, representative of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) and trade union organiser • Salma Ali, legal activist with women workers in the Dhaka Free Trade Zone (Bangladesh) • Shahnaz Rouse, writer on women, nationalism and fundamentalism in Pakistan • Nirmala Rajasingham, Sri Lankan Tamil feminist writer and activist • Mrinal Chakma, activist from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (India)

* Sponsored by SOAS, De Montfort University and Luton University

Registration: £3/day for students, low and unwaged, £10/day for waged individuals, and £25/day for institutions. Cheques payable to SASC, c/o Londec, Instrument House, 205-217 Kings Cross Rd, WC1X 9DB. For further details tel./fax +44 171 354 8744 or 713 7907

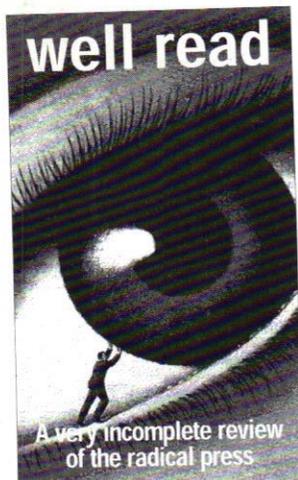
Raise your banners '97

31 Oct.-2 Nov. 1997, Sheffield, England

Following the enormous success of the '95 festival, plans are under way for a bigger, better, even more exciting celebration of political music.

Invitations have gone out to some of the best known British and international names in political music. An extensive programme of films, drama, performance poetry, workshops, children's events, exhibitions and discussions will complement the more than 20 concerts which are planned for city centre venues, large and small.

To receive a programme send a SAE to the Festival Office, RYB, PO Box 44, Sheffield, S4 7RN



Monthly Review

Summer 1997 Special double issue: Rising from the ashes? Labor in the age of "global capitalism." Edited by Ellen Meiksins Wood and guest editors Peter Meiksins and Michael Yates. Contents include: Zapatismo and the Workers Movement in Mexico at the End of the Century by Edur Velasco Arregui, and Richard Roman • Organizing the Unorganized: Will Promises Become Practices? by Fernando Gaspas and Michael Yates • Notes on Labor at the End of the Century: Starting Over? by Sam Gindin • Race and Labor Organization in the United States by Michael Goldfield • Talking About Work by Doug Henwood • Same As It Ever Was? The Structure of the Working Class by Peter Meiksins • American Labor: A Movement Again? by Kim Moody • The French Winter of Discontent by Daniel Singer • The "Late Blooming" of the South Korean Labor Movement by Hochul Sonn • Labor, The State, and Class Struggle by Ellen Meiksins Wood

US\$7 from Monthly Review, 122 West 27th St., New York, NY 10001, USA. MasterCard/Visa orders call +1 212 691 2555. fax: 727 3676 <mreview@igc.apc.org>

Socialist Challenge

Summer 1997 issue includes: Reds and Greens — Allies against a common enemy • BC Premier pits workers against environmentalists • Homophobic bigots are repelled, but the tactic raises a debate • Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation • No! to APEC • Unity talks between Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste and the New Socialist Group

Socialist Challenge is the English language publication of Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste, the section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state. For a sample copy or subscription (\$12 for four issues in Canada), please contact Socialist Challenge, Box 4955, Main Post Office, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4A6 Canada or email <rbanner@web.net>

International Viewpoint

1996 collection

The 1996 collection costs £10/\$20. Bound volumes for previous years ('90, '91, '92 '94, '95) cost £5/\$10. 20% Discount on orders of four or more volumes. Full Index included.

NetWorking



Global Labour Directory

What better occasion than Labor Day (in the USA and Canada) to launch the Global Labour Directory of Directories?

This is not a listing of trade union web sites but a directory of such listings. One of the four directories has more than four times as many listings as Yahoo in this field.

If you've just launched a labour web site -- or if you want to further promote an existing site -- use the on-line form to promote your site to all the top labour directories on-line.

The question of a comprehensive and authoritative labour directory on the Web has not yet been settled. But here are some comments and pointers, as well as critiques of some sites which could be doing better. [EL]

www.solinet.org/LEE/gldod.html

Global Labournet

The latest issue of the on-line newsletter dealing with trade unions and computer networking focuses on international conferences in Seoul, Manchester and San Francisco concerned with trade unions and the new communications technologies.

www.solinet.org/LEE/labour04.html

Le Monde diplomatique

France's largest and fastest-growing left magazine has launched an English edition on the Internet. Arabic, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish editions of the radical monthly already exist in printed form. Circulation is 250,000 for the French monthly, and 200,000 for the other language versions combined.

www.monde-diplomatique.fr/int/en/

To subscribe to the free "dispatch" mailing-list, send an (empty) e-mail to:

dispatch-on@london.monde-diplomatique.fr

Viento Sur

The bi-monthly Spanish magazine produced by supporters of the Alternative Left current.

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

IIRE

The International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, and its publications can be accessed via the *International Viewpoint* website

www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm

Australia's DSP

The new Democratic Socialist Party website includes details for the 1998 Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference, as well as links to *Green Left Weekly*, ASIET, CISLAC, Resistance and other initiatives. Coming soon: updates to the Links and Resistance Bookshop pages.

www.peg.apc.org/~dsp/

Global Labournet

The latest issue of the on-line newsletter dealing with trade unions and computer networking focuses on international conferences in Seoul, Manchester and San Francisco concerned with trade unions and the new communications technologies.

www.solinet.org/LEE/labour04.html

Agitprop News

The Labor Art & Mural Project (LAMP) runs an email list for cultural workers, artists and activists, on behalf of the Cultural Workers and Artists Caucus (CWAC,) of the (U.S.) Labor Party.

The list carries "announcements of political developments, national and international, of concern to artists and other known trouble makers."

>> lamp@igc.apc.org

www.igc.apc.org/laborart

Jerusalem AIC

The Alternative Information Center has a new address:

<http://aic.netgate.net/>

International Viewpoint

There has been a sharp rise in visits to *International Viewpoint's* own web site since mid-May. Visitors came from at least 47 countries (compared to "only" 32 in the previous period).

The USA is still the largest readership group, with 11% of hits (down from 30%), followed by Sweden, Norway, Germany, Finland, Belgium, Turkey and Japan. New hits were recorded from Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia.

A growing number of webmasters (most not connected to the Fourth International) have created links to the site. Special thanks to Labour Left Briefing in Britain, and those in Spain, Finland, Britain, USA, Denmark, Belgium and elsewhere for encouraging free speech and democracy on Internet!

International Viewpoint now receives more visitors than our web host, the Swedish fourth internationalist weekly *Internationalen*. That site received 4,700 visits between May 16 and July 15, compared to 3,500 in the previous two months. Webmaster Peter Lingren reports that, "Swedish FI supporters have a strong presence at some Volvo-plants but hardly any members at the IT-giant Ericsson. But the number of visitors from the second company is higher. Maybe because Ericsson is planning to layoff 8,000 employees!"

www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm

Our English listserv provides the full contents of this magazine, and articles from our associated publications.

International_Viewpoint@compuserve.com