

international  
**VIEWPOINT**  
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France :

**Youth force right to retreat**

Mexico :

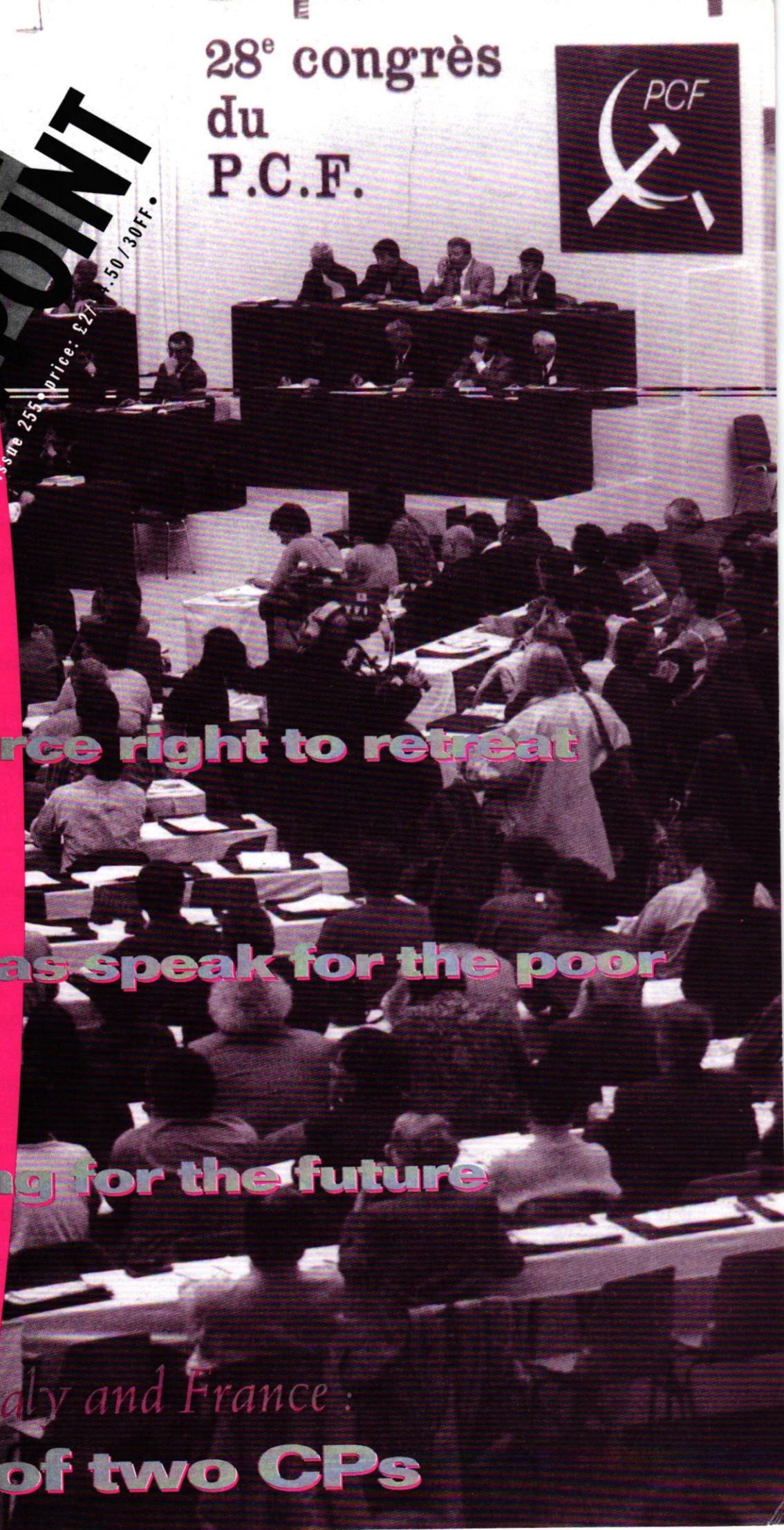
**Zapatistas speak for the poor**

South Africa :

**Preparing for the future**

Dossier — Italy and France :

**A tale of two CPs**



# CONTENTS

## 3 VIEWPOINT

### 4 FRANCE

**Youth force right to retreat**  
— *Raghu Krishnan*

### 6 EX-YUGOSLAVIA

**Second Workers' Aid convoy**  
— *Report from IWA office in Split, Croatia*

### 8 MEXICO

**Zapatistas speak for the poor**  
— *Sergio Rodríguez Lascano*

**Candidate in a ski-mask?**  
— *Jeff Mackler*

## DOSSIER: Communist Parties

**14 Hands up for renewal**  
— *Daniel Bensaid*

**16 ITALY**  
**A refoundation still to come**  
— *Livio Maitan*

**20 GREECE**  
**"Good old days" no comfort**  
— *Tassos Goudelis*

**22 FRANCE**  
**Safety in continuity**  
— *Francis Sitel*

**26 SOUTH AFRICA**  
**Preparing for the future**  
— *Peter Blumer*

**30 PALESTINE**  
**No abnormal sin**  
— *Adel Samara*

**True and false naïvity**  
— *Salah Jaber*

**33 WORK**  
**Sketching out alternatives**  
— *Maxime Durand*

**36 AROUND THE WORLD**  
● **World Bank** ●

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# There's a bar in Bologna...

ROLAND WOOD

It is said, and I do not think that this is just another apocryphal yarn, that in the bars of Bologna, northern Italy, silver-haired veterans from the war-time resistance will still, on occasion, burst into a chorus of "Bandiera Rossa". If these same "cantatori" were singing at all after the country's recent election, one can only assume that it was more for comfort and a little ideological reassurance, than any kind of celebration.

We will be examining the full implications of this election in a future issue. For now, it is worth commenting on the victorious right's spurious, but principal post-election claim.

The "Alliance for Freedom" of Mr Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the federalist Northern League, and the neo-fascist National Alliance (formerly the MSI, and now the third largest party in parliament), asserts that its victory was based on overwhelming national support.

On the contrary, regional disparity in voting patterns has again increased. It is as if Italy has unilaterally split into three parts — the north, centre and south — with parts of the centre, a traditional bastion for communist and socialist voters, holding off the challenge from the right. In Umbria, for example, candidates from the "Progressive Alliance" (213 seats, 32.2% of the vote), the "left" so to speak, were elected in all the new first-past-the-post seats, while in Tuscany, they won 80% of the seats.

The real losers, as voters clearly intended, were the former ruling parties. The former Christian Democrats, now renamed the Popular Party, were reduced to 11.1%, while the "Socialists" were all but wiped off the electoral map.

While the new electoral system makes comparisons with the last election difficult, the vote for the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), even as part of the "Progressive Alliance", remained relatively stable, with approximately six percent of the overall vote and a small increase (from thirty-five to forty) in the number of deputies elected to the lower house. As Livio Maitan explains in this month's dossier, the PRC faces enormous challenges. In the

immediate post-election period they will come under particular pressure from the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS, the majority of the former Communist Party). PDS leaders have already spoken of their desire to "transform this electoral pact (the "Progressive Alliance") into a firm democratic unity..." The PDS wants the left to dance to their tune, and their tune alone — and it won't be "Bandiera Rossa".

## France

French youth will know neither the words or the tune to the anthem of Italian communism, but they certainly know what they want. And they got it. Raghu Krishnan explains the background to a series of demonstrations which has brought hundreds of thousands of young people from across the country onto the streets to protest against reductions in the minimum wage. The rightwing government has retreated.

## Mexico

Sergio Rodriguez and Jeff Mackler, while writing before the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the Presidential candidate of Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, provide an excellent background in this issue to understanding what the impact of this event will be.

## South Africa

Peter Blumer outlines the options for the left, particularly the revolutionary left, in South Africa's first non-racial elections, later this month. We are also publishing, for readers information, extracts from the manifesto of the "Workers' List Party", of which the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action is the principal sponsor. Look out for a full dossier on post-election South Africa in our June issue. ★

**Out now!**

# INTERNATIONAL MARXIST REVIEW

No. 15

Spring 1994

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## **Capitalism's new economic order — Restructuring the labour process**

- ◆ **Maxime Durand** introduces the issue with the political economy of "Lean Production"
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This edition of *International Marxist Review* will be the last in its current format. A discussion has begun, the aim of which will be to decide on a better format for the presentation of the Fourth International's theoretical views. Details will be published here in *International Viewpoint*. ☉

# Youth force right to retreat

**ALMOST to the year that Eduard Balladur's rightwing government was elected, he has found himself confronted with some very angry French youth. For nearly a month now, several hundreds of thousands of students, unemployed and semi-employed youth, teachers and other trade unionists have taken to the streets in protest. The government has been forced to withdraw legislation which cut minimum wage levels — but protests continue.**

**RAGHU KRISHNAN**  
Paris, 31 March 1994

“We'd rather take to the streets than end up in them.” With this slogan, student demonstrations last year set the tone for the more recent.

The current rightwing government is haunted by images of May 1968 when student protests led to a month-long general strike of 10 million workers and created a situation that sent De Gaulle scampering over to Germany to see if he had the support of French troops stationed there. More recently, it was student protests that eventually led to the fall of the 1986-1988 rightwing government led by Jacques Chirac.

The government of Edouard Balladur is all the more edgy because this is the latest and most widespread in a series of challenges, in particular the militant Air France strike, which began towards the end of last year.

At the same time, the first signs of student unrest emerged in opposition to plans to cut back student housing grants, against underfunding of the education system and a reduction in vacancies in the public service.

The next wave of protest arose in opposition to government plans to devote more public funds to the private (and largely Church-run) school system. On 16 January, the largest demonstration since the late 1960s brought some

750 thousand people from across the country to Paris, in defence of properly-funded, universally accessible and secular education. Once again, Prime Minister Balladur was forced to retreat.

Just before the latest round of protests, violent clashes continued over several days in the suburbs of Paris — largely pitting the teenage children of Arab and Black immigrants against local police forces — following the murder of a teenager of Vietnamese origin and rumours that his killer had been set free.

The object of the current youth unrest is a package of government labour reforms — known as the “CIP”, the French initials for “contract for professional integration” — that make it cheaper for employers to hire youth in all categories, including university and technical school graduates.

Although promoted by government spokespeople as a plan to fight unemployment, there is every reason to believe that the reforms will do nothing of the sort. Youth hired at the lower wage would be merely replacing an older worker neatly disposed of through an early retirement package or simply dismissed

## Unemployment

In other cases, many youth that would have been hired at the full wage will now be taken on — after six months of unemployment for degree-holders — at a wage anywhere between 20% and 70% lower than before, according to age and the level of post-secondary education.

A job “created” in this way can last for a maximum of two years, after which time the employer can take the person on at the full wage or hire another cut-rate youngster. It is not difficult to figure out that the employer will usually go for the latter option — if the position is filled at all, that is.

An article in *Le Monde*, 18 March, put it best: “The CIP does not so much create as it does generalise the [youth minimum wage], with a 20% cut in the professional minimum wage for degree-holders. More generally, employment policy over the last 15 years has had hardly any effect on youth hiring, in spite of all the [tax and social security]

exemptions offered to employers. At the same time, the over-50 age group has been massively oriented towards early retirement schemes. The result: access to employment is de facto reserved in the main for those between 30 and 50 years old.”

The CIP blow has been hardest for the very students that accepted arguments about the need for people with a technical education. Since the 1980s, middle-class youth in all the Western industrialised countries have been told that this is the way to a secure future — and the way to lead their countries out of recession.

Now, government and employers are telling them that the economic and professional value of their degrees is not so great after all. And these technical graduates have seen their unemployment rate rise to ten percent, a five-fold increase in the last four years.

## Middle-class

No surprise, then, that it is the sons and daughters of “La France profonde” — white, middle-class families in cities and towns outside Paris — that now find themselves in the front line of a showdown with the government and its police.

But unemployment and insecurity run rampant through all categories of French youth. Nearly one quarter of France's 4 million unemployed are under twenty-five. Even for those with jobs, which are increasingly part-time, the situation is also unstable.

Many high schools and colleges are on strike, and some universities are occupied. However, the absence of student unions in the technical high schools and colleges has made it difficult to establish representative bodies to organise and be accountable to the movement. And there is certainly no question of the movement immediately turning for leadership to the established leftwing parties — the Socialist Party (PS), Communist Party (PCF), Greens, or the revolutionary left.

Demonstrations have taken place even in the smallest of communities and in some of the bigger cities — Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, Lille, Nantes — they have been joined by large contingents of

high school youth and unemployed teenagers from the working class suburbs. These are often the largest and most militant contingents, and are certainly the most diverse in terms of their ethnic and gender composition.

The participation of these youth from the working class and heavily immigrant suburbs has increased the stakes of the stand-off, and touched the rawest nerve of the French right-wing. It seems there is nothing the country's rulers fear and hate more than the children of Arab and Black immigrants, all the moreso if they are joined by their white friends.

From the early to mid-1980s, it was the children of immigrant workers that were at the cutting edge of struggles for democracy and social justice. They have played a decisive role in each wave of mass youth protest, following their cross-country "Marche des Beurs" ("Beurs" is slang for the children of Arab immigrants) and the "Marche pour l'égalité".

Conditions for these youth are even worse — with estimates placing unemployment in their ranks at 50% — and further aggravated by constant police harassment and the growing xenophobic climate in the country.

The fact that their movement was betrayed and co-opted by the last PS government — and then frontally attacked by the right-wing — has been a significant contributing factor to the current despair and disorientation in their ranks.

The response of the authorities to the broadening of the movement to include these suburban youth has been as predictable as it has been unfortunate. In reply to some isolated incidents of looting and stone-throwing, the government — in the shape of the arch-reactionary Interior Minister Charles Pasqua — attempted to justify its stepped up repression of the whole movement by decrying the presence of those who were allegedly trying to use it to further their own violent and criminal ends.

The racial overtones have been barely hidden. To drive the point home, two teenage students of Algerian origin, Mouloud Madaci and Abdel Hakim Youbi — both in France since childhood — were arrested after one of the demonstrations in Lyon and, without even a proper trial, expelled on a ship to Algeria (see box). For now, at least, attempts such as this to divide and break the movement have been ineffective.

In general, demonstrators have had to contend with police repression. Some

reports speak of plain-clothes police themselves smashing shop windows in order to invite the wrath of their uniformed colleagues. Arrested protesters have seen their rights curtailed in the courts, with sentences being pronounced before the required legal defence can be provided.

With the CIP now officially buried, and the student protests at their peak, the question of the future of the movement is now up in the air.

Seeing the CIP as a clear attack on their members and on workers' rights generally, the country's trade union federations staged their first joint action since 1962, a nation-wide demonstration of some 200 thousand people on 12 March. In spite of the withdrawal of the CIP, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), which remains close to the PCF, has decided to go ahead with plans for a general strike on 7 April, now directed against the government's five-year economic plan.

### Decisive

The role played by university arts and science students will also be a decisive factor. In May 1968 it was these students that played the leading role. Thus far, they have largely remained on the sidelines, with the idea that the CIP would not affect them. There have been some signs of movement, however. In late March, for example, six-hundred students occupied university buildings at the Tolbiac campus of the University of Paris.

On April 6 a cross-country trek by the new "Act against unemployment!" campaign will begin. It is scheduled to end with a huge march on Paris at the end of May. The campaign involves trade unionists, unemployed activists, housing rights activists and people from the women's and other social and democratic movements.

In the meantime, the government does not intend to sit by and mourn the death of the CIP. They have already announced new "job creation" measures expected to put six billion francs (\$1 billion) into the pockets of employers who hire youth over the next eighteen months.

Trade unions have already denounced this as another giveaway, which encourages employers to dismiss older

workers and provide temporary and underpaid work to youth. Even dissenting voices within the government have said the new measures will create 15 thousand jobs at the most.

However, not one to mince words, the president of the National Employers' Council, François Périgot, declared: "There are only two ways to go — either to lower salaries, or to reduce (employers') social security payments. It is a question of political opportunity." Fighting words, which cannot go unanswered.

Indeed, there is every reason to believe that the threat of "social explosion" will continue to loom over the country for some time to come. ★

### A permanent provocation

THE expulsion to Algeria of Mouloud Madaci and Abdel Hakim Youbi — two students arrested after a demonstration in Lyon — is the first overtly political use of the new immigration laws the Balladur government introduced soon after taking office in March 1993. The changes, known as the Pasqua laws, after the Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, essentially create two legal categories for youth in France, with immigrants (and those born to immigrants) getting second class treatment.

The Lyon police invoked the harshest component of the law — meant for terrorists — to expel the two. While a national legal body has declared the expulsion illegal, the Lyon police — with Pasqua's silent blessing — have challenged the ruling. In the meantime, the two teenagers are awaiting their return to France in the international transit zone of the port of Algiers.

Protesters — first in Lyon, then nation-wide — have made the return of the two the central demand of their post-CIP actions. The slogan "Libérez nos camarades!" ("Free our comrades!") was at the forefront of the 31 March demonstrations. Clearly, they understand the moral and political stakes of this heinous act. — RK ☉

# Second Workers' Aid convoy

## Build direct links

INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid (IWA) convoys will converge on Split, Croatia, 8 April. The IWA is "back on the road" following the success of the first convoy to Tuzla, Bosnia last year, and the determination of the recent IWA conference in Amsterdam to continue building and spreading the campaign.

But financial aid is still needed and we urge every reader to send what they can to the IWA account in Denmark (see opposite). Following arrival in Split meetings will be organised with local trade unions, which have often been at the forefront of the anti-war opposition. Direct links between rank-and-file workers in the former Yugoslavia and Western Europe have, throughout the war, been one of the small rays of hope for the future.

This is why plans are being hatched to bring trade unionists from former Yugoslavia to Western Europe to meet and talk with the workers who have helped build the IWA convoys. A delegation from the Sarajevo-based union federation, Savez Sinokata B-H, has already visited Brussels, primarily for a meeting with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Their request for membership was refused and, instead, they were offered a probationary relationship.

Jenny Mees, a driver on the first convoy to Tuzla and member of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, also met with the Bosnian delegation and asked them if they would be prepared to attend a conference and speaking tour of trade unionists which would also include Croats and Serbs. While at first they said "no" to the inclusion of Serbs, "because they are the aggressors", after discussion they agreed. The ETUC, who will be in Sarajevo for 1 May, clearly has its own agenda for the re-organisation of the trade union movement in the event of a "peace settlement" along ethnic lines. Another reason, if any more were needed, for demonstrating that there is an alternative vision of international workers' solidarity. **Gerard Macklin** ♦

THE second International Workers' Aid (IWA) convoy is on the road and the newly established IWA office in Split, Croatia, sent us the following report.

AS of Saturday 19 March International Workers' Aid has been working from its new office in Split. We are currently overwhelmed with organising for the arrival of the international convoy. At present our main priorities are registering as an NGO with the Croatian authorities, hiring a warehouse, sorting out customs and opening a bank account so that the next convoy is not bedevilled by bureaucratic and logistical problems.

We are expecting the first loads of aid from Spain and Germany to arrive on 28 March and we will by then have a warehouse and efficient customs clearance procedures. We are co-operating in the receipt of the Spanish load with SOS Balkanes from Euzadi. We hope this is the first

of many occasions where we are able to co-operate. The main convoy from northern Europe arrives on 12 April and we are planning a weekend event in Split before unloading and preparing our off-road trucks for the run to Tuzla.

Many of the routes to central Bosnia are open and there are less HVO checkpoints. There is now a ferry to cross the Neretva river at Bjiela and there is talk of re-building the bridge. In Gornj Vakuf children are playing in the streets and people are tending their gardens. There is still some tension around Visoko where the "Bosnian Serbian Army" has yet to withdraw all their guns, and shells are still falling on Kladanj and Olavo.

As well as an increase in traffic from humanitarian aid organisations there are now a number of Bosnian-led initiatives.

One of these, the Convoy of Salt and Cereal, has been jointly organised by the Logistics Centres of Tuzla, Srebrenica, Gradacac and Brcko, and is sending ten trucks through at a time. In addition a lot of independents, business-people and "black-marketeers" are starting to organise runs. All food getting through will have the effect of depressing prices of basic commodities. The price of flour had risen to 30 Deutschmarks a kilo last winter but is now starting to fall as supplies get in.

The cease-fire is holding; at least between the HVO and the beleaguered Bosnia-Herzegovina government. However, the real beneficiaries of this deal will be the Croatian government and their German backers, whose economic power will very likely absorb the shattered Bosnian economy. Whether the Serbs can be persuaded to join this "confederation" remains to be seen (it

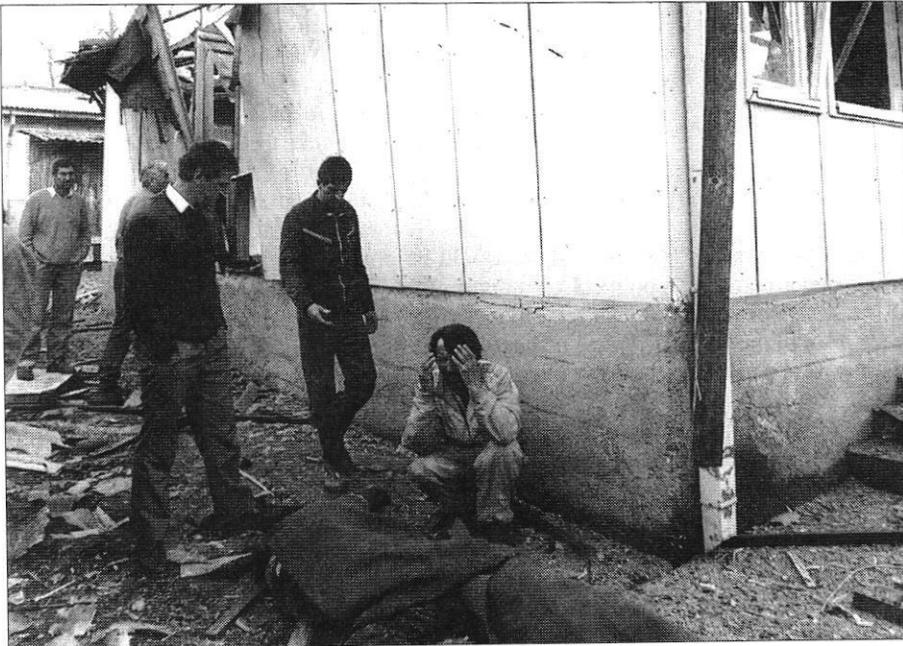
would leave them most if not all of the ground they hold and in effect divides the country into the ethnic cantons they have supported at Geneva). Meanwhile Bosnia remains isolated and desperately short of the basic commodities for everyday life.

The real losers of this war are the working people and farmers evicted from their towns and villages, the people who are now an army of 2 million refugees. Maybe three or four percent of these people have escaped from war, starvation and refugee camps to Western Europe. How many of those left can return to their homes? This "peace" solves none of the problems of the Balkans. The effects of this war will last for a generation at least.

We must broaden and deepen our campaign. The need for international working class solidarity and direct labour movement links represented by our aid convoys assumes an even greater importance. ★



**Tuzla, Bosnia:**  
A man cries next to his dead brother and nephew, killed by Serb shells 9 March — one day after UN troops took control of the airport



# Zapatistas speak for the poor

Whilst written, in the main, prior to the commencement of negotiations between the Zapatista National Liberation Army and the PRI-government, our Mexican correspondent builds upon his February article to further examine the impact and repercussions of the 1 January armed uprising.

**SERGIO RODRÍGUEZ LASCANO\*** — Mexico City, 21 February 1994

**T**HE action taken by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) on 1 January brought to a head the hidden crisis within the Mexican political system. Why did the crisis arise? President Salinas de Gortari was not, as some believe, simply attempting to implement neo-liberal economic policy, but, fundamentally, to restructure the way in which capital was accumulated and to play a more active role in relocating centres of labour. To Salinas the Free Trade Agreement not only made use of Mexico's geographical location, but also its potential productive capacity, and this would guarantee substantial economic growth.

## Abandoned

To make his approach credible Salinas abandoned State populism, believing that through the national social security programme, Pronasol, the people could be compensated for all the social costs which his vision would entail. However, a series of interventions by the large state social organisations, which operate as mechanisms of bureaucratic control, were ineffective. This does not mean (as we shall see later) that there is already a social movement which has broken the mechanisms of control.

The effectiveness of the Zapatista action relates to many of the features described in the February issue of *International Viewpoint*<sup>1</sup> (its indigenous nature, mode of action, policy of making alliances, and historical roots). But there is another fundamental feature: the existence of a popular democratic movement which since 1988 has consistently defied the government. This democratic movement is the greatest safeguard of Zapatism but at the same

time Zapatism has given it a new impetus. It is their connection which has brought about the present crisis in the Mexican State.

To separate the two would deal a death-blow to both. While it is true that the democratic movement is centred around the campaign for electoral democracy it has found a great many echoes among the Zapatistas. While the EZLN action was fundamentally military in nature, it also seeks to end the "State party" system. To want to separate them or to believe that one is more important than the other (or worse, that the Zapatistas will be able to resolve all the political problems facing the democratic movement or that the democratic movement can disguise itself as Zapatism) would not only be to misunderstand what is happening throughout the country but also an immense political error.

Certainly, Sub-commander Marcos of the EZLN has stated, when asked whether they were planning to take power by force of arms: "No. Unlike the Maoists, we have no conception of a peasant army descending on the cities from the mountains. If there were no workers there would be no possibility, political or military, of achieving anything..."

And he has also stated that there can be agreement with the popular movement in other organisations: "...this agreement with other sectors would have to be something larger and broader than the EZLN. For this reason we speak of a national revolutionary movement. If this banner were to be raised we would rally to it."<sup>2</sup>

The government project could not overcome two obstacles. Firstly, important sectors of the population no longer accept the suffocating national political system, which attempts to keep "those below" under the total control of the

State; secondly, there are sectors which, due to their own social structure, were more opposed to the policy of modernisation. The intention behind the reforms to Article 27 of the Constitution was to re-organise the country-side at any cost, even though this involved destruction of the indigenous communities. Luis Téllez, Under-Secretary of the organisation Agrarian Reform, put it clearly when he said that the reforms were analogous to the "winning of the West" by white colonists in the United States of America (USA), which ended in the almost total destruction of the indigenous peoples. Sub-commander Marcos again: "There was stagnation until the "supreme" government had the brilliant idea of reforming Article 27. This was a powerful catalyst for the communities. The reforms wiped out all legal possibility of holding land, and it was this which finally led to the formation of a paramilitary group for self-defence. Then there was the electoral fraud of 1988. [...] These two were the detonators, but I think what most radicalised the comrades were the reforms to Article 27, which closed the door to the indigenous peoples surviving in a legal and peaceful manner."<sup>3</sup>

The series of images, actions and comunicués during the uprising are a new message from the poor. They are trying to establish a dialogue between "those below" and the State. They are opposed to the myth that "modernity" will bring progress and First World standards for all. The vision of Joseph Córdoba Montoya (chief adviser to the Mexican regime, architect of Mexican "restructuring" and historical illiterate) is now confronted by the vision of the Zapatistas. Years of struggle have found renewed strength in the Zapatista project.

There are huge problems which must be resolved if our people are to have the chance of survival.<sup>4</sup> Adolfo Gilly calls these the points which "mark the line" for the construction of a new

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

1. See Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, 'The new Zapatistas', *International Viewpoint*, no. 253, February 1994.

2. Interview from *La Jornada*, 6 February 1994.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Inprecor para América Latina*, no. 25, September 1992.

socialist ideology. The Zapatista vision is not simply a programme set out for the Mexican people but encompasses their demands, after years of struggle, for work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy and justice. If these are achieved peace will be possible.

As a result of its actions, gestures and communiques, the people are identifying with the EZLN project. The Zapatistas destroying the town halls with spades and pick-axes yet at the same time saving the historical archive of San Cristóbal de las Casas, affected popular consciousness, which already distrusted the government-Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) institutions. No longer were "those below" "barbarous Mexico".

The government has attempted to fragment in various ways but in particular by television. Adolfo Gilly has explained it thus: "Capitalist use of television separates, debate, space, reason, and possibilities of social autonomy in the interpretation of the world."<sup>5</sup>

The EZLN has had a truly impressive capacity to gain access to the means of communication. In this it has made reality of Gilly's certainty that the "perverse attempt at fragmentation" through "the obsessive and solitary spectacle" will ultimately have a cost for capital. For example, "the revolutionising of images" promoted by television, has led to many viewers identifying Sub-commander Marcos with Juan del Diablo.<sup>6</sup> "Tiger" Azcárraga<sup>7</sup> is being destroyed on his own terrain, by images which have captured the consciousness of the people. This struggle has not finished and it would be a mistake to think that Televisa will not react.

The EZLN has now humiliated three of the four most important institutions in the country — the Presidency, the army, and Televisa — and helped to divide the fourth, the Church. This is a major achievement. However, the Mexican political system has many more resources than those of its friends in El Salvador and Guatemala. In less than two weeks it gained a great deal of ground in the politics of "the low intensity war", including by Camacho Solís recognising the EZLN as a "political current in process of formation" and hinting at the possibility of its being recognised as a legal party in the near future. This is because the Mexican regime believes that any person or organisation can be corrupted.

The significance of this strategy was described thus by North American,

Gabriel Kolko: "The war does not consist simply in the confrontation of rival armies...(but) between opposing social systems... (around)... political, economic and cultural institutions... The longer the war continues, the more likely that it will be decided outside the field of battle."<sup>8</sup> The government objective is obvious: faced with the impossibility or indeed the cost of a military victory, it is attempting to destroy the EZLN politically. To do so the conflict must be isolated, presented as a conventional confrontation and its support undermined, locally as well as nationally and internationally.

### Amnesty

This is what the government has tried to do. Since the announcement of the amnesty, all its actions have had a double character. On the one hand, it has responded to the pressures which have been placed on the State but on the other, it is attempting to break the dialogue between the EZLN and the general democratic movement. For this reason, "democratic peace" as referred to by Camacho Solís has been understood as the maintenance of the status quo.

The government sought the signature of an "Agreement for peace, democracy and justice", from the only party opposed to it which is legal. However, the same day that the signing of this pact was announced (including by Cuauhtémac Cárdenas, which was what gave the document credibility), Salinas showed that he is not committed to a transition to democracy when at a meeting with ministers, representatives from the Supreme Court of Justice and PRI deputies and senators, he stated that the economic model had not failed in Chiapas, nor had Pronasol or the State reforms. The only thing to fail had been their intelligence network. In signing the pact he was attempting to isolate the Zapatistas, so forcing them to negotiate from a weak position and manoeuvring them towards Cardenism; but he did not appreciate his position of weakness. Further, the Cardenista response to Salinas' words was unexpected, making clear, as it did, the links between events in Chiapas and the fate of the democratic movement in general. Cárdenas: "If this has been done with us and our signatures... what can be the credibility of the promises made by the Commissioner in Chiapas, in the negotiations with the EZLN?"<sup>9</sup> He stated this even more clearly on 13 February, at the end of the "One-hundred hours march for demo-

cracy",<sup>10</sup> when he declared: "The Chiapas rebellion made all our country and society think. We could see the causes which motivated the uprising and also many other political, social and economic problems. [...] We wish there to be correlation between what was signed and what happens in practice to resolve once and for all the problems and complaints of the Mexicans concerning work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. These are the claims which came from the heart of Chiapas. We can only agree with these claims."

The government's counter-insurgent project has been successful only in that the truce has allowed it time to prepare for future confrontation, should negotiation not have the result which it desires.

### Failed

The situation which has been created within the regime cannot be resolved. The PRI Presidential candidates campaign has failed to awaken the least interest and indeed seems certain to collapse. Each time Salinas believes that the worst is over and that the PRI can return to its previous behaviour, another event occurs.

The army feels itself to be the victim of a con-trick. If it has yielded to the traditional temptation to step in, it has also made it clear that it did so at the request of the civil State. Again, the army has a double character in that within the hierarchy there will likely be those who favour a coup, but there will be others who will not wish to risk the army on an irresponsible venture, besides which they do not completely reject the Cardenista position. Although Cárdenas himself has denounced the excesses of the army and demanded an inquiry he has placed responsibility for them on the civil State. He also recognises the military character of the EZLN, always speaks

5. *Inprecor para América Latina*, no. 32, May 1993.

6. Juan del Diablo is the main character in the most popular television serial in Mexico, which is broadcast by Televisa, the powerful Mexican television monopoly.

7. "Tiger" Azcárraga is the main shareholder in Televisa and the most important of the fifteen Mexicans among the richest people in the world.

8. Gabriel Kolko, 'Anatomy of a war: Vietnam the United States, and the modern Historical Experience'.

9. Cuauhtémac Cárdenas, discussion on 5 February, on the constitution of the National Democratic Alliance, which supports his Presidential candidacy.

10. From 9-13 February, thousands of people marched uninterruptedly for one-hundred hours in support of clean elections, which Cárdenas had called for in his speech on 5 February. It consisted in repeatedly going around the perimeter of Mexico City's main square (the Zócalo); at the same time, similar actions were carried out in other places.

of two armies and tends to analyse them symmetrically. This has provoked a completely disproportionate reaction from the PRI.

Salinas appears to have found himself in the same crisis as Porfirio Díaz, the President of Mexico toppled by the forces of Emiliano Zapata. Aware of Mexican history, Cárdenas put it thus: "The fate of the country is in the hands of one man, Carlos Salinas de Gortari [...] on whether he resolves, in the interests of the country, on an electoral clean-up which will have active support across the political, economic, social and intellectual spectrums and also for thousands of citizens... Not to do so would not only indicate that he does not want clean elections, but that he wants to rule the country by force."<sup>11</sup>

The problem is that Salinas will find it very difficult to accept the road to representative democracy. The political system of one-party domination has existed in Mexico for decades. The whole structure of bureaucratic control of the people (by unions, peasants' and other "popular" organisations), the political structure of regional control (governorships and municipal presidencies), the judicial system, all the "legislative" apparatus, absolutely everything, from police corruption to multi-million dollar frauds on the Stock Exchange or the privatisations which have sold the country off cheap, are based upon office not being taken different parties, but in there being a State party, in electoral fraud.

The neo-scientists who govern us do not have the knowledge of Mexican history held by their forebears. This handful of adventurers are however expert in outlining "critical routes" and "political scenarios" and our country, as designed by them, had momentary possibilities while they were able to co-opt, through corruption, many leaders of social organisations and members of opposition parties. But they have never known how to deal with true opponents, and with them turn to abuse, violence and even assassination (for example the disappearance of José Ramón García Gómez — Revolutionary Workers' Party militant and defender of the Cardenist triumph — shortly after Salinas took power, and the more than two-hundred and fifty assassinated members of the Party of Democratic Revolution); for Salinas politics is a continuation of the war by other means.

In Chiapas, as in the rest of the country, the demand for democracy is the very least which is ready to be accepted at this stage. And when we speak of

democracy, it is not merely a question of changes to the electoral law. The majority of the Mexican people believe that our country deserves a political system where the government and its party does not decide everything for them. This also applies to the social problems of land, housing, health, education and so forth, which would be confronted differently if there were no institutionalised structures of dictatorial control over society (the National Peasants Confederation, the Federal Electoral Institute, Pronasol, Televisa...). Democratic change would allow the different social sectors to express themselves.

### Skill

Through fear of this occurring the government has set up negotiations intended to prevent the EZLN from pronouncing on the national situation. However they have been unsuccessful, due not just to the skill of the EZLN but, above all, the echo which is beginning throughout the country. The cane cutters of Michoacán to the indigenous peasants of Guerrero Mountain, the peasants of Puebla, the more than two-hundred and twenty peasant organisations in Chiapas and many others have pronounced not only that they support the EZLN, and that they are in total agreement with its approach, but also that it has authority to propose alternatives for the nation.

It is extremely unlikely that the Chiapas conflict will be resolved early in negotiation and we see it rather as an opportunity for the ideas of "those below" to be heard throughout the country. All the Mexican people will be hanging on what is said. The government, through its representative Camacho Solís, will first offer money and more assistance from Pronasol; from time to time it will make a veiled threat. It will try to slip away from the debate around democracy while prompting the conversion of the EZLN into a legal party. It will refuse to amend the reforms to Article 27 of the Constitution but will make some vague remarks concerning indigenous self-government. For its part, the EZLN will very probably insist on the amendment of Article 27. They will not accept that the situation can be resolved by more assistance from Pronasol, but by fair distribution of land. At the same time it will explain its position on the great national problems, and in particular that of democracy.

The fate of Mexico will be decided in the negotiations. In spite of it being unlikely in the present crisis, a govern-

ment recovery cannot be totally ruled out. It has the resources to do so. The Mexican government does not want there to be a social movement which makes demands. They will attempt to corrupt through money, and, if necessary, use repression.

### Fundamental

The democratic-electoral movement headed by Cárdenas is also gambling its future. It would be totally wrong to demand that this movement should follow the same direction as the Zapatistas (although at a basic level it is almost the same); but it is fundamental to maintain an alliance based on the similar objectives. The Underground General Committee of the EZLN has already stated: "We organise ourselves as we do because it is the only form left to us. The EZLN salutes the honest and important development of all the independent and progressive organisations which struggle for freedom, democracy and justice for the whole nation. There are and will be other revolutionary organisations. There are and will be other popular armies. We do not intend to be the one and only true historical vanguard. We do not intend to force under our Zapatista banner all honest Mexicans, although we offer it. There is a larger and more powerful banner under which we can all gather: the banner of a national revolutionary movement which, while it can embrace different tendencies, ideas, and forms of struggle, encapsulates the common desire for freedom, democracy and justice."<sup>12</sup>

The possibility of a Cárdenas electoral victory is greater than ever. According to opinion polls, if the elections were held today, he would win easily. There is a two-fold problem; firstly, there must be popular mobilisation and secondly that legitimacy must be won in the eyes of broad sectors of the population (including sections of the army, employers and so on). The two are not always compatible. At this stage the problem will not be resolved by the socialist forces alone who can fulfil the first objective, but will forget the importance of the second.

The Zapatistas will continue to act in accordance with the legitimacy which they have won among the people. The most probable scenario is there is fresh electoral fraud is an explosion of great

11. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, speech on 13 February, at the end of the march.

12. EZLN communiqué, 20 January 1994

social violence. This is the responsibility which has been placed on Salinas by Cárdenas and is even greater with the appearance of the EZLN. It is almost impossible that the conflict will resolve itself before the elections in August.

### Conclusions

● The indigenous insurrection in Chiapas has shown the validity of earlier analyses of the interrupted nature of the (original) Mexican revolution; certainly Trotsky's analysis, on the subject of the second six-year plan of the Lázaro Cárdenas government, is still appropriate: "It is necessary to complete the democratic revolution by giving the land, all the land, to the peasants. On the basis of this already established victory there must be given to the peasants an unlimited period in which to reflect, compare and experiment with different agriculture methods. They must be given technical and financial help but not placed under an obligation. To sum up, it is necessary to complete the work of Emiliano Zapata."<sup>13</sup> That revolution, as Adolfo Gilly has insisted, still exists in the consciousness of large numbers of the Mexican people. The Zapatistas and (whether we like it or not) the Cardenistas, will revive in this consciousness the emancipatory claims of the 1910-17 revolution.

● In a country where it seemed that everything could be bought and sold, where the buyers and sellers played a perverse game in which frustrations at the high prices were interspersed with winks of complicity, where ethics had been erased by "realism" which both over-determined and was an excuse programmatic changes, the uprising of the EZLN brings a fresh spirit. Both with its ability to carry out a military action with great repercussions and its ability to bring about dialogue with "those below", the EZLN has given a lesson on dignity. When Camacho Solís threatened "Peace with democracy or else" its response was that it sought "peace with dignity or war with dignity", the dignity of Emiliano Zapata.

● It is not only incorrect but would be suicidal to separate the Chiapaneco Zapatista movement and the democratic-electoral movement. The two movements are not equivalent but they are complementary. The development of their alliance depends in large part on the possibilities of destroying the dictatorial system of the State party. Support

for the alliance is not only based upon the common social and democratic problems, but above all on the firm conviction that the way to begin a "democratic transition" is to eject the PRI from the National Palace. Whether this can be achieved without huge social costs depends on how swiftly the social movement develops. The theory that mobilisation will lead to repression is completely false. Far worse is the consistent smothering of the popular movement.

● We Mexican socialists have placed ourselves in the middle of this great social movement which has developed throughout the country both before 1 January and since. We are not Zapatistas nor Cardenistas but recognise ourselves as part of the movement directed by both. We also regard both forces as allied to our emancipatory project. We are responding to the calls by the EZLN for the building of this great "national revolutionary movement" and of the alliance which, around the candidacy of Cárdenas, is working for the destruction of the PRI. We are struggling to advance the self-organisation of the social sectors and the self-government of the people. We know that the fall of the State party system is the first and necessary step if the different social sectors are to act using all their potential. But it is also necessary to recognise that both movements have increased present crisis among the socialist currents. The recent events in Mexico have obliged us to reflect more fully. To paraphrase the editorial by Peruvian revolutionary José Carlos Mariategui, in the first issue of *Amauta*: "This debate on the intellectual plane does not concern only one group. On the contrary, it is about a movement, a spirit." Without this spirit socialism will not succeed. ★



Look out in our  
May issue for  
an exclusive  
Cárdenas  
interview

13. L. Trotsky, 'On Mexico's second six-year plan' (translated is from the Spanish).

# Candidate in a ski-mask?

**JEFF MACKLER** visited Chiapas from 17-26 February, at the time which negotiations began. Below, we publish extracts from his report. He is a leader of Socialist Action, an American organisation which supports the Fourth International.

FIFTY days after the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) began their armed rebellion, fifteen of their combatants re-entered the Chiapas mountain city of San Cristóbal de las Casas. This time their purpose was to participate in a "dialogue for peace". In this city of 85 thousand the EZLN were the only armed force allowed; recognition of the moral and political authority they have won.

Three-hundred and fifty journalists from around the world were present to record and update EZLN and government positions. Translation into Spanish was necessary because the Zapatista leaders spoke seven dialects inherited from their Mayan ancestors. [...]

## "Peace dialogue"

The agreement to begin the "peace dialogue" in San Cristóbal was negotiated with the mediation of Mexico's pro-Zapatista liberation theologian, and now Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Bishop Samuel Ruiz.

The agreement provided for a national coalition of human rights organisations associated with Bishop Ruiz, COMPAS, to organise a "Civil Space for Peace" (*Espacio civil por la paz*). Hundreds, perhaps a thousand pro-Zapatista human rights activists throughout Mexico came to

participate daily in around-the-clock shifts, surrounding the San Cristóbal Cathedral, the site of negotiations. The Mexican Red Cross provided a bus to escort the Zapatista negotiating team to and from the Cathedral. This multi-tiered, independently organised security net around the city's central square — combined with the "third army", the world's media — provided an eloquent validation of the justice of the EZLN cause. [...]

In the first three days of negotiations tentative accords were reached covering local issues: health, education and democratic rights. Both Sub-commander Marcos, from the EZLN, and Camacho Solís, the government appointed negotiator, stated that final agreement was contingent on ratification by the EZLN's central leadership and the Mexican government.

Marcos also made it clear that the EZLN was not capable of negotiating agreements to redress the wide range of injustices that are inherent in Mexican society. For this, he said, a "much broader and national negotiating table" was required.

A 16 February statement, distributed on the first day of negotiations, laid out the EZLN's approach: "We are not going to ask for pardon nor beg. We are not going [...] to pick up the crumbs that fall from the overflowing tables of the powerful. We are going demand what is right and reasonable for all people — freedom, justice and democracy. Everything for everyone. Nothing for ourselves."

Reiterating the view expressed elsewhere, that the EZLN could not exclude a return to armed struggle, Marcos' made a statement to the media on 22 February: "If its possible that neither arms nor armies are necessary — without having blood and fire to cleanse history, so be it. But if not,

that is, if once again they close all doors to us and if our words cannot surmount walls of arrogance and incomprehension, and if the peace is not worthy and true, who, we ask, will deny us the sacred right to live and die as dignified and true men and women?" [...]

## Exchange

In the week prior to the start of negotiations, former Chiapas Governor, General Abralon Castellanos, was publicly released in the remote town of Guadalupe Tepeyac. In exchange, thirty-two EZLN prisoners were released and Castellanos issued a statement to the effect that there were indeed grave injustices in Chiapas which required attention. While hundreds of Indian supporters cheered the EZLN fighters who escorted Castellanos to his freedom, their chants of "EZLN, EZLN" were dubbed out of the one and only PRI-controlled television station, Televisa, and replaced with applause, as if the people were cheering the corrupt PRI politician.

To this day, Televisa has not referred to the EZLN by its correct name. Nor has it used the word "Zapatista". The station's owner, Emilio "Tiger" Azcaraga, who has contributed \$125 million to the PRI Presidential campaign, apparently believes that "armed bands" will suffice. [...]

The murderous conduct of the Mexican army following the rebellion was acknowledged by the PRI-controlled National Commission on Human Rights, which produced a seventeen-page document recording, albeit in the most muted manner, a number of Mexican army violations of human

promises of improvements in health and education, is designed to cloak the PRI in democratic clothes as the August Presidential election approaches.

Camacho Solís is, for the moment, the PRI's mouthpiece in this effort. He said early in the negotiations: "After making an initial evaluation of the EZLN's proposal, and after offering a general response, I think that the solution for peace in Chiapas will be in new answers for the State. Not only for the EZLN but for the entire society. The solution will consist of a new kind of treatment for the native peoples throughout the country and a commitment to democracy.

"In this process it has become quite clear to me that only way to move forward in solving the problems of Chiapas, with the repercussions they have for the country, is by reinforcing the republican institutions. This means the institutions see what is happening and respond to these problems, because the strength of these institutions depends on how much they listen to the society and offer it new answers."

But Solís' San Cristóbal "carrot" was balanced by (the now late) PRI Presidential candidate Luis Colosio's Mexico City "stick". Colosio had told the press that there was no need for changes in Mexico today. [...]

### **Corrupt**

With regard to the upcoming elections, the EZLN has made clear its disdain for an institution which it considers corrupt. In a 23 February appeal for solidarity from the people of Mexico, Sub-commander Marcos declared: "We appeal to civil society to aid us by making sure that the accords are carried out by both sides. We are disposed to give peace a chance not because we are obli-

ged to, not even because we owe it to our dead, or the federal government, but because we owe it to civil society. That is why we are sitting here, if not, we would be in the mountains, fighting arms in hand, whether we lived or died, instead of talking.

"[We are not seeking power] a political party seeks power. We said, why do you want to make us out to be a political party if we don't want power? We want to live in peace with democracy, freedom and justice.

"We don't want any posts, neither the Chair of the town council or a Governorship, or a Secretary of State, or President of the republic. So, why should we be a political party? Aren't there enough already? How many candidates are there for the Presidency? Nine? Is the tenth to be dressed in a ski mask?"

Earlier EZLN statements indicated that they see no possibility of changing Mexico in the context of the elections. Rather, they look to the vast majority of the Mexican people to organise their own struggles independently of the existing institutions of the capitalist state. This is certainly a refreshing change in Mexican politics, a change made possible because the nation's most down-trodden rose up, with their lives in the balance, to struggle for their own liberation. ★

rights. These included the revelation of a "common grave in the municipal cemetery in Ocosingo in which eleven bodies of adult males were found." The Commission recorded "bombardments from the air" near San Cristóbal and other cities, but went on to note that rockets, and not more powerful bombs, were employed, as if to demonstrate that the army had, after all, acted with some moderation. The report concluded that: "Unquestionably, in Chiapas, there have been violations of human rights by various individuals, but these violations are being investigated thoroughly, impartially and honestly.

"The Commission has discovered local bosses (caciques) who, besides having called for the Commission to get out of Chiapas, may put in question the peace process in order to protect their own spurious interests." The notion that today the PRI government is genuinely seeking reform is central to current propaganda. The government's decision to reverse gears and replace the initial mass terror with diplomacy and pledges of reform, not to mention

## Candidate in a ski-mask?

DOSSIER

# Hands up for renewal

IN 1943, Stalin made the liquidation of the Communist International official. At the beginning of the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split brought an end to the grand conferences of the "world communist movement", which had been reduced to a nebulous gathering. Not without its contradictions — especially after the Soviet Union's intervention in Czechoslovakia, and particularly for those Parties with strong roots in their own country — Moscow played the role of historical, ideological, and often, material, common point of reference.

DANIEL BENSAID — 20 March 1994

## "A Tale of Two Parties"

IN THE immediate post-war period the Italian and French Communist Parties (the PCI and PCF) were the strongest and, potentially, most powerful in Western Europe. Their evolution, as many of our readers will know, has been quite different. The PCI split: the majority forming the "social democratic" Party of the Democratic Left; the minority, in collaboration with currents of the revolutionary left, forming a new Party of Communist Refoundation. The PCF, whose recent 28th congress opted for "safety in continuity", continues to bleed members but staggers on regardless.

In his introductory essay, **Daniel Bensaid** identifies the debates and issues which, despite the different reactions, were common to both the Italian and French Parties; common indeed, for Communist parties throughout Western Europe:

- Stalinism in general, but specifically the relationship of these Parties to Moscow.
- Euro-communism and its "democratic" critique of Stalinism which, for all that, never did too much to genuinely democratise the Parties themselves.

The Italians were, in many respects, the "founders" of Euro-communism; their distance from Moscow was longer established. And, it could be argued, the PCI majority at least had the honesty to take Euro-communism to its logical conclusion — abandoning its historic identity and openly embracing social democracy (rather than, as had increasingly been the case, from the beginning of the 1980s at the very least, hiding thoroughly social democratic politics behind a fashioned variant of "Marxian new speak").

The PRC, the majority of which are former PCI members, is not, as **Livio Maitan** explains, a rump Stalinist organisation. The name "Refoundation", as we have said before, was well chosen. It implies a critical spirit, but, as Maitan concludes, the real refoundation of Italian communism, with particular regard to the Party's general strategic orientation, is still to come.

The French, on the other hand, were obviously shy. Despite the public declarations and joint press conferences with leaders of the Italian and Spanish Parties, support for Euro-communism was always faint-hearted. However, their critique, in so far as they developed one, was not the sign of healthy developments but rather a retreat back to the comfort of old habits. **Francis Sitel** examines this debilitating obsession with "safety in continuity", exemplified by its longer lasting relationship with Moscow.

By way of contrast to Italy and France we are also publishing a shorter article on the history and evolution of the Greek Communist Party (KKE). There is some similarity, in that, as **Tassos Goudelis** says, the KKE also found itself in a potentially powerful and influential position in the immediate post-war period. The contrast however, is that the KKE remained, through necessity, a largely clandestine organisation until the mid-1970s. Its subsequent evolution has been shaped as much by that experience as by the debates which pre-occupied the Italians and French.

In future issues we will be examining the developments in other Communist and former-Communist Parties. **Roland Wood** ☛

IN Western Europe, the French and Italian Communist Parties (PCF and PCI) were the most torn between their links with the USSR, growing integration into the institutions of their national States (including the serious possibility of taking on governmental responsibilities) and their hold on a powerful trade union and social movement, the ultimate source of their legitimacy. Other parties such as the Spanish and Portuguese Communist Parties, were the main political forces in the resistance to Franco and Salazar, and were less directly subjected to this explosive contradiction. But their clandestine existence had other paradoxical effects on them. In Spain, for example, the apparatus had less control over an activist base which itself subjected to the centrifugal effects of the national question.

The Prague Spring of 1968 was the occasion to publicly take one's distance from the international policy of the USSR. In the mid-1970s "Euro-communism" became the label of a belated and failed renewal. Meetings between the Italian, French and Spanish parties signified the emergence of a political current — in the middle of a European crisis reflected by the fall of the Spanish and Portuguese dictatorships. The 1976-77 common declarations of Berlinguer, Marchais and Carrillo were both the high-point of this political current

and the beginning of its collapse. The democratic critique of Stalinism served as a cover, in Italy and in Spain, for a rightist turn in the face of the crisis. In

Italy, this meant the historic compromise and the trade union line of the EUR. In Spain, it meant the Moncloa Pact and the legitimisation of the monarchy.

As for the French Communist Party, from the summer of 1977 it began a period of division of the left that was to lead to the barely hidden call to vote for right-wing candidate Giscard D'Estaing in the second round of the 1981 presidential elections.

These flip-flops could only have a devastating and disorienting effect on Party activists. As such, the first mass reaction to the social consequences of "Euro-communism" found a certain charm in the good old days. During the 1981 congress of the Catalan Communist Party (Spain), the victorious opposition to Euro-communism was called "Afghan" without any offence being taken.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the USSR clearly signal a major historical turning point that requires all Parties with origins in the international communist movement to undertake a radical self-redefinition. The collapse of the common reference point in Moscow has led to re-classifications that have been as unexpected as they have been spectacular. Hereafter, some Parties consider their communist identity to be nul and void. History has to be revised, right up until the Parties' origins. For those who continue to define themselves as communists, formal loyalty to the label is not sufficient to reply to questions of substance: which communism, and with what in the past are they breaking?

The change promises to be all the more painful (and perilous) in that it takes place in a context of social and economic crisis which leaves little place for the traditional reformist policies adopted after the Second World War. This applies in relation to the liberal offensive and the decay of the Welfare State in the imperialist countries, and to support given to bureaucratic populist regimes more or less at the service of the international policy of the USSR. The effects of this can already be seen. Communist Parties have been marginalised by a massive reorganisation of the working class movement (Brazil), others have been dissolved into populism (Mexico), exploded (Algeria), or are going through a crisis of redefinition with tragic consequences (Philippines).

In the countries of Western Europe, the evolution of the majority of the Italian Communist Party is an exception. It is not only the question of a change in

name and an abandonment of the communist reference point, but of an attempt to occupy the political space of a social democracy weaker than the Spanish and French Socialist Parties, and morally bankrupt.

The partnership between the Party of the Democratic Left (the former Italian majority) and the big social democratic parties on a pan-European level, may very well work to the advantage of this switch. But in other countries where there are still Communist Parties that are weakened but have social roots, the pains of recomposition are going to continue. The crisis of the USSR has definitely affected their long-held identity. The social crisis has eroded their trade union strength and weakened their electoral strongholds.

### *Intransigent*

At the same time, the effects of the crisis are so deep-going that they spoil initial pseudo-realist reflexes, such as patiently waiting for the end of the tunnel. The need for intransigent resistance is expressed in the presence and activity of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy, the left of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Workers Commissions (CCOO), and even in the Party of Democratic Socialism in the eastern part of Germany.

Beyond these signs of resistance, the question of the future of the Communist Parties is still there. They may overcome their historic differences with social democracy and the question of re-unification will be posed, or they will be confronted with the need to genuinely deal with their own history, which they will have to if there is to be any authentic renewal.

The case of the French Communist Party is a good illustration. After the electoral defeat of the Socialist Party in 1993, given the inconsistency of the ecologists, the PCF had the chance to lead the social remobilisation on the condition that they make a real effort towards critical renewal. But the apparatus — preserve of conservatism, built upon decades of bureaucratic practices, depoliticised by routine — seems incapable of such an effort. And yet, unlike other European countries, the nearly immobile corpus of this Party is still big enough to hold up the renaissance of a fighting internationalist left on the pan-European level.

Such a recomposition is very much on the order of the day. It has at least a pan-European dimension. After the

disappearance of the USSR, it will be principally determined by the redefinition of links with the social movement, the development of a European project and the assertion of a new internationalism in solidarity with the Third World. Already, the PRC in Italy, the United Left in the Spanish State and the unitary agreements for the municipal elections in Lisbon provide interesting experiences, insofar as united social mobilisation can develop side by side with democratic practices and political pluralism.

Other factors will intervene in this complex process of re-organisation. The small Communist Parties of northern Europe — who no longer have the support of the Soviet big brother — are becoming simple partners in coalitions with the revolutionary left and greens (Denmark). On the other hand, it is still too early to see what political form resistance to the liberal shock will take in Eastern Europe.

### *Populist?*

And finally, it is not excluded that — in the face of the brutality of the social crisis and the ruinous consequences of unemployment — certain chauvinistic and populist sections of the Communist Parties will swing to the far right. In Russia, this is no longer a hypothesis. In Western Europe, there are only symptoms of this.

It is still difficult to fully grasp the scale of the major historic developments underway. Less than five years ago, the Berlin Wall was still standing. Less than three years ago, the USSR was still cited as the number two superpower. The shake-up which has occurred since then has yet to have its full impact. It will be more powerful than even the most rigid apparatus. Honest activists are leaving aside past certainty and opening up to dialogue.

Dialogue is indeed taking place, and barriers are falling to the wayside. The first requirement is that of action. To face up to the blows of international capitalist re-organisation, the need of the hour is a common front. But nothing solid will be built without honest collective reflection upon the lessons of recent history, upon political and trade union democracy that can resist bureaucratic tendencies — and upon a revolutionary strategy for our times. ★

# A refoundation still to come

AT the Italian Communist Party's last congress in February 1991 it abandoned its name, symbols, and historic identity. The majority formed the Party of the Democratic Left. The minority opposition formed first a movement and then, only ten months later, a new Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC). In three years the PRC has achieved more than either its adversaries or supporters would have expected. Moreover, as opposed to what had happened before, on a much more modest scale, in the Spanish and French Communist Parties, this was incontestably a leftward split.

LIVIO MAITAN\* — 6 March 1994

**W**HATEVER the wishes of the Party of Communist Refoundation's (PRC) founding leaders, the party was born as a pluralist formation. For sure, the overwhelming majority of members came from the former Italian Communist Party (PCI), but a significant number have emerged from other origins, and have passed through a wide variety of different experiences.

Moreover, the former PCI members are no homogeneous bloc. In the final days of the old party two oppositional currents had emerged. One, the "Cossuttian" current, named after its most well-known representative, Armando Cossutta, was formed at the end of the 1970s. For more than a decade it had criticised the social democratic, and then, social-liberal-democratic drift of the leadership, going so far as to take on Enrico Berlinguer himself.

The other, called "Ingrait" or "the Ingrait left", after the old leader Pietro Ingrao — who actually remained in the PDS at the time of the split, only to leave two years later, without for all that

joining the PRC — dates primarily from the time that Occhetto decided to draw the lessons of changes that had long since taken place in the party. As a result, his criticism was less radical and, more often than not, did not challenge the conceptions and orientations of the Berlinguer period.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth adding that a part of this current was made up of activists who, after a time in the socialist left, had participated in the formation of the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP). The PSIUP originated in a split from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1964. A majority of this group joined the PCI after the 1972 elections.

A much smaller number participated in the foundation of the *Il Manifesto* current, and then of the Democratic Party of Proletarian Unity (PDUP), which was one of the main far-left currents in the 1970s. These activists did not join the PCI until the disappearance of the PDUP.

Further, a number of people who had, as a result of their disagreement with the PCI's orientation, individually quit the Party in the 1980s, joined the PRC after its foundation.

Finally, following its June 1991 congress, a majority of *Democrazia Proletaria* — the only significant far-left tendency to have survived the 1980s — joined the PRC.

Given these diverse origins it is easier to understand why, at its first congress in December 1991, there was broad agreement in favour of the name Communist Refoundation. The objective was to underline the need for critical reflection on the past experience of the communist movement on a national and international level, and the need for a new beginning.

There are indeed those in the PRC who have been, and still are, nostalgic for the days of Stalinism. However, this is only a small current and, moreover, it does not systematically defend Stalinist methods and conceptions. Rather, it is that they are attached to what they see as a positive image of the PCI in relation to the Party's post-Stalinist drift.

For the PRC's president, Armando Cossutta, and his closest supporters, the Stalinist label is not particularly appropriate. In fact, from the beginning of the

1960s onwards, in the Milan federation, Cossutta was among the most active in the "de-Stalinisation" of the PCI. While twenty years later he criticised Berlinguer's final break with Moscow, this was not in order to defend Stalinism, but rather because he believed that the gains of "socialism" still persisted in the Soviet Union and that it was therefore wrong to break off all ties with the Soviet Communist Party leadership. He later made a self-criticism on this point.

More generally, it is useful to recall that at the time of the split in the PCI it had ceased being a Stalinist party several decades beforehand. This was not because it had developed an exhaustive critical analysis of the Stalinist phenomenon and of its own past, or because it had completely abandoned modes of functioning practised since the 1930s. Rather, it is because its policies were fundamentally determined by its integration into the institutional mechanisms of Italian bourgeois society, and by the interests of its leadership and not those of the dominant social layer in the USSR of which Stalinism was an expression.

## Formal

One final remark can be made concerning the PRC's membership. While the large majority of those with formal membership status originate in the PCI, the proportions are different on the level of the active membership, and even moreso on the level of party workers. Here the presence of those of non-PCI origin is much greater.<sup>2</sup>

It should also be recalled that following the last national congress, where three different motions were put to a vote, minorities were given proportional

\* The author is a longstanding leader of the Fourth International and was also elected to the leadership (Direction) of the PRC at its recent congress.

1. As part of a self-criticism, one of the best-known representatives of this tendency, Sergio Garavini, general secretary of the party until the summer of 1993, recognised that he had supported the trade union turn of the end of 1970s without for all that understanding the real stakes. He also acknowledged having shared Occhetto's positions until the April 1989 congress of the PCI.

2. According to PCI tradition, most members of the Party are not active and only pay for their membership card. About 30% of members participate in some small way or another in the life of the Party, through its local structures.

representation both on the national political committee and on the leadership. Only the secretariat is composed solely of members of the majority.

As for the PRC's social composition, it is undoubtedly a party with a popular base, and a relatively high proportion of workers. Moreover, it has proved its ability to organise mass mobilisations on several occasions. It was the driving force behind two major national demonstrations of more than 100 thousand people with radical social and political demands.

In the legislative elections of April 1992, the party obtained 5.6% of the vote for the lower house and 6.5% for the senate. In the municipal elections that followed, it generally improved its standing, surpassing the PDS in Milan (11.4%) and Turin (14.6%).

Nonetheless, three of the PRC's weak points must not be obscured.

Firstly, while the PRC may have the support of working class sectors and can count of a core of workers in large and medium-size enterprises — such as Alfa Romeo in Milan, FIAT in Turin and militant factories in the south — its organisational presence in the work place remains quite limited.

Secondly, the social implantation of rank and file community organisations is entirely inadequate. And even where it exists, there is no consistent activity.

Thirdly, while last year's big demonstrations — particularly on 25 September 1993 — had a satisfactory and active participation from youth, the percentage of youth in the party is very low. Up until now there has been no co-ordinated effort on the national level around questions of specific interest to the younger generation.<sup>3</sup>

### Provisional

Certainly, the balance sheet of an organisation that is only three years old can only be provisional. Nevertheless, since these three years have been characterised by a general crisis of Italian society and a succession of often dramatic events on both the national and international level, the PRC has already been put through some important tests.

The PRC has emerged as the only left-wing opposition in the country. This is especially so following the decision of the PDS to accept the agreements between the government, employers and the trade union confederations — agreements which have been disastrous for working people. The PDS has also, to a large degree, supported the Ciampi

government in its work of "cleansing", restructuring and conservative and anti-worker overhauling of State institutions and legislation.

The PRC was the main force opposing — unfortunately without success — the anti-democratic reform of the electoral code, whose consequences have been very serious. As has already been said, unlike all the other parties the PRC actively participated in the wave of struggles in autumn 1992, against the government measures which gravely affected the standard of living of broad layers of the population.

Nor has the Party been affected by the tornado of scandals which have caused tremendous damage over the last two years. Not a single one of its national or local leaders has been charged by the courts.<sup>4</sup>

On international questions the PRC has made its positions clear: against the Maastricht Treaty; participation in the mobilisation against the Gulf War, and denouncing, in no uncertain terms, the neo-colonial adventure in Somalia. It declared itself opposed to any type of military intervention in ex-Yugoslavia, and has called for lifting the embargo on Iraq, Libya, and Cuba. Solidarity with Cuba has been a central theme of its anti-imperialist propaganda and activities. The PRC condemned the August 1991 aborted coup attempt in Russia, as well as the bloody repression unleashed by Yeltsin last October.

### Relations

The organisation's relations with working class parties and anti-imperialist movements in other countries has been appropriate in the current context, that is to say its has not privileged relations with any one group or current. Rather, it has established relations with a of communist parties, socialist movements and groupings. It has also made links with working class and anti-imperialist organisations in under-developed countries, and even with certain far-left formations.<sup>5</sup>

This is why the PRC has been able to build itself as a real political force in a context which is actually very unfavourable for the building of an organisation with a class struggle approach and which lays claim to communist ideas.

With this mind, we can now examine the difficulties the party has had to confront, especially over the last year.

● There has been a problem of orientation in mass struggles, especially with respect to the chronic crisis of the



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trade union movement. It should go without saying that however destructive the actions of the trade union federation bureaucracies may be, the PRC as such cannot substitute itself for the specific and autonomous role of the trade unions.

3. Rather different and vague ideas exist concerning what organisational structures should be adopted. The negative experience of the PCI youth federation — where "autonomy" gave birth to an array of centrifugal forces — has made many activists reject outright the idea of a specific youth organisation.

4. There have been some isolated cases of PRC members marginally implicated in a number of unclear matters. And these affairs pre-date the actual formation of the party. To our knowledge, no one has been formally charged up to this point.

5. For example, the PRC participated in the European initiative that took place in Paris in June 1993. See *International Viewpoint*, no. 247. July 1993.

However, nothing prevents it from making an active intervention in this area. It can take the initiative and organise the mobilisations that trade union leaders refuse to organise themselves. And it can take advantage of the presence of many of its members in different levels of the trade union movement and in other mass organisations. Disagreements have surfaced on this question, including in debates leading up to the recent congress.

In principle, a decision was taken, which has been confirmed on several occasions, not to impose any line on Party members. In other words, it was decided to register the fact that members of the party belong to different federations (with a majority in the General

Essere Sindacato and in particular its leader, Fausto Bertinotti, current general secretary of the PRC, declared their intention to assume their responsibilities outside of the formal framework of the confederation. They argued that CGIL General Secretary, Bruno Trentin, had himself stepped outside the trade union boundaries by not respecting his mandate. Bertinotti called on Essere Sindacato supporters to resign from their positions in the various secretariats of the confederation.

### Risk

This decision was all the more justified by the fact that the risk of being isolated was limited, insofar as the huge

**Enrico Berlinguer :  
The "God-father"  
of Euro-communism.  
The French CPs George  
Marchais grins in the  
background.**



Confederation of Italian Labour — CGIL), as well as to organisations outside the federations — base committees, and groupings that call for a radical renewal or a genuine refoundation of the whole trade union movement.

Nevertheless, a tremendous effort was made to both support the activity of the left opposition in the CGIL confederation, Essere Sindacato, and to fortify the so-called "councils movement" made up of activists from various trade unions. This movement is not particularly representative and its influence is on the wane. While it severely criticises the confederations leaderships, it does not adequately address the global problem of trade union reconstruction.

This unclear orientation had negative consequences during the struggles of autumn 1992, which were the biggest in recent years. At the time, the trade union left was confronted with the capitulation of CGIL leaders, an even greater capitulation of other confederation leaderships, and the signing of an agreement that eliminated or seriously eroded a number of working class gains, including the sliding scale of wages.

mobilisation demonstrated the chasm between the masses and the Confederation's leaders.

This could have been a first step towards trade union reconstruction. But it did not happen. Plans remained on paper and PRC trade unionists with major responsibilities did not commit themselves to a new course. These problems were not seriously addressed at the time and re-appeared one year later during the preparatory stages of the recent congress.

Formally, there was debate over a proposed amendment to the texts presented by the national political committee.<sup>6</sup> Divisions even appeared within the majority. There were those who, while not proposing an organisational break in the current context, put forward the idea of genuinely rebuilding the trade union movement from the bottom up — in the workplaces and through existing organs of self-organisation; and there were those who wanted to prioritise the on-going battle inside the CGIL.

The latter approach was adopted by a majority, but there can be no doubt that the debate will re-appear, especially

when new struggles break out. The absence of a clear orientation, especially during the decisive events of autumn 1992, demonstrates that the PRC was not able to meet one of today's pressing needs for the development of a class struggle opposition.

● Over the past three months problems relating to the political crisis have led to the emergence of a variety of positions in the run-up to the March legislative elections. It should be recalled that these elections will be organised under new legislation that was adopted in a referendum held in April 1993. Seventy-five percent of deputies and senators will be elected in a British-type "first past the post" system, and twenty-five percent will be elected on a proportional basis.

The intention of the change is to simplify the process of alliances by reducing their number, if possible, to two. In all likelihood this objective will not be met, but the new law has nevertheless led to the formation of blocs of rather heterogeneous forces. This could already be seen in the municipal elections held last autumn, even though the legislation for that poll was not as restrictive as it is for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The PRC has had to make a difficult choice. It could stand independently and thereby run the risk of winning a significantly lower number of seats — and objectively strengthening the right-wing, conservative, reactionary-populist, neo-fascist coalition,<sup>7</sup> or it could join a "progressive" coalition, and partially lose its independent profile.<sup>8</sup>

As we pointed out in the last issue of *International Viewpoint* (no. 254, March 1994), the debate on this question was at the forefront of the PRC's 20-23 January congress. Delegates were torn between the goal of maintaining and even increasing the party's parliamentary presence and preventing the right-wing from forming a government, and the difficulties presented by the formation of a leftwing alliance.

6. The national political committee is the equivalent of a central committee, whereas the Direction is a smaller body which meets much more frequently.

7. In the elections of April 1992, the PRC won 35 deputies and 20 senators. Without an electoral agreement, and with the same number of votes, it would get much less under the new electoral code.

8. The term "progressive" is used above all because the coalition does not merely include the remains of the PSI, the Rete, the Greens. It also includes small radical Christian groups and people organised in the Democratic Alliance, which includes former members of the Christian Democrats and the Republican Party (a party which was in power for several decades).

**PCI to PRC**

THE PCI was founded in January 1921, by a minority that split from the Socialist Party. Its first congresses were characterised by the political and ideological influence of its main leader and ultra-leftism was criticised by Lenin at the time, Amadeo Bordiga, whose and the Communist International. It was only at the Lyon congress in 1926 that Bordiga was defeated and Antonio Gramsci's approach were on the ascendancy — but only for a short period.

Forced to work underground and in exile while the fascist regime was consolidated, the PCI played a major role in the resistance during the war and emerged afterwards as a big mass party.

In 1956, at its eighth congress, it made a turn that went in the direction of a break with Moscow — fully formalised at the beginning of the 1980s — and an evolution towards ideas similar to those of social democratic parties.

At the February 1991 congress, a majority led by Antonio Occhetto decided to abandon communist ideas and any class struggle approach. It even changed the name and symbols of the party, which thereafter became known as the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). The minority which opposed this turn of events gave birth to the Movement for Communist Refoundation, which formally became a party, the PRC, at its first congress in December 1991. ⚡

In the end, a seventy percent majority approved the position of the outgoing leadership — an electoral bloc, which includes the perspective of forming a “progressive” government. Twenty percent of delegates argued that there was no programmatic or political basis for such an agreement, and that it was not possible to form a purely pragmatic agreement aimed at limiting damages caused by the new electoral legislation. The remaining ten percent supported another motion which criticised the majority for abandoning a part of their critical analysis of the PDS and plans in the trade union field which the political committee had adopted in October 1993.

While the congress vote supported the position of the outgoing majority, this did not resolve problems relating to the elections. The “progressive” coalition was formed on the basis of a platform that is partially in conflict with the conceptions of the PRC.

**Explicit**

Moreover, after the adoption of the common platform, the PDS released its own programme, in which its moderate approach was even more explicit. When the PRC released their programme a few days later, everyone could see just how wide a gap there was between the two organisations. The result was that from the beginning the election campaign was characterised by rather open and often severe polemics between PRC and PDS leaders.

PDS leader, Occhetto, declared, for example, that the PDS is not in favour of a leftwing government, but a government of “national reconstruction”, and has already approached the political centre, represented by the heir of Christian Democracy, the Italian Popular Party (PPI) and the forces around Mario Segni, enemy number one of proportional representation and proponent of an openly conservative line.

Clearly, the PRC cannot participate in such a government, all the more so because, according to Occhetto, it would pursue the policy of financial “cleansing” of the current government and even include members of the current government. It would even go so far as to have Ciampi as the prime minister.

When Bertinotti proposed to tax Treasury bonds beyond a certain limit, Occhetto contemptfully rejected the proposal. A few days after the PRC re-stated its opposition to NATO membership, Occhetto visited NATO headquar-

ters in Brussels and declared his “Atlantic” convictions, explaining to the “allies” that there would not be any big changes in the foreign policy of a “progressive” government.

Finally, the official opening of the election campaign coincided with the signing of a disastrous agreement by the trade union confederations with FIAT — which employs a significant sector of the country's working class. The PDS, along with the trade union bureaucracies, applauded while the PRC distributed a leaflet calling for rejection of the agreement.<sup>9</sup>

All of these difficulties will deepen and grow in number if the “progressives” secure a parliamentary majority. The PRC would be faced with even more arduous decisions; new and deeper differentiations would be inevitable.

The party is not adequately equipped to confront the difficulties that we have analysed. Since its foundation there has been a major negative element which no one seems to be challenging. The project of programmatic, political, and even organisational refoundation has yet to really see the light of day.

No one can ignore the objective obstacles, or deny that the postponement of attempts to undertake some kind of critical reflection (for example, on Eastern Europe) has been due primarily to the succession of dramatic political events, and by the pressing need to mobilise the party. But this does not change the fact that there is a void that the PRC must begin to fill. It cannot continue to indefinitely put this off to some future date.

The idea is not to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of historians and theoreticians, however legitimate it may be. Rather, it is to understand that in a period of deep-going social and political crisis it is, in the last analysis, impos-

sible to make the necessary choices, even in the short-term, without the compass of a strategic orientation. And such a strategic orientation cannot be formulated without providing answers to the major questions that the crisis of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s presents to the working class movement as much on the national as on the international level. ★

9. One problem for the PRC is that in certain districts elected on a “first past the post” system its members and electorate will have to vote not only for PDS, Green and Rete members, but on occasion also for ministers from the current government, representatives of the industrial employers' association, the Confindustria, and other bourgeois political figures who have always fought the working class movement.

# "Good old days" no comfort

DOSSIER

THE following article outlines the current profile of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) focusing on its past, because the development of the Party cannot be understood without some knowledge of its underground history, traditions of struggle, and attachment to Moscow.

**TASSOS GOUDELIS**  
Athens, 10 March 1994

THE KKE was created in 1917 under the name of the Socialist Workers Party of Greece (SEKE). Soon after it joined the Third International under the name KKE. It should be noted that before the creation of the SEKE there had been no workers party in Greece, that the whole SEKE joined the Communist International and that until 1974 there was no other mass workers party in Greece.

Until World War Two it had a very limited influence. But during the war and the German occupation of Greece (1941-44), the KKE was the bedrock of the resistance movement. This movement attracted the most active, dynamic and conscious elements of the country's working class and peasantry.

## Prestige

At the end of the war, power was in the hands of this movement. The fact that the KKE was at the head of this movement gave it tremendous prestige and deep roots in Greek society. In spite of the errors that it subsequently committed — above all, allowing bourgeois forces to form the government in 1945 — this prestige persisted.

Even when the government began its anti-communist witch hunt — leading to the civil war of 1947-49,

the defeat and outlawing of the left — the KKE still managed to maintain its influence within the working class and peasantry.

This situation of illegality forced the KKE leadership to live outside the country (in Romania and the USSR) for 25 years, and it had great difficulty leading its organizations within the country. Its dependence on Moscow was accentuated. The KKE went through a serious crisis in 1956 when its old Stalinist leadership was replaced by one loyal to Moscow.

In 1968, there was a split in the party, with one wing leaving to create the Communist Party of Greece-Internal (PCG-internal). This party condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet tanks, the KKE's orientation towards Euro-communism and its collaboration with bourgeois parties against the military dictatorship that had been set up in 1967.

## Moscow

The KKE continued to be very attached to Moscow, and used more radical language than the other Greek communist parties. It was legalised in 1974, but came up against the competition of other parties that were trying to establish a base in the working class — from the PCG-internal and the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK).

The PCG-internal opted for a line of class collaboration and quickly fell apart, scoring only 1% in elections and establishing a mediocre trade union presence. But the

PASOK quickly grew and became the first mass socialist party in the country's history.

The KKE held onto its influence in the traditional working class sectors (construction, textiles) but the PASOK overtook it in the modern sectors (steel, chemicals, public sector).

PASOK formed the government after the 1981 elections. Its victory was propelled by the decline of the parliamentary right-wing, in power since 1974, and the political climate in Europe — with the electoral victory of Socialist parties in France and Spain.

To begin with, the KKE supported the PASOK, making only timid criticism of its negative policies. Afterwards, it took on a sectarian attitude, and didn't hesitate to cooperate with the rightwing New Democracy on several occasions against the PASOK. It hoped to win over the PASOK's base in this way.

In 1989, following changes in the USSR, the KKE tried to go beyond the traditional framework of a Communist Party, by creating a leftwing coalition — with relics of the PCG-internal and some former cadres of the PASOK. It abandoned almost all its class references in order to be accepted as "a responsible and serious force".

This evolution led to a new crisis in its ranks. A section of its intellectuals and most of its student members left — on the basis of a leftwing critique — and created the New Left Current (NAR).

But in spite of the PASOK's bad image, after eight years in office, the leftwing coalition could not manage more than twelve percent in the 1989 elections, with the KKE scoring only ten percent on its own. Worse, it co-operated with

the rightwing against PASOK by helping it take power and launch a major attack against the working class.

A little more than one year after the creation of the leftwing coalition, the KKE quit its ranks on the basis of disagreements over the situation in the USSR. In opposition to the rest of the coalition, the KKE came out against Gorbachev's reforms, and then was in favour of the August 1991 attempted coup. But most of its intellectuals, parliamentary deputies and activists remained in the coalition.

### Traditional place

The KKE is trying to return to its traditional place in Greek society, but nothing is as it was before. The situation of the ex-USSR has destroyed the ideal to which it dogmatically attached itself. It is seen as being responsible for the rightwing's term in office, given that it had co-operated with New Democracy against the PASOK.

It lost its best parliamentary cadres to the coalition, and its student section to the NAR. It was virtually inactive in response to the rightwing's anti-working class attacks. Its main arguments in its favour revolve around appeals to its former supporters based on its role in the war-time resistance, in the civil war and on the repression it had to endure. But this is not sufficient for regaining its influence.

Its electoral score has dropped to five percent. In all the trade unions it has lost a large number of its supporters; most of its intellectuals have left; and it has practically no existence among youth. Its organised membership have been reduced to a point where many of its local branches have trouble surviving. Its main rival is not the leftwing coalition, which is in an even worse state, but the PASOK which has regained its influence thanks to the policies of the rightwing and the decline of the KKE.

With the return of the PASOK to power in October 1993, the KKE is trying to win back its support, focussing primarily on the pro-

blems PASOK has encountered in the running of the government. It has carried on propaganda against the current austerity policy, but its reduced forces have prevented it from carrying out a campaign.

It has opposed the Greek government's embargo of the Republic of Macedonia, calling for dialogue between the two countries without conditions. But this position is not popular, given the nationalist mood that now dominates the whole of Greek society — and the KKE is in part responsible for this.

On the international level, it is trying to co-operate with other Communist parties that still speak of the "good old days" of the Soviet Union. But it is very sectarian towards all other leftwing forces — even though it sometimes proposes short-term alliances whenever it experiences difficulties.

The KKE is incapable of developing a political approach which can tackle today's problems. Its ideology is in total crisis. Its history is ridden with political errors. With its diminishing influence, the KKE appears incapable of influencing the political process and seems condemned to continue its trajectory towards complete marginalisation. ★

"Good old days"  
no comfort



# Safety in continuity

**AT the 28th congress of the French Communist Party, George Marchais, General Secretary for twenty years, stood down. Would this be the event which at last opened the Party up? No. Continuity was the defining feature of the congress. The opposition around Charles Fiterman remained on the sidelines. Only the still powerful Pas-de-Calais Party federation staked itself out against proposed changes.**

**FRANCIS SITEL\***  
Paris, 16 March 1994

**T**HE French Communist Party (PCF) is haunted by the obsessive question of its own transformation. For many years successive oppositions have taken up the banner of change only to become progressively discouraged. Once again, it is the leadership which has put itself forward as the force most capable of ensuring this necessary change. The need to renew the Party leadership — which coincided with the need to bring the Party's political orientation up to date after the shake-up of the international and national situation — appeared as a precursor of real change. This in turn provoked a counter-reaction from a powerful conservative wing in the Party, which fought the changes proposed by the leadership.

The documents themselves provoked only limited debate in the Party, and in the absence of groupings established around specific political platforms they did not genuinely reflect the challenges faced by the leadership.

The documents aside, the stated desire to transform the Party could be subjected to three tests.

Firstly, how would the question of Marchais' replacement be dealt with? Secondly, what real changes would be made in Party functioning? This question could be answered in a concrete way, through the debate on the place of

the Refoundation current at the congress and in the new leadership. And finally, what innovative ideas would this congress produce to face up to the major crisis of the working class movement?

The congress — "closed" rather than "open" as promised — failed all three tests. For the moment change seems to be impossible.

Preparatory to the 28th congress, the leadership based its "renewal" of the Party around two documents: a Manifesto providing an up to date analysis of the situation, and a proposal for new statutes (the most striking feature of which was the abandonment of democratic centralism).

## Replacement

But it was Marchais' replacement at the head of the Party which dominated the congress. Would the new national secretary (a title which, in the new statutes, replaces that of general secretary) be a partisan of openness, or rather a loyalist entrusted with the job of guaranteeing continuity?

It is entirely symptomatic of this Party's difficulties in providing real measures of change that all the real debates should have to be focussed around such a question. As a result, the debate around the Party's orientation was necessarily deformed.

Since Marchais himself had promised dramatic changes, the Party's "document-writers" had to respect his wishes — but at the same time they could not be so audacious as to abandon the previous line and the outgoing general secretary with it. A cumbersome exercise indeed!

The balancing act did not end there. The suspense around Marchais' successor was maintained almost until the end of the congress. While the names of Francis Wurtz and Alain Bocquet were invoked; it was Robert Hue who was chosen in the end. But not satisfied with merely increase the number of his close supporters on the national bureau (new name for the political bureau), Marchais decided to remain a member of this body himself. The PCF missed its chance to take its leave of the Marchais era.

George Marchais, named joint general secretary in 1970 following the

serious illness of Waldeck-Rochet, has been general secretary of the Party since 1972 — a twenty-year reign from which the PCF has emerged considerably weakened and transformed.

The PCF of the 1970s was a big party — representing twenty percent of the electorate, an unequalled activist force, giving it an incontestable hegemony within the working class.

Today, it has lost more than half of its electoral support, only retaining influence in certain regions and is going through profound and unceasing internal crises. Its political image has been severely damaged by the double discredit it endured following both the failure of the governmental experience of the left in France and the collapse of Stalinist regimes to which it remained attached for such a long time.

## New reality

The Party has to adapt to a new reality in which it is no longer, and never again will be, a "front-runner" in French party politics, whose recognised and legitimate goal was to run the country, and to transform society.

The new situation has not only led to a decrease in the Party's size, but to a change in its identity. In a certain sense, the problem is not so much one of abandoning old ambitions — time itself is eroding resistance to accepting a fait accompli — as it is managing to meet current responsibilities within a new relationship of forces and new political realities.

For while the PCF can no longer claim to be vying for governmental power, it continues to be a significant force with considerable strengths in a worker's movement which is both in crisis and in the process of major self-redefinition.

It has an apparatus of several thousand full-timers. In spite of its electoral collapse, it has an important number of elected officials and municipal governments, which give it social roots, material means, and the wherewithal for political intervention. It has organic links

\*The author is a member of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International.

with the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), which remains the main trade union confederation — the most active and present when it comes to struggles on the ground.

For those of us who continue to see politics in terms of class struggle and social transformation, these are decisive acquisitions for confronting the crisis that the French working class movement is currently going through.

In the face of an aggressive and arrogant right-wing, many activists — in spite of the weight of defeats and disillusionment — are not insensitive to the need for renewal and new political proposals.

While the Socialist Party (PS) might be the best placed to respond to these needs on an electoral and institutional level, it has less weight in the arena of social mobilisation and struggle.

As for the revolutionary left, forces of the critical left that have emerged from the PS and the PCF, and certain sections of the green movement aware of the importance of social struggles, there are enormous obstacles on both the path to regroupment and a real capacity for political intervention.

In such conditions, the PCF has considerable margin for manoeuvre as far as putting itself forward as an indispensable force for those who refuse to rally to a renewed social democratic force.

## Breaks

The question is whether this state of affairs — with its limits and potential — can be confronted without any fundamental breaks in the Party, continuing along in much the same way as before. Or if, on the other hand, this game of fake renewal will prove to be destructive.

In several fields, there is a growing divergence between the role of PCF members as trade unionists — elected representatives and rank and file activists — and the political and programmatic meaning of PCF membership.

This is the origin of certain developments that are more or less under control — and sometimes even tolerated by the leadership for short-term reasons. For example, there are PCF candidates who take their distance from the Party at election time. There are deputies who play down the communist reference in their election campaign — personalising their campaign to an extreme, putting forward their abilities as managers, and even underlining their opposition to the

Party leadership. Most of the PCF's mayors identify with the Refoundation current.

There are trade unionists who are in a de facto break from the Party, or who call for real trade union independence from the Party. On the eve of the 28th congress, Alain Obadia, a central leader of the CGT, announced in no uncertain terms that he would no longer be a member of the PCF leadership. This flies in the face of long-held traditions in the Party.

## Fragmentation

All these developments point to a dynamic, not of splits on a clear political grounds but of fragmentation and the establishment of feudal-type groupings. These are groupings of a type that will cling to their interests and maintain rather lax links to the Party apparatus — and will doubtless be called upon to theorise their situation with specific political positions.

This is connected to the growing distance that exists between the decisive political role played by the PCF through its activists, and the Party as an institution, lacking both a coherent political project and a living ideological reference point.

Such a separation can be managed, if the only goal is that of surviving pure and simple, by adapting an orientation determined by short-term considerations and embracing the most base forms of empiricism. However, to mend this division would require a redefinition — a cultural revolution — which would tackle the major contradictions that riddle the Party.

There are three central areas in which such a redefinition would have to be made.

● First, there is the necessary and difficult break with Stalinism.

This does not mean writing yet more essays listing the damage done by Sta-

## The PCF opposition

THE opposition forces that have emerged within the PCF in the last few years have called for renewal from different standpoints. First, in 1988 there were the Renovators who supported Pierre Juquin, a former member of the political bureau, for president in the elections. They were the last to be officially expelled. Refusing to follow them out of the party, the Reconstructors, around Claude Poperen — a former member of the political bureau, long responsible for work in the factories and highly respected in the party — formed a new opposition. This opposition had many activists and a lot of electoral support in a number of important regions. They became more and more autonomous and eventually quit the party. Along with the remnants of the Renovators they formed Alternative Democracy Socialism (ADS). The third wave of opposition was the Refounders, behind former ministers Charles Fiterman, Jacques Ralite and Anicet Le Pors. They enjoy considerable influence in certain sectors of the PCF, in particular among mayors of big towns and many trade unionists. The Refounders became a de facto public faction, active within a pluralist organisation called Refoundations with its own newspaper, meetings and political initiatives. Charles Fiterman, who was the number two man in the party, announced at the 28th congress that he was quitting all his responsibilities in the party.

These successive waves of opposition rise higher and higher in the ranks of the party, and have influenced broader and deeper elements within the party. The leadership has been more and more conciliatory, and no longer takes disciplinary measures. Nor does it take political initiatives to try to re-absorb the various political differences. A kind of passive modus vivendi has set in.

This appears to have created differences within the Refounders themselves. Some have followed Fiterman and have decided to break from a process that offers no perspectives. Others, especially elected officials, have opted to hang onto the PCF label in view of the next round of elections. The Refounders did not wage a battle at the 28th congress, and have been marginalised in the new leadership. ⚡

linism. This has been undertaken for some time, although with uneven results. What has been lacking is recognition of an unrelenting political reality: the continued and contiguous joint existence of the Party and Stalinism.

George Marchais' belief in 1978 on the "globally positive balance sheet" of the countries of the Eastern Bloc had a sufficient enough impact on political opinion and consciousness that it needs to be politically addressed.

## The influence of the PCF

The number of PCF full-timers has been calculated at 5,000. This includes:

- 1900 mayors, of which 123 are in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants (half of these are in the Paris region).
- 260 city councillors.
- 122 regional councillors.
- 23 deputies (out of 527 deputies in the National Assembly. There were 73 out of 486 in 1973).
- 14 senators.
- 7 European deputies. ☺

The new national secretary, during his first major political public appearance on television on 6 February 1994, went so far as to say that "what appeared to be globally positive was not". This after saying that, "the Communist Party, with George Marchais, has had the courage to break with the Soviet model. This is one of the most important developments in the current period, that has meant the Party can launch the new round of renewal begun at the 28th congress."

It is clear that it is not with such reasoning and trickery that past accounts will be settled, to put an end to the intimate links that unite the PCF and Stalinism, including in regards the Party's subordination to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. No one can ignore or hold in contempt the revelations of the secrets of this long relationship — for example, information suggesting that Marchais rose to the leadership of the PCF according to the wishes of the Soviet leadership.

If this question is not treated seriously it can only further weaken the political fabric of the Party. The accumulated delay — even in comparison to other Western European communist parties, and now even to those in the Eastern Bloc itself — can only aggravate the problem and make it even more difficult to find a solution.

● Second, the Party has to determine what course it will follow after the collapse of the Union of the Left.

The PCF of today is a direct product

of the line adopted during the period of the Union of the Left, that led to the Mitterrand victory in 1981 and a decade-long

experience of the left in government. But during those years the PCF leadership was unable to escape the twin dangers of either sectarian denunciation combined with ultra-left verbiage against the PS, or an opportunist alliance.

Both approaches share much in common, especially since it made it impossible for activists and workers to intervene, and provided no solution to the question of the unity of opposing political forces within the worker's movement.

### Concessions

The problem is all the more important in that every election obliges the PCF to solicit PS votes and make concessions to its leadership. The search for a political perspective necessarily poses the question of an alliance with the PS — unless one chooses to incessantly declare that past strategic errors cannot be repeated.

Nevertheless, within a classically reformist and electoralist framework that has never been questioned, only an alliance of this type with the PS can raise the prospects of electoral victory and a presence in the government. Robert Hue has recognised that "political agreements" cannot be excluded: "There are millions of men and women who are waiting for some kind of political perspective." It is clear that this means agreements with the PS.

● Third, there is the question of pluralism and democracy.

In its unitary approach, the PCF leadership always reduces the left to the PS and the PCF alone, with reference made on occasion to the Greens. This is because it wants to approach matters within a classical framework which requires no self-doubt about the PCF's identity and project. But the crisis of the working class movement is such that this type of conservative approach is inadequate. The PCF will not be able to escape the process of recomposition that is now underway.

On the one hand, the PS has undertaken a rebuilding process which, if successful, will exert a power of attraction which the whole PCF or sections of it will not be able to resist. On the other hand, the alternative to this project cannot be represented by the PCF as it is today. Such an alternative requires the formation of a new political force that includes all or part of the far-left, a part of the ecologist current, and currents which choose to break from the PS and the PCF.

The PCF can neither remain outside this process of recomposition, nor try to co-opt it to its own ends. It finds itself swept up in the redefinitions that are taking place and that are sure to continue in to the future.

This is all the more true in that this process of recomposition is linked to the recomposition of the trade union movement. The CGT cannot remain the major union confederation that it is unless it breaks free of the grip of the PCF and appears as a genuinely independent from it.

### Distance

For its part, the United Trade Union Federation (FSU) — which originated in the break-up of the PS-led National Teachers Federation (FEN) and now holds a majority in the educational world — is led by a trade union current which was close to the PCF and the CGT, and that long ago took its distance from them. This has allowed it to resist the destructive manoeuvres of the FEN leadership and build the FSU along with other currents. This is a lesson well worth studying!

We are clearly no longer in the period when the trade union movement, through the head to head confrontation between the PS and the PCF, was polarised by the Cold War. The PCF is now going through a major crisis, which poses the question as to whether it will

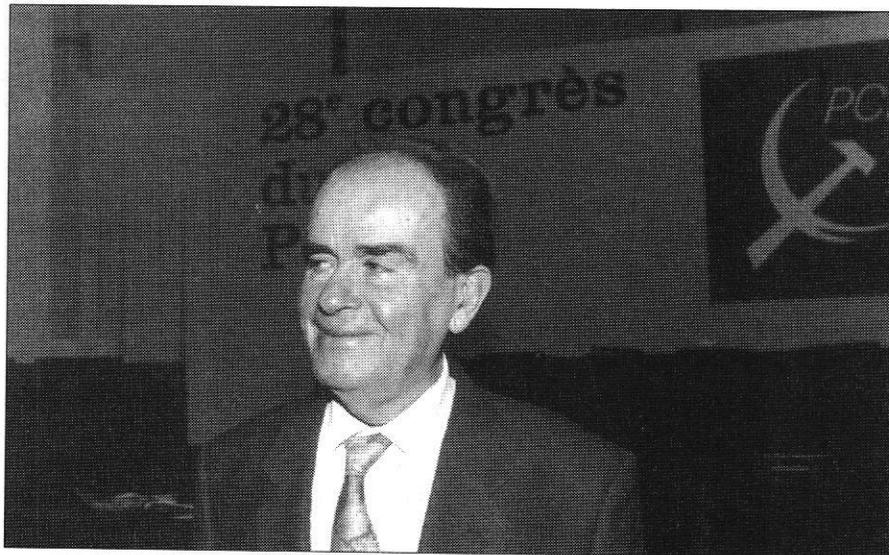
be able to resist — in spite of its reformist underpinnings — the pressures of a rebuilt PS, or whether it will get involved in the process of recomposition and self-definition that has been undertaken by the critical left.

This situation sharply poses questions relating to pluralism and democracy — internal democracy and democracy in relation to mass organisations — and makes them vital requirements not to be treated lightly. In reply to these questions, it is not sufficient — as was seen at the 28th congress — to no longer exclude internal opposition and abandon the notion of democratic centralism (without ever having made a distinction between it and the rather monolithic bureaucratic centralism which the PCF practiced).

### *Heritage*

Experience shows that parties claiming the communist heritage — especially those who confused communism and Stalinism — have to radically change if they hope to survive. The PCF is no exception. A specific trait of the PCF leadership is that it was at least partially aware of this need, while proving to be reluctant to seriously undertake this change — either through lack of will or inability.

This is the cause of the de facto paralysis of the PCF which, in spite of the Party's public declarations, was confirmed once again at the 28th congress. ★



**George Marchais: still smiling after all these years**

# Preparing for the future

**ON 27 April the overwhelming majority of South Africa's blacks will vote, without hesitation, for the African National Congress-led coalition. But a smaller number, while voting similarly, are increasingly sceptical about the compromises which have been made, and what the future may hold. Can the revolutionary socialist left orientate to these critical forces?**

**PETER BLUMER — 22 March 1994**

**T**HE reasons for holding non-racial elections on 27 April are perfectly understandable. There are long-term cumulative factors, such as the crisis of the apartheid economic system and its specific forms of labour force management; and there is the impact more recent political events, particularly the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the change in the international political situation.

Although it was not inevitable, no political organisation or mass movement has been untouched by this shock wave. All are ridden with serious political conflicts, concerning not only tactical questions but also problems of strategic re-orientation in a radically different political and institutional environment.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these debates began to take shape at the end of the 1980s, but they gathered force after the start of official negotiations between the ANC and the government. The elections, and the specific issues related to them, further reveal the scope of problems that each political formation must confront.

This applies above all to the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). It is not simply a case of the rank and file being shell-shocked by the political re-orientation of their leadership. The leaderships themselves are slowly breaking up as a result of diverging political interests. This is also true for the COSATU trade union federation and the federation of civic associations, SANCO. For both these organisations, the elections have brought different projects and interests to the fore.

There is full-blown internal division in the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) is largely paralysed by self-doubt. Finally, most organisations of the

socialist and revolutionary left are criss-crossed by new debates, including around the question of what call to make for the 27 April elections.

These increasingly public discussions stem from two developments.

The first was the change in the government's policy. It was one thing to understand the contradictions and divisions that have long run through the ranks of the South African ruling class. It was quite another, however, to understand why and how this ruling class decided to reform the system, and regain the initiative after the mobilisations of the 1980s.

The worst prepared were those in the ranks of the ANC and the SACP, where activists had been taught that apartheid was a kind of internal colonialism that called for a "democratic revolution". This theory allowed for a great amount of softness in relation to the liberal bourgeoisie. But no one said anything about putting an end to "internal colonialism" through an agreement for joint government with the "representatives of the Boers".

## *Irreversible*

Nor did the shock fail to hit a number of those who believed that apartheid — as a specific mode of capitalist domination in South Africa — would only crumble under the blows of a socialist revolution. Over a long period, many even doubted the irreversible character of the structural reform carried out by the government itself.<sup>2</sup>

The second major development affecting current debates has to do with the political retreat of the ANC and SACP leaderships and their decision to work with the out-going government on the basis of consensus. To know what these leaderships really thought during

the major social conflicts between 1984 and 1987 is rather unimportant. It is clear that several positions co-existed at that time. Some sought negotiation as a result of pressures from liberal employers and the major Western powers, while others prepared for a final conflict that would lead to the establishment of a non-racial government through a "national and democratic revolution".<sup>3</sup>

However, the most important feature is how millions of Blacks understood the political message of the ANC and the SACP. The overwhelming majority did not understand the meaning of gestures towards liberal bourgeois sectors; nor that the radicalism of 1985-86 — with the slogans of "insurrection" and "dual power" put forward by the ANC — did not necessarily have socialism as its goal.

The majority of people — including political and trade union activists — could not fully appreciate the implications of either the discussions already underway or the pressures from both the Soviet Union and the West. Their daily experiences of struggle and resistance gave them only a rare glimpse of the issues and contradictions at play.

Despite having won the leadership of the main trade unions, the left was not able to circulate these debates to the most active circles of shop stewards. And the small left-wing political groups encountered tremendous difficulties in their attempts to orientate towards broader sectors.

It was in this context that negotiations began. Moreover, they were put forward as a way to solidify ANC gains and negotiate a transfer of power. The "armed struggle", formally waged from the 1960s onward was "suspended" without any congress discussion. The Freedom Charter — long put forward as the sole "banner" for national liberation

1. This judgement is also valid for rightwing and far right parties, and parties of an ethnic type linked to the "governments" of the Bantustans. This includes Buthelezi's Inkhata Freedom Party and the recent case in Bophutsotswana.

2. The end of apartheid as a specific system does not mean that racial oppression has disappeared and that it no longer has an impact on the functioning of the system.

3. The effects of this diversity are still perceptible among intermediary cadres of the SACP who reproach their leadership for having "abandoned" the so-called insurrectionary line.

— was quickly abandoned following discussions that dropped plans for nationalisation.

The demand for a real Constituent Assembly was abandoned in favour of a plan for a unitary joint government that would leave a future parliament with very few constitutional rights. This is why the shock has been so brutal for many activists, and fragmentation and division will continue.

These are the new stakes for coming struggles. One era is coming to an end; another is being born. The independent and socialist left-wing must not only draw a balance sheet of the past; it must prepare the future by addressing as effectively as possible the hundreds of ANC, SACP and trade union activists who will look for an alternative path to the one chosen by their current leadership.

On 27 April millions of Blacks will vote for the first time, and they will vote for the ANC. Most of them will do so without hesitation. In so doing, they will be expressing for the first time their democratic right as citizens to vote for the organisation that they feel has led the liberation struggle.

Others — much fewer in number but more involved in the leadership of the struggle — will vote for the ANC-led coalition, whilst sceptical with regard to the coalition leadership's course. They will be voting to give the National Party and its allies absolutely no chance, and perhaps to get certain SACP and COSATU leaders elected and see what the Mandela leadership will do with its electoral victory.

In such a context, the scope of the ANC victory will not be without consequence for the social struggles that emerge following the elections. And this is so whatever the nature of the ANC leadership's current policy may be. Why is this the case? Was another option possible?

When the negotiations were well underway and the perspective of general elections arose, it was necessary to establish a political "regroupment" that could offer an alternative programme to the mounting compromises of the ANC leadership. But for such a possibility to have ever seen the light of day, rather than remain on the level of simple propaganda, a number of conditions would have to have been met.

Firstly, there would have to have been a significant base of support in the trade union movement. Secondly, such a regroupment should have at no time

appeared to be contemplating abstention from the elections based on the faulty and dogmatic pretext that a genuine Constituent Assembly would not be elected.

### Programme

The regroupment would also have to be able to put forward a programme of struggle and immediate demands that was not solely a denunciation of the Mandela leadership. This implies the need for a systematically unitary approach towards the ANC-SACP alliance. In this way — and only in this way — a relationship of forces could have been established to make this alternative credible and avoid appearing as a source of division.

In such a process, the question of pluralism in the trade union movement would have been posed, as well as that of a new political leadership for working people. The debate about a mass workers' party, which has surfaced in a few unions, would have garnered much greater credibility.

However, the "regroupment" did not materialise. There are a number of reasons for this, among which we should mention AZAPO's inability to understand the problems associated with building a united front in struggles where the ANC is hegemonic, and its inability to build a useful and stable organisation.<sup>4</sup>

In addition we must not forget the windows of opportunity of the 1980s that the revolutionary left was unable to exploit. It was unable to build an

## Will pragmatism reign?

BOURGEOIS economist, Rian le Roux, has predicted that the post-election government will have little option other than to follow "pragmatic" economic policies. Moreover, he believes that the country's economic prospects are better than at any time since the gold boom of the 1970s.

Mr Le Roux claims that low reserves, a limited tax base, and a heavy budget deficit will limit both the tendency to overspend and the temptation for "macro-economic populism."

With the end of international isolation it is believed that economic growth can be sustained and stabilised because of the following "positive" factors:

- A strong, "battle hardened" private sector, in contrast to other emerging countries
- A solid infrastructure
- Huge development needs which could spur growth

Furthermore, a rise in exports to South East Asia of sixteen percent is likely to off-set a feeble half-a-percent growth to Europe.

In conclusion Mr Le Roux said: "...any economist will tell you, stable growth of three percent a year is much better than six percent one year and minus three percent the next." ❊

Source: the Argus, 09/03/94

enduring base in the trade union movement and build a stable and credible current of ideas

within it. It too had difficulties understanding the central importance of the united front in relation to the rank and file of the ANC and SACP. Too often, it did not go beyond uncovering the schemes hidden behind a particular strike or conference.

Finally, we should not forget the large number of objective difficulties that confronted all those who — in South Africa as elsewhere in the world — sought to defend an innovative and democratic socialist project. Bureaucratic threats and Stalinist sectarianism did not always allow much room for choice in many struggles.

Suffice to say that a balance sheet of that entire period remains to be written.

An immediate consequence is that there will not be an electoral platform which demonstrates the existence of a socialist — or even radical — current which goes beyond the ranks of the revolutionary left and offers the immediate hope of an alternative leadership.

It is in this context that one should look at the decision of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) to take up the "workers' party"

4. AZAPO has finally decided not to participate in elections and for the time being has not said what to do on election day.

debate and run candidates within this framework for the 27 April elections.<sup>5</sup> In a 27 February communiqué, it declares, "WOSA will campaign under the banner of a Workers' List for an Independent Workers' Party (WLP). The workers' list is a list of demands of the working class, but the WLP would also put forward a symbolic list of candidates who will fight for these demands."

### Alternative?

Does this represent an alternative to what could not be patiently built in the last period? Only this organisation will be able to answer this question after the elections. The objective may well be that of progressively restoring indepen-

the target audience. This is why in our previous article<sup>6</sup> the idea of calling for a vote for the ANC while running an independent campaign of immediate democratic and social demands was raised — an independent campaign that would address the most critical sectors of the ANC, the SACP and COSATU.

The debate on the recomposition of the working class movement in this country is just beginning. There is a long road to travel before the foundation of a workers' party can be a practical consideration. This debate has taken place in a number of countries, in very different historical and political conditions. But examples of cases where mass sectors have succeeded in bringing this project to life are few and far between.

### Workers' List Manifesto

THE "manifesto" of the Workers List Party, initiated by WOSA, puts forward a number of social demands that should make up part of the central pillars of a real break with the former racial system. As such, the "manifesto" focusses on the right to work, to health care, to education and housing. It demands land redistribution and the end to all discrimination against women. According to WOSA's analysis, it sets the general political objectives around which its candidates wage campaigns in the struggle for a workers' party. Below we publish extracts from the "manifesto".

All contributions to WOSA's campaign should be sent to: **WOSA, Nedbank, 100 Main Street, Johannesburg, South Africa.** Account number: 1979-318-433

(right)  
The National Party's press coyly reveals undying affection for their negotiating partners



dent perspectives for the working class movement. But it remains to be seen which approach is the most pedagogical and constructive towards the hundreds of political and trade union activist members of the ANC and SACP who will in their majority vote for the ANC ticket.

Obviously, everything cannot be reduced to the tactical choice one makes for the 27 April elections. But as with every project of regroupment or unification, the legitimate goal of building a new working class party means going through new experiences with forces which extend far beyond the ranks of the revolutionary left.

The propagandist approach — despite being imposed by circumstances — needs campaigns that make the formation of a workers' party as concrete a goal as possible, and which can penetrate as far as possible into the ranks of

For the moment, the political terrain in South Africa is largely occupied by the ANC and the SACP. To advance the idea of a workers' party first of all means seeking to work with mass oppositional currents in these movements, when such currents emerge.

This is a central task. For the moment, it means running the best possible campaign at a time when the Black masses exercise universal suffrage for the first time. ★

<sup>5</sup> WOSA is a revolutionary socialist organisation which, while relatively small, has a genuine degree of political influence. Beside WOSA, a number of small and generally dogmatic groups exist, originating in one form or another from British "Trotskyist" organisations. In the past few years, WOSA has been the only organisation that has provided a reference point to the left of the ANC-SACP and the PAC.

<sup>6</sup> See Peter Blumer, 'A new phase begins', *International Viewpoint*, no. 253, February 1994.

THE "Workers' List Party" enters the elections in order to promote the formation of a "Mass Workers' Party" (MWP). We believe that only a workers' party will be able to carry forward the struggle of the exploited and oppressed masses of South Africa. We do not believe that any of the white or black nationalist parties can solve the crisis of unemployment, homelessness, disease, illiteracy and poverty that afflict the urban and the rural poor; those who live in the crime-ridden townships and squatter settlements of our cities, in the rural slums, in the Bantustans, and in the slave-like conditions on the white farms and in the dorps (small villages). These parties cannot (solve the crisis) because they accept the capitalist system. (...)

### The economy and democracy

The alternative we propose — to the undemocratic command economy which existed in the Soviet Union and the brutality of market capitalism which causes inequality, unemployment, wastage, war and environmental degradation — is a socialist democracy. This means that a

democratic planning process, although calling for a central plan to ensure the main social needs like employment, housing, health, education and food are met, also allows for decentralisation of decision-making. This must extend down to the work place and community, so that working class control over the means of production and distribution takes on a real meaning. We believe in socialism from below. This is the essence of democracy. Democracy is not about voting every five years. We cannot eat the vote. Democracy is about controlling the fruits of our labour, about deciding what to produce and how to produce it and how to live. It is not about production and distribution for the profits of a few, but about production and distribution for human needs.

We stand for nationalisation under workers' control of the monopoly companies, banks, mines and land without compensation. The capitalists have been living in luxury for all these years at our expense. Small businesses will not be affected, but we insist that the rights of workers be respected in these businesses. We also insist that areas that have been privatised, or are about to be privatised, like railways, electricity, steel etc be renationalised under workers' control. (...)

### **Land to the working people**

The land shall be redistributed among all those who live and work on the land in accordance with acceptable principles of agricultural economics and democratic consultation. No land shall be used for purposes of exploitation and oppression. The land of absentee landlords and the defence force must be confiscated and used for productive purposes. (...)

### **Put the apartheid criminals on trial**

We are opposed to any general amnesty and will fight to bring to trial those who defended the apartheid capitalist regime by means of torturing, detaining, maiming and killing those who struggled against the system.

We must have our own Nuremberg trials in South Africa. We also stand for "bringing to book" all those involved in state corruption. We say these things not to seek revenge, but to ensure that those responsible

account for their actions, so that nothing similar happens again. People responsible for these acts must not acquire state positions. They cannot be trusted. (...)

### **Accountability of leaders**

We stand for members of parliament to be paid the salary of skilled workers: that they should be subjected to the right of recall and that they should not have any business interests. (...)

### **A constituent assembly**

We stand for a genuine constituent assembly which is not tied down by undemocratic constitutional principles and deals like the Sunset Clause, protection of private property and protection of apartheid civil servants. Only grassroots structures can organise free and fair elections for a genuine constituent assembly. We reject the idea of a "Government of National Unity" which includes the racists. (...)

### **Workers' government**

A genuine constituent assembly could be no more than a stepping stone to a workers' government which will be under the control of mass organisations. We want to build a mass workers' party one of whose tasks will be to assist in the establishment of factory, township, village and other forms of worker action committees. These committees will become the beginning of workers' rule of society. (...)

### **Self-defence and peace**

Capitalism, which creates unemployment, hardship and divisions, is the root cause of violence. To have lasting peace we must end capitalism. We stand for peace but cannot allow the continuing attacks on us while we remain defenceless. We support the right of the oppressed to defend themselves by whatever means necessary. Therefore we stand for democratically controlled and accountable self-defence committees in the workplace, in trains and in the communities. Changing the name of the South African Defence Force (SADF) to

"National Defence Force" (NDF) and the absorption of MK and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) into the SADF does not remove the need for self-defence and a workers' militia. The NDF will not act in the workers' interests. (...)

### **Culture**

Apartheid-capitalism has stifled the creative energies of our people. This will only be fully realised and released in a society where people's basic needs are met. A culture which places profits first, dehumanising not only workers but also people from other classes.

We believe that the artists and cultural workers in our society have a vital role to play. They must be encouraged and financially assisted. The state must fund community based and factory based art groups. Funding must not be used to control the independent expression of artists. A democratic culture cannot be imposed from above.

Freedom of expression should be a fundamental practice of a new state. Immediately, this should involve free access to official information, the abolition of the Publications Control Board, the independence of the public broadcaster from political parties, and the provision of state resources for the setting up of community radio stations. While the state must not interfere with the press, it is important for editors not to conduct their own brand of censorship in the newsrooms by favouring some political parties above others.

Freedom to practice whatever religion should be allowed.

The policy of two official languages has been used to prevent people from controlling their own lives. All languages in South Africa must be recognised and be given equal status. The language spoken by most in particular regions should be used as the linking language for that region. ☉

In its 26 March edition, *Socialist Outlook*, the British Fourth Internationalist paper, carries an article from prominent WOSA activist, Salim Valley, outlining in greater depth their strategy in the forthcoming elections and beyond.

Copies are available from:  
**Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU**

# No abnormal sin

**FOLLOWING Michel Warshawsky's article on the Hebron massacre in our March issue, Adel Samara, a Palestinian economist from the Occupied Territories, presents his reaction to the atrocity and its implications for the future.**

**ADEL SAMARA — 12 March 1994**

**I**n the context of both the formal terror which surrounds us on a world scale and the culture of Zionism, Baruch Goldstein's crime at Hebron is not an abnormal sin.

On a world scale, a new form of terror started with the air raids against Libya, the occupation of Grenada and later Panama, the large scale massacre of the people and economy of Iraq, the United Nations occupation of Somalia. Terror became an aspect of the "New World Order" which developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## Long list

For Israel, as a settler colonial state, killing Palestinians is a part of its culture. The Hebron massacre was not the first — and it will not be the last. The list is long: Deir Yasin and Dawai-ma in 1948, Kibiay in 1954, Beit Liqia in 1955, Gaza in 1956, Rishon Litsyon and Jerusalem in 1990. Killing the aborigines is the first condition for the continuity of all white settler colonies. While in America, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, the settlers adopted the slogan of "kill and settle". For the Zionist settlers it was evict, settle and kill later.

Goldstein "typically" applied what he was always taught at home, school, university, in the army, from the rabbis — and from the imperialists as well. In our long experience with the Israelis they are in a continuous internal race to invent the most effective means for harming the Palestinians. Since the massacre, in two weeks, forty people were killed by the Israeli army, most of them in demonstrations. In the first weeks of the Intifada, Henry Kissinger, told Israel

that the best way to quell the Intifada was to kill several thousand people in one day.

In the last few months, several Israeli army reports noted that it is expected that some Israelis might kill large numbers of Palestinians in villages and towns. Many Israeli rabbis were encouraging people to kill Palestinians. One need not have waited until the massacre to realise that Israel is still not ready for peace and historical reconciliation with Palestinians and Arabs. It will be ready for that when its Zionist culture has changed.

During nearly three years of the imperialist settlement, Israel intensified its repression in the Occupied Territories, more killings, expansion of settlements, more settlers "imported" from the former Soviet Union and other countries, a tight economic siege on the Occupied Territories. The Declaration of Principles was an indirect annexation of the Occupied Territories; it included no hint that Israel will withdraw from them and no acknowledgement of the Palestinian people's right to return. All responsibilities which Arafat and his group are going to take and conduct in the autonomous areas are civil ones, for example roads, schools, construction, direct taxes, but not even control over export and import, water and so forth.

## Victim

Saying that Israel is not ready for peace means that its racist mentality and culture have not changed. Accordingly, nothing has been done to change the mentality of Goldstein, especially when Arafat has signed an agreement which guarantees the right of settlers in the Occupied Territories, and has apologised as a victim to the killer. In one way or another, this is an incentive to other Goldsteins to commit more crimes.

On the other hand, Arab capitalist regimes are not ready to fight for a just peace. The increasing compradorisation of their economy means greater political orientation towards the imperialist centre. As a result of dependency the policy of these regimes are designed by imperialism. These regimes are unable to extract a just peace from Israel and imperialism. What is important here is

that these regimes are ruling but not representing their peoples. This makes any peace agreement through them unable to last.

It is clear that in the Arab countries there are two camps, that of the dependent capitalist regimes, and that of the popular national classes. Each want a different form of peace, the first is looking for the peace of international capital, and the second is looking for a peace in a form of historical reconciliation. One important development in the region is that while Arab regimes are neither elected nor representative, they are increasingly unable to manipulate the masses. This change opens the area for several options.

## Centre

What has strengthened and even guaranteed Israel's vision and understanding for peace is the support from the imperialist centre. Last but not least is the \$10 billion loan guaranteed by the USA, not as a price for peace but to increase the settlements in the Occupied Territories. The American insistence, in the UN Security Council, to not condemn or blame Israel for the massacre, and the timing of the visit of the French Minister of the Defence to Israel (two weeks after the massacre to renew the military co-operation between the countries). To justify this agreement with Israel, the French Minister said that he "discussed the visit with the PLO in Tunisia"! This means nothing for the Palestinian people and cannot cover the fact that while looking for a market for its weapons French imperialism is deliberately supporting Israel and encouraging it to insist on the imperialist settlement.

As the settlement is an economic one, it is capital [in class re-ordering in the region], Israel, imperialism and dependent Arab regimes will never look for a real and just peace. Just peace means an independent Palestinian state which might for one reason or another close its borders to Israeli exports to the Arab markets. This is one of the reasons why the designers of the imperialist settlement insisted that the Occupied Territories must be some thing down of independence and more than pure and bare

or absolute occupation, which is practically "occupation". The autonomous areas will be domains for Israel, an open area which Israel can enter easily, and the Jordanians will do the same. This means a place (a large club or land of market) which gather Arab comprador with the Israeli exporters without national or political boundaries, tension or sensitivity. That is why it should not be independent.

Developments after the 13 September 1993 made things clear. The donor countries, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, continuously repeated that money will not be transferred to the autonomous areas before the final Palestinian signature. They are asking the Palestinians to adopt the Israeli tax system and to sign an agreement for a joint tax and customs system with Israel, not to establish a central bank, and not to issue a local currency.

Since political independence for the Palestinians is rejected by imperialism, Israel, Arab comprador ruling classes, and the Palestinian negotiators, the idea of a real and UN military presence in the Occupied Territories is not part of the discussion.

### Response

A few hours after the massacre, Arafat stated that it will not stop the negotiations. When he saw the mass response, the PLO leader and his supporters (for example, Faisal Al-Huseini) started manoeuvring. Huseini said that the negotiations could not continue until the settlements had been evicted and UN peace-keeping forces were present. Only two weeks later they gave up these conditions.

The massacre, the Arab regimes, and Arafat's approval to continue the negotiations was a "good" chance for the Palestinian opposition to elaborate its position and analysis on the basis that the imperialist settlement could not even offer the Palestinians physical protection, and that there is no possibility of co-existence with the Israeli settlers. It is the first time that people shouted in demonstrations, "Down with Arafat!", and burnt his picture.

But on the other hand, the people's opposition was still unable to alter the situation. It should be borne in mind that the creation of Israel in Palestine was not designed only for Palestine, but to keep the Arab countries fragmented, dependent, and open for plunder, unequal exchange and blocked development. Accordingly, the imperialist sett-

lement is not designed only for the Palestinians, but the for the Arab world as a whole. Therefore, the struggle against Israel and imperialism is not the duty of the Palestinians alone.

The most important regional factor is the role of political Islam. This new development in the Arab area is progressing rapidly. While the shape of this phenomenon is purely religious — and mainly conservative — the content is not totally connected with the shape. The content is a new popular phenomenon which is a mixture of bitterness about national dignity, poverty, underdevelopment, hatred of Israel and imperialism. In this context, religion became one of the national levers. Thus, popular discontent is today expressed by militant and politicised Islam, together with progressive nationalists and Marxists. All of these three currents are fighting to gain

**LINDA BEVIS,**  
a human rights lawyer in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1992-93, sent us her comments on the legality of Israeli policy, extracts of which we publish here.

### Occupation and the law

THE Israeli "Open Fire Regulations", written and oral, allow Israeli soldiers to shoot without warning at the vital organs of a fleeing "suspect". In effect, because many peaceful activities are criminalised in the Occupied Territories, the Open Fire Regulations legalise the execution of a person who poses no threat to the soldier or society. For example, an unarmed youth who is running away from soldiers may be "legally" shot for no other reason than they had just painted some graffiti. [These] killings are arbitrary executions and violate international law; yet Israel has legalised them. [...]

Eighty-five percent of all Palestinian prisoners have been tortured. Israeli military laws and regulations contribute to systematising torture. Military Order 378 establishes the military judicial system and allows prisoners to be held incommunicado for eighteen days before being brought a judge, who may then extend the period up to thirty days. Such detention without access to a lawyer, friends or family contributes to the psychological disorientation of the prisoner and may constitute part of the torture. This period also allows time for marks of torture to disappear. [...]

Military orders are issued to confiscate land. To date, Israel has confiscated sixty percent of the West Bank and thirty percent of the Gaza Strip. Once confiscated, the land is held by the military or turned over to settlers. Israeli High Court cases have ruled that settlements and (armed) settlers are legal, even though they are expressly prohibited by Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Ironically, this Convention was drafted in reaction to the horrors of the Holocaust and the plight of Europe's oppressed Jewish population. Israeli settlers now constitute fifteen percent (250 thousand people) of the population of the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem, and use approximately eighty-five percent of the water resources. This leaves Palestinians increasingly landless, poor, and exploitable. ☺

# True and false naïvity

**THE massacre perpetrated at Hebron on 25 February by Zionist settler, Baruch Goldstein, has provoked tremendous discomfort in the ranks of Palestinians who supported the Accords signed in Washington on 13 September 1993.**

**SALAH JABER — 28 March 1994**

Interviewed on Cable Network News (CNN), a few days after the massacre, Faisal al-Husseini — a Palestinian notable from Jerusalem, heir of a well-known aristocratic family, and an official representative of Yasser Arafat in the Occupied Territories — declared in a falsely naïve tone that “life has introduced a new factor into the situation.” He said that it was necessary to settle the question of the Zionist settlements before the peace process could proceed any further.

Did it really require the criminal act of a far-right Zionist fanatic to “introduce” the need to deal with a question as flagrant as that of the Zionist settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967?

## *Future negotiations*

The question was actually addressed in the Washington accords. They stipulated that the settlements would be the object of future negotiations, at the very latest by the end of the three year period which is supposed to be inaugurated by the partial withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Gaza strip and Jericho. In the meantime, the “Palestinian authority” has no right of observation over these settlements. As such, the accords are meant to set up a Palestinian administration that controls Palestinians in the Occupied Territories with the help of a “powerful police force” working in tandem with the Israeli army of occupation. This, it was said, would need to take place before any negotiations began on the status of Zionist settlements and the presence of the occupying army.

In such conditions, the Palestinian opposition argued, these agreements could only lead to the setting up of Ban-

tustans in which the Palestinian police would be given the responsibility of putting down the struggles of those who fight for the dismantling of the settlements and the total withdrawal of the occupation force. Not even Bantustans, an Israeli leader cynically added, because that would mean an “independent State”, whereas even this has been denied to the Palestinian “authority” in the accords.

So, better late than never? Has the PLO leadership discovered in good time that it is necessary to “settle” the problem of the colonies before going ahead with its co-operation with the army of occupation? One would really have to be naïve to believe so. For anyone who thought that the Arafat leadership was finally going to demand the dismantling of the settlements, Faisal al-Husseini insisted in the CNN interview that he merely wanted “protection of the settlements to be the task of the Israeli army alone” (and not of the settlers themselves). From Tunis, Arafat added that it was imperative that international observers be sent to the Territories, in accordance with the 13 September accords.

It is difficult to determine which is greater, the PLO leadership’s bureaucratic corruption or its political capitulation to the enemies of its people. On the eve of the Hebron massacre, this leadership reached an agreement with Rabin-Peres on Israeli withdrawal from Gaza which allowed not only for the continuation of Zionist settlements and farming operations in this territory but also for the continued presence of the occupying army in order to protect them.

## *Symbol*

This same leadership also acquiesced to Israeli control over the access route to the land under its “authority” from Jordan — a symbol if ever there was one of the status of concentration camps with an internal police that the Zionist government has reserved for the territories from which it is partially withdrawing its army.

The Arafat leadership has just provided proof, if one was necessary, that those who are counting on a “dynamic” that would lead it to “surpass” — in the direction of Palestinian national rights

— the framework of the accords signed with Rabin, Peres and Clinton, are entertaining illusions.

As a matter of fact, the majority of the inhabitants of the territories occupied in 1967 had a profusion of illusions after the signing of the accords. Arafat — a smooth talker as always — promised them that they were an immediate prelude to an “independent and sovereign State”. He guaranteed them a shining future, with dollars abundantly flowing in under the supervision of the World Bank. In short, paradise in the shadow of Pax Americana.

Should one have been surprised by the naïvity of the gullible or, worse, base oneself on it in order to continue supporting the Arafat leadership? Had people forgotten the huge illusions of the Egyptian masses that triumphantly greeted Sadat when he returned from his “peace initiatives” — and then shed not a single tear of remorse when the same Sadat was assassinated by fundamentalists?

## *Exile*

Even still, that meant ignoring the great majority of Palestinians living in the exile camps who, from the beginning and with good reason, felt betrayed by the PLO leadership. Today, it is in the Occupied Territories themselves that Arafat’s popularity and credibility rating is in a free fall. Actually this rating has not stopped its fall since the first snags that followed the signing of the accords.

Recently, Faisal al-Husseini was heckled by the inhabitants of Hebron, while portraits of Arafat were burned, for the first time, at demonstrations inside the Occupied Territories.

In the 14 March edition of *Newsweek* magazine Yasser Arafat was asked, “You seem powerless. What can you do?” Arafat replied, “It is enough for me to go to the streets and to speak frankly to the Arab people, to the Islamic people, to the Palestinians everywhere, that I have been deceived. It is enough. And see what will happen.” The fine confession of a charlatan who knows he is not telling the truth and — like his predecessor Sadat — still entertains great illusions regarding the affection which the people hold for him. ★

# Sketching out alternatives

**AMONG the obstacles encountered in the difficult but necessary mobilisation against unemployment, there is the following question: is it possible to get out of the crisis without a radical shake-up in the very way we think of work? This article charts out some possible approaches.**

**MAXIME DURAND**  
10 March 1994

**E**VERYONE now agrees, more or less, that there is no longer hope of a spontaneous end to the unemployment crisis. This alone explains the return of the question of the length of the working week to centre stage. Many erroneous theses have thus been abandoned, which referred to three central notions: compensation, Toyotaism and chosen time.

The compensation theory was based on the idea that jobs destroyed through automatisation and restructuring of the productive apparatus would be created elsewhere. In such conditions, unemployment appeared as the price to pay for a fundamental technological change and a generalised adaptation to a new model of economic growth. The unemployed are seen as people who are not adapted (and even inadaptable); they do not have the required qualifications to be integrated into the new organisation of work, in which skilled employment is said to play the decisive role. Time is therefore required to absorb this unemployment: time to train workers, to recycle them, or more simply for them to age and be sent into retirement.

This compensation dogma reigned supreme throughout the 1980s, but nobody believes it any more. In the current phase of capitalism, it is clear that links between accumulation and employment have been decisively thrown off balance, through the growing absence of opportunities for profitable accumulation.

The theory of the post-industrial society is in some ways a variant of the

compensation theses. In its simplest version, the analysis consists of saying that there is a transfer of human activity from industry towards services, analogous to the previous transfer from agriculture to industry. But at the same time, it is not a simple transfer, insofar as services have specific qualities, the most noteworthy being their intangibility.

We are said to be entering into a society where work that transforms materials would bit by bit be replaced by activities that circulate information. The proletariat is said to be subject to a two-track process of dissolution — with the industrial worker occupying a more and more marginal place in productive human activity, and with the direct application of physical effort itself tending to disappear. The very notions of merchandise and work are supposed to be becoming more and more blurred.

Often, this approach is paired up with an idyllic extrapolation of a world in which the rise of mass unemployment has the historical function of creating the foundations for a new relationship to the labour process.

The contradictions of this analysis are striking. On the one hand, these approaches do not hide the reality of unemployment and insecurity. There is very little free choice in this free time! It is an insult of those excluded by the market system to make their defeat the sign of a new society in the process of being born. But, on the other hand, one senses that this analysis is correct, insofar as it spells out what is indeed possible and is within arm's reach.

## Toyota

According to the Toyotaist analysis, the computer revolution is leading us into the post-Taylorist and post-Fordist era. It means the end of assembly line production, the hyper-specialisation of employment, the end of mass production and the advent of quality manufacturing and worker participation. The firm of the future would be based on new positive values such as cooperation and versatility. A new social model, founded on new work relations, is said to be in the process of being born.

It as if one were dreaming when all these projections are matched with reali-

ty. What do we really see? Massive and violent lay-offs, the intensification of the work process, the individualisation of salaries, job insecurity, the growth of contracting out, the rise of forced part-time work for women, the freezing of salaries, work through "temp" agencies for youth, and so forth.

Once again, on the level of the workplace we see the same ideological approach as in relation to the role of work: a regressive reality, but also objective elements which are taken out of their context to justify an optimistic vision.

In the same way that unemployment potentially challenges the wage relationship, new technologies contain within them the seeds for a radically new organisation of the work process. In both cases, there is confusion between their potential and their actual social reality. The argument relies on an automatic generalisation of good solutions, in which the array of potential is harnessed in the most optimum fashion. It is on such an argument that should be examined, in order to understand the two sides of the crisis of work.

Only Marxism can clear up this contemporary paradox which sets the "good news" of productivity gains against the social tragedy they engender. The only way is to use an essential concept of materialism, that of the social relationship.

## Rigid

Every society is dominated by a mode of production that determines the way in which social needs will be met and the division and sharing out of work. This structure works according to relatively rigid rules; elements of social change — whether in the field of technological innovations or in relation to the emergence of new aspirations — can only become real within the mould of the given social relations of production.

In other words, the crisis that we are going through today is a text book case that illustrates the validity of a perfectly classic Marxist analysis. How can we ignore that the development of the productive forces tends to come into conflict with capitalist relations of production? How better to express this

feeling that everything is possible (to work less, to get everyone working, and to meet basic needs) and that at the same time the laws of the capitalist system separate us from this possibility?

Indeed, it is the thrust given to the development of the productive forces by capitalist social relations that prevents all the potential of technological change from being translated into social progress for all of humanity — and which in fact turns it into a force for social regression.

Today, this phenomenon is intuitively understood by a growing segment of the working class, so glaring is the difference between the hyper-sophistication of techniques and living conditions for the majority.

### Hesitation

This feeling, however, is often accompanied by a number of hesitations. The positive interpretation is that of saying that we have to finish off capitalism in order to liberate the potential that it has accumulated while perverting its social effects. The slow process of consciousness-raising on this score is related to the difficulty of crossing this hurdle and grasping all the consequences of the fact that there is no alternative to a radical break with the system.

Of course, nothing is ever impossible, and this observation is relative. Things can be put in another way: never in the history of capitalism has capitalism proven itself to be so incapable of meeting social needs.

It is better to produce less than to produce in an insufficiently profitable manner. This basic rule of capitalism has created a massive phenomenon of exclusion — the exclusion of working people, whole sectors, regions and countries. Capitalism tends to align itself with the most high-performance sectors, while excluding the rest. This is why we insist on the idea that the marginalisation of the majority of the Third World is the same as the rise in unemployment, and that the Third World is now present in the First World countries.

Capitalism has not collapsed, but the system of accumulation that has progressively been put into place is intrinsically unstable, since it implies growing inequality in the sharing out of revenues. Today it has reached limits compatible with the current social relationship of forces.

When we examine economic projections, we see that maintaining current unemployment rates is an optimistic

goal. However, to do so would in no way mean keeping to the status quo. It would actually mean deepening — and not stabilising — the phenomena of social decline that we have experienced over the last 15 years.

In the best of cases, capitalism will not be able to achieve anything more than medium growth, leading to limited job creation, enough to absorb growth in the active population. We would have the same “stock” of unemployment and under-employment that we have today. The only way to both reabsorb today’s unemployed and employ future candidates is therefore through a massive and immediate reduction in the length of the work week.

This argument does not convince everyone. After all, why not aim for more sustained growth and resign ourselves to limited prospects for employment? There are two answers. In the first place, there has to be an understanding of why economic policies currently being pursued do not go in this direction, in spite of calls for a major European initiative.

The first reason is that the public debt, which presents an easily understood contradiction. You cannot at one and the same time hope to reduce the budgetary deficit and want to create jobs through public spending. This obstacle is the product of the gifts that have been handed to the wealthy over the last ten years; public debts are held in the main by the social layers that have benefited from fiscal counter-reform. They have been double winners — having had to pay less taxes and having been offered profitable investment opportunities.

But as a result the budgetary margin for manoeuvre

has been reduced to a very narrow one indeed. This is an important factor — as much as globalisation — behind the inability of European States to adopt even nominally autonomous policies.

### Power

The second reason is more deep-going. A distribution of buying power only makes sense if this buying power is spent where it needs to be. But nothing guarantees that it won’t go towards imported products or, what amounts to the same thing within capitalism, towards services outside the realm of the hard core where capitalist logic is the most unrelenting — that is, consumption of goods not produced in sectors with the highest gains in productivity. This thesis will not be disproven so long as partisans of European revival explain why what has not been possible for ten years should all of a sudden be so today.

It is possible to overcome these limitations and believe that a voluntarist policy



pursued within a national framework will lead to growth rates that could provide an alternative to the reduction of the work week. Unfortunately, this is wishful thinking. Given the degree of openness of economies, such a policy would mean hoping to export unemployment from one country to the next.

It could be said that this is a policy of aggression, insofar as one country cuts its own unemployment by handing a rotten apple to its neighbours. In response to this protectionism that seeks to win against the others, we must propose the right to protect social innovation — a protection that would disappear if others adopt the same policy, for example that of a 35-hour work week. The idea is altogether different: to win alongside and not against one's neighbours.

## Growth

The mirage of a shining path of growth drifts increasingly into the distance. The rise of an unemployment which spares neither degree-holders nor qualified workers has been a spoiler for those who promoted the idea of merely adapting to the new order, people who believed that the curse only affected unskilled workers.

Little by little, the idea of a radical break is gaining in currency. But there should be no illusions: we are still very far from a situation in which there exists a clear social alternative to the bourgeoisie's projects. We are at a point where a growing section of working people understand that there is no third way between continuing the decline and establishing a new economic system with new rules.

This is a strong negative dose of consciousness-raising regarding what can be expected from employers and the government. What remains is to organise this negative consciousness so that it becomes something positive. And this is where the greatest difficulties lie — and there is what could be called generalised social hesitation to draw the lessons of a widely-shared observation.

The situation is thus wide-open, and the stakes are high. Because the alternative is a national-populist programme which appears coherent because of its simplicity, and is based on the failure of liberal policies. Confronted with what should be seen as a very serious threat, projects advanced around the demand for the 35-hour work week should aim to define an alternative which is a clear break from the capitalist mess.

The notion of a radical break is deci-

sive. Once again, it is not possible to entertain ideas of a way out of the crisis through step-by-step measures which supposedly inject elements of change into the sick body of capitalism. There is no continuity between the current situation and a different mode of economic organisation.

The need for a radical break also flows from the global character of aspirations towards the reduction of work time. On the macro-economic level, it is accompanied by two fundamental challenges. On the one hand there is the sharing out of wealth and revenues — through recuperating financial revenues. On the other hand, there is a re-orientation of production according to social needs. On the level of the firm, it challenges the employer's demand to control management, in particular in relation to the organisation of work and the people employed.

This necessary radical break is what makes a lot of people wary. Is there really no other way that would lead to similar results at a smaller cost? By hoping to turn things upside down, do we not run the risk of being the sorcerer's apprentice?

## Shift

The way in which these reservations are expressed show that a growing proportion of working people are ready to shift to a position that overtakes lingering hesitation. This shift will not solely be the product of theoretical demonstration and neatly ordered proposals, but moreso that of an association of these arguments with practice.

Concrete experience is showing millions of working people that the economic machine is not only out of control, but that it has gone berserk and that it has to be stopped — even if one would have preferred to peacefully watch the world go by.

The fact that the struggle for a massive reduction in the length of the work week is starting rather late in the game



has at least shown working people the emptiness of

other remedies to unemployment. At the

same time, the demand has changed in nature; it has become the expression of a broad aspiration towards another mode of functioning for the economy and for society.

It is not only a technical measure of a purely economic character — but a sketch for another society. In a right-wing political landscape in Europe — where “left-wing” parodies in government betray and spoil all hopes for social change — the theme of a radical reduction in the work week points to a new anti-capitalist coalition.

This coalition is no longer formed around a clear project that aims to go beyond capitalism — all alternative models and reference points having been demolished — but around the defense of immediate aspirations. We have entered a period in which the elementary fight for the right to a job and to civilised living conditions have taken on a de facto anti-capitalist content, given capitalism's growing inability to satisfy these essential needs.

The coming together of social interventions that have remained dispersed until now could very well give birth to a relatively new form of socio-political movement. This is still only a perspective in the initial stages, but one thing is clear: in order to give rise to a contemporary form of anti-capitalism, today it is clearly enough to demand capitalism to provide what is possible — something it is not capable of doing.

To demand the possible — but stubbornly and with no illusions about shortcuts. ★

# World Bank: "criminal"

**NEARLY two years after the Rio Conference on the environment and development, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) having been debating a fundamental question. Is it possible to influence the policy of the World Bank? PIERRE GALAND, the general secretary of Oxfam in Belgium, has said "no". In an open letter, extracts of which we publish below, he calls on NGOs to assert their independence.**

**II** ON the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the institutions of Bretton Woods, I would like to resign from the NGO-World Bank working group and its co-ordinating committee. My decision is guided by intellectual honesty and honesty towards the many friends with whom I work in the countries of the so-called 'Third World'.

"Having had the opportunity these past three years to observe the behaviour of the World Bank, I would like to join my colleagues in the NGOs who believe that only dissidence can lead to an alternative of justice and co-existence for the peoples of our planet. I was hoping that by working together in the NGO-World Bank group we would make some progress towards co-development and addressing the condition of the most deprived segments of the world's population.

"The reality is very different. Poverty worsens every day. Hunger kills more effectively than the worst of wars. The number of sick without care, of illiterate youth, of homeless, of unemployed grows everyday at an unprecedented rate.

"The remedies provided by the World Bank for development are poisoned remedies that accelerate the process. For my soul and conscience, I am obliged to tell you, "enough!" You have stolen the correct discourse of the NGOs towards development, eco-development, poverty and people's participation. At the same time, your policies of structural adjustment and your actions accelerate social dumping in the South, by obliging it to enter defenseless into the world market.

"Thanks to you and your IMF colleagues, multinational firms are relocating, because you create productive conditions with reduced social costs. The result of your joint IMF-World Bank interventions is constant pressure on the world's economies to be more competitive. This objective is only

obtained through growing pressure on governments to cut spending and reduce social expenditure judged to be costly. In your eyes, this means that the only good governments ... are those that accept the prostitution of their economies to the interests of multinational corporations and the major groups of international finance.

"The World Bank is the biggest international institution involved in development, but it is also the most arrogant. It has an unequalled power of intervention into world affairs and the internal affairs of States. It dictates the conditions for development, and is only accountable to itself. [...]

"The World Bank is very well informed as to the state of poverty, impoverishment and abandonment of large sectors of the planet's population. Is it pure cynicism and lies? For my part, I believe that the World Bank is simply the object of a terrible misunderstanding from most of us, for whatever it might say it is an instrument in the service of an orthodox model of growth based on competition and not cooperation.

"Its task is to get everyone, big and small, participating in the great world market. But very rarely — and certainly not today — has growth equalled 'development'. At the end of the century, growth and competition have become a means of accelerated and disproportionate enrichment for a minority, and no longer has the effect of development, cooperation or redistribution. [...]

"As long as the World Bank continues with its crazed policies in the field of structural adjustment, we will have to mobilise ourselves and mobilise the greatest number of the victims of this type of intervention in order to fight it. After a three and a half year dialogue with the World Bank, within the NGO working group, I wish to offer my resi-

gnation. It is clear to me that there is no space to humanise the World Bank.

"Africa is dying, but the World Bank is enriching itself. Asia and Eastern Europe are being robbed of all their riches, and the World Bank supports the initiatives of the IMF and GATT that authorise this pillage, which is both intellectual and material. Latin America, like other continents, watches in horror as its children serve as a reserve army of labour and, worse, a reserve of organs for the new transplant market in North America.

"According to the World Bank, indispensable sacrifices of structural reconversion required for the globalisation of the economy and of markets are somehow the indispensable 'desert crossing' en route to the Eden of development.

"I refuse to subscribe to this fatalistic idea preached by the World Bank and prefer to participate in the strengthening of organisations, of landless peasants, of streetchildren, of centres for women who refuse to prostitute themselves in the big Asian cities, of workers and trade unions that struggle against the pillage of their resources and the dismantling of their productive capacity. [...]

"The revival of the economy of development — which promotes social justice through the access of the greatest number to the revenue of labour — requires us to urgently find the institution that can replace you and empower people to work towards restoring their dignity, food self-sufficiency and right to diversity in co-development.

"In resigning, I salute my colleagues for whom I retain my esteem, and I continue to appreciate a number of employees of the World Bank.

"Only regroupment and a new struggle for the transformation of the United Nations and the institutions of Bretton Woods will be able to create new conditions to wage the war on hunger and for co-development based on solidarity." ★