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VIEWPOINT

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**Western Europe:
Elections highlight
new social conflicts**

Setback for plural left

DESPITE the predictions of the pollsters that it would be victorious, the *gauche plurielle* ("plural left"), that is the coalition government, came out defeated from the French municipal elections of March 11th and 18th 2001.

JAN MALEWSKI*

YET its defeat was not really a victory for the right, who suffered a symbolic defeat in losing Paris and Lyon. Certainly, the electoral system, which advantaged the lists which came first, assuring them nearly three-quarters of councillors, and marginalized minorities, meant that after the second round the "plural left" took the two biggest cities. And it also allowed the right to claim victory in that they now control 139 towns of more than 30,000 inhabitants (23 more than before March 18th, of which 6 have more than 100,000 inhabitants) against 114 controlled by the governmental camp.¹

However, beyond these institutional results, the novelty lies elsewhere.

The first round was marked both by a high rate of abstention and a significant breakthrough of critical left votes — bearing witness to a growing discontent with government policy. In the second round the transfer of these votes to the candidates of the governmental left was more limited than in the past; indicating a strong rupture of the progressive electorate with a left installed for the past 20 years in governmental alternation with the right, and within this framework implementing a policy of management of capitalist interests.

A "social fracture"

Barely ten days before the scrutiny, the first wave of accounts published by the 12 biggest companies registered a significant rise in profits in the year 2000; whereas in 1999 the 30 biggest French firms accumulated 121 billion francs in profit, in 2000 the 12 biggest French groups totalled 126.7 billion in profits.² The first clear signal — if one was needed — that prime minister Jospin's government has in no way redistributed wealth.

On the day after the municipal elections the annual study by INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) on "incomes and wealth of households" was published and its results drew the headline in *Le Monde* (March 23rd), "Since 1997, growth has not reduced poverty".

While the number of unemployed has fallen from a million under the Jospin government, benefiting from a favourable conjuncture, "from January 1996 to May 2000, the rate of poverty stabilised": 7.3% of households, or 4.2 million people, live below the poverty threshold.³ The rate of poverty is at its highest among youth of less than 25 years old, reaching nearly 20%, and among the households of immigrant workers originating from the Maghreb, of whom a quarter live below the poverty threshold.

"Nearly all jobs created by the private sector since the beginning of the legislature — seven eighths, in fact — have been at a wage lower than 1.3 times the SMIC (minimum wage), that is 7,400 francs net a month. By way of comparison, wages lower than 1.3 SMIC represent 40% of wages in the private sector in France" in the year 2000.⁴ Note again that in 1999 32.5% of wage-earners received a wage lower than 1.3 times the minimum, thus in one year the share of low wages has grown by 7.5%.

In the course of the same period there has been a significant growth of temporary jobs: the number of such jobs grew by 33.8% in 1999 and again by 20.2% in 2000.

In short, contrary to the affirmations of Lionel Jospin, the creation of jobs — 1.5 million since June 1997 — does not amount in itself to a policy of redistribution, above all when we are talking about temporary and poorly paid jobs while at the same time profits are taking off, sup-

ported by an increased rate of exploitation.

The law on the 35 hour week, another source of pride for the government of the "plural left", has favoured the creation of jobs but has also led to a deregulation of the labour market favouring an increased rate of exploitation.⁵

The 'social question' has been central in France at least since the 1995 strike movement. Jacques Chirac won the presidential election of 1995 promising to heal the "social fracture", a promise whose non-fulfilment led to his defeat at the parliamentary elections that he himself called in 1997. Lionel Jospin, whose discourse of self-satisfaction is increasingly dissatisfying to those who hope to see change, is in the process of learning his lesson too.

An impatient combativity

Whereas for the past 20 years in a context of mass unemployment the number of strike days in the private sector has fallen continuously, 1999 (the last year for which figures are available) saw a considerable increase.

Stimulated notably by conflicts stemming from the application of the 35 hour laws and wage struggles, the number of individual days lost through strike action in the private sector went from 353,600 in 1998 to 573,560 in 1999, an increase of 62.2%.

A phenomenon all the more remarkable in that we are for the most part talking about local conflicts, with national actions called by the confederations hitting an all time low in 1999, accounting for only 1% of total strike days. Even if the rise was more modest in the public sector, nonetheless 68,300 more days were lost than in the previous year. According to René Mouriaux "there is every reason to think that the phenomena observed in 1999 will continue in 2000".⁶

This combativity is apparent also in the survey carried out by the CSA institute for the CGT.⁷ Thus in autumn 2000, 67% of wage-earners said they were ready to demonstrate to defend their interests, 66% to go on strike and 36% to occupy their workplace. In comparison with the similar survey carried out in 1996 (under the Juppé government, after the huge strikes and demonstrations of December 1995), willingness to demonstrate increased by 6 points, to strike by 11 points and to occupy by 3 points.

In total, if one builds an index of combativity starting from the three modes of



"The social diffusion of militancy" — striking doctors

struggle, 62% of wage earners have a high index rating (at least two of the three criteria mentioned).

This militancy is widely diffused in society, among women (56%) and men (66%), intermediary professions (77%) and blue-collar workers (65%), private sector (61%) and public (63%).

Finally — a phenomenon indicative of the pressures felt by the low paid — it is much higher among the highly paid (those earning more than 20,000 francs a month) than the low paid (less than 7,500 francs a month): 56% of the former said they were ready to resort to at least two of the forms of struggle mentioned, whereas only 46% of the second replied in the affirmative.

Finally, an element which indicates the social diffusion of discontent and militancy, 49% of higher managers have a high index of combativity and 54% of them are ready to resort to strike action to defend their interests.

Social conflict enjoys, moreover, a great popularity; commentators had a lot to say in 1995 on "the strike by proxy", when despite the propaganda efforts of the Juppé government, the strike movements (which affected public transport in particular) were popular with the public.

Since 1995, of 26 broad social conflicts, one alone — the rail workers strike in 1999 against the agreement on 35 hours, called by a part of the unions only — met with more disapproval than approval from the public.

Over the whole period, on average, 41.4% of French people have supported the conflicts or protests, 28.2% have sympathised, 10.9% have said they were indifferent and only 16.7% were opposed or hostile.⁸

What is more, despite all the efforts of propaganda aimed at presenting public sector workers as privileged, private sec-

tor employees support their strikes. And, evidence of a recomposition of the very identity of the wage-earning class, "managers are now on the side of the social movements"⁹ — 57% (support and sympathy combined) were against the freezing of public sector wages in October 1995 as against 82% in March 2000.

There has been a "new phase of social contestation" since 1995, according to René Mouriaux, or the development of a "critical vision of society — synonym of more pressure on workers — and the effects of globalisation" according to Jérôme Jaffré.

All of this provides the basis of an interpretation of the municipal elections of March 2001, since a willingness to defend one's interests in struggle also indicates a taking of distance in relation to the government.

Thus, whereas in the course of the 'Mitterrand years' the sympathisers of the left were ready to allow the great man time, today they are even more willing to strike than in 1995 under the Juppé government (66% against 63%). As for the sympathisers of the right, only 25% said they were ready to strike under Juppé, as against 54% today under Jospin.

It is as if 20 years of neo-liberal policies, carried out in the name of the "left" as well as the "right", have led to the rediscovery on a mass scale of the old slogan "the emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves!"

Diverse critical left votes

"It is possible to think", wrote the editorialist of the bourgeois daily *Les Échos* (March 26, 2001), commenting on the studies mentioned above, "that the strong showing of the *Green* and far left lists in the first round of the municipal elections confirms this revival and radicalisation of

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social combativity”.

The results of the first round of these elections confirm a displacement of votes towards candidates who in various degrees appear opposed to the governmental left. Unsurprisingly, 27% of people polled at the end of January 2001 replied “there is no difference” to the question, “Who would you have more confidence in to manage the affairs of your commune, the plural left or the right?” and 22% said they desired neither the victory of the (plural) left nor the right at the municipals.¹⁰

The Greens

This is partly the case for the *Greens*, who are nonetheless present in the government with two ministers, but in a subordinate position. Where they opposed the lists of the “plural left” they improved on the already significant score of the list headed by Daniel Cohn-Bendit at the European elections of 1999 (9.72%).

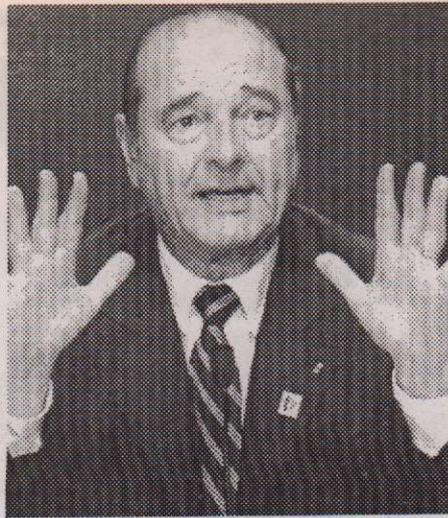
It is as if some at least of the electorate who voted this time for the *Greens* hoped to encourage their gesture of independence so that they would show more insubordination towards the ruling social democrats.

The *Greens* averaged 12.3% in Paris (making them the second biggest left group on the city council, with 23 councillors and control of one district); 15.5% in Lille; 18% in Talence; 16% in Morlaix; 16.31% in Evreux; 14.19% in Manosque; 12.5% in Montpellier; and 12.37% in Pau.

In the Parisian suburbs, they scored 24.42% in Pierrefitte; 23.53% in Mureaux; 23.06% in Villejuif; 20.53% in Bagnolet; 20.17% in Montreuil; 15.95% in Epinay-sur-Seine; 15.85% in Nanterre; 14.19% in Vincennes and 13.67% in Creil.

Their electorate is mainly young and employed and if some sections of the media present support for the *Greens* as a form of “bourgeois bohemianism”, studies on the evolution of consciousness of wage earners and the radicalisation which also includes the better paid, cited above, allow the Green vote to be interpreted otherwise.

While a survey by IPSOS published in *Le Monde* (March 21, 2001) shows that more than half of *Green* sympathisers desire a government which pursues a policy “neither more nor less left” than the previous one, for many young rebels “a left policy” is that of Mitterrand-Jospin, the only one they have known under this name, and there is no doubt



Undermined by scandals: Jaques Chirac that a policy of “more Mitterrand-Jospin” would not be acceptable.

Yet, the mobilisation of the electorate by the *Greens* ultimately served to prop up the governmental lists and it would be to say the least one-sided to think that all Green voters are critical of the government in which the *Green* party participates.

The more so in as much as the *Greens* were also an integral part of the lists of the “plural left”; the most high profile of its lists, that headed in Dôle by [their leader] Dominique Voynet, did not equal the score of the combined *Union of the Left* and the *Greens* in 1995, losing more than 500 votes and nearly 4%.

The *Green* vote appears then as a very composite vote, both in favour of the government (a vote that the press characterises as “liberal-libertarian”) and critical of the government for its social and environmental policy.

However, it is this critical dimension of the *Green* vote — particularly in the former bastions of the *Communist Party* (PCF) that is partially responsible for the good scores achieved by the party when it stood alone.

The “citizens’ lists”

To the left of the governmental left other lists were able to capture the discontent. Thus in Toulouse, the list *Motivé-e-s* (set up around the *Taktikcollectif*, an association whose best known members are the musicians of the group *Zebda* and who had previously collaborated with the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*), clearly positioned to the left of the governmental left, scored 12.38% of the votes, well ahead of the *Greens* (6.15%), the LCR and LO.¹¹ Similar lists did well in Bondy (*Rebondyr*, 12.89%), in Rennes (where *Motivé-e-s* obtained 8.22% in a cam-

paign marked by strong hostility to the far left)¹² and in La Roche-sur-Yon (14.31%).

These lists led very diverse campaigns, critical of the government in varying degrees and also to some extent critical of politics itself. The media have catalogued them as “citizens lists” and the governmental left did not hesitate between the two rounds to try to embrace them, with lukewarm success.

Sometimes the basis of these lists was linked to a negative judgment on the ability of the revolutionary left to animate a left current of opposition to government policy. However, whatever the political discourse of these lists, even when, as in Toulouse, they were absorbed in the second round by the governmental left, their electors did not always follow them, indicating their refusal to identify with the “plural left” even when enlarged in its plurality.

Emerging above all from local initiatives, without any real national dimension (even if attempts to link up were made and media coverage popularised them beyond the communes where they stood), these lists took votes which had gone traditionally to the far left or *Greens*, at least where they were in competition, but also the votes of those who were breaking with the governmental left for the first time.

Far left breakthrough

“The far left prospers on the ground of the left”, noted *Les Échos*; “LO-LCR: surprising scores” wrote *l’Humanité*, daily of the PCF; “The far left creates some bastions” said *Libération*; while *Le Monde* ran the headline, “The far left and the lists *citoyennes* compete with the governmental left”.¹³

Yet, contrary to the European elections of 1999, the two main formations of the revolutionary left, *Lutte Ouvrière* and the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, did not present themselves in a unitary fashion and were often in competition.

Having refused all agreement with the LCR, LO presented 129 lists. The LCR supported 93 lists, having sometimes succeeded in regrouping other components of the left breaking with the governmental policy. There was also the competition of the 146 lists led by the *Parti des Travailleurs* (PT - Lambertistes), under the name “local democracy and secularism”. A generally narrowly corporatist discourse marked by a somewhat archaic brand of secularism; a visceral rejection of being identified with the rest of the far

left; and finally the fact that the *PT* has for many years rejected all common activity with other radical left forces makes it harder to characterise this vote, but it also undoubtedly won votes from those wishing to reject the governmental left from the left.¹⁴

The scores obtained by the LCR and LO lists were by no means negligible, in both municipal and cantonal elections.¹⁵ The total vote was generally more than 5% and the LCR gained representation in 20 municipalities with 28 councillors, while 34 LO councillors were elected in 25 municipalities.

While *Lutte Ouvrière*, which has a long electoral tradition and runs with a remarkable regularity, generally scores more than the LCR, the results for the two organisations in 2001 were similar — on average in the towns where the LCR ran it received 4.44% while LO obtained 4.37%.

The combined average of the two organisations was 6.23% in the municipalities where at least one of the two was present, which exceeds the score of the LO candidate, Arlette Laguiller, at the presidential elections of 1995 (5.3%), and that obtained by the LO-LCR list in the European elections of 1999 (5.03%).

We see, then, the affirmation of a far left constituency, which not only rejects the governmental policy but also supports the lists representing an alternative left policy to that of the reformists.

The importance of the critical left votes underlines the responsibility faced by *Lutte Ouvrière* and the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*. For both the electoral results and the radicalisation and social combativity mentioned previously demand the appearance of an alternative to social liberalism, a political project and a project for society, a framework of struggle, a strategy — in short a political party that would represent the wage earners.

The debacle of the PCF

These municipals mark a new setback for the *French Communist Party* (PCF). If its decision to run on the lists of the “plural left” means we cannot compare the score of the PCF to those of the non-governmental left or the critical left, it nonetheless lost a number of its municipal bastions.

In the first round it lost the towns of Drancy, Montluçon and Sens while in the course of the second it lost Nîmes, Tarbes, Evreux, La Ciotat, La Seyne, Dieppe, Argenteuil, Colombes and Pantin

Left press analyzes election results



Lutte Ouvrière (extracts)

Georges Kaldy

“ONE of the striking facts of these elections is the high rate of abstention (Paris apart). While the municipals are supposed to be among the most popular elections, between the first round of 1995 and that of 2001, the rate of abstention went from 30.6% to 38.7%. At first sight, it is in the workers’ towns, and more particularly in the popular neighbourhoods and housing projects that the rate of abstention was highest. It is one of the obvious expressions of the mistrust felt by the popular electorate towards the parties which participate in the Jospin government.

The other striking feature of these elections, and politically clearer still, is the increased vote of the far left. The three far left organizations, *Lutte Ouvrière*, the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* and the *Parti des Travailleurs*, undoubtedly intervened around different political axes [...] Nonetheless, in the eyes of the electorate, they were seen as critical of the governmental left. This simple fact allowed them to capitalise on the mistrust felt towards the big political parties in general, and those of the governmental left in particular.

The lists of *Lutte Ouvrière*, whose electoral axis was a clear and unsparing critique of the governmental policy from the point of view of the interests of the workers, registered in a number of towns, in particular workers’ towns, a doubling, indeed a tripling of their scores.

The fact that we announced in advance that there was no question of our lists giving in to the blackmail of the governmental left and no question of accepting the fusion of our lists where we scored more than 5%, nor withdrawing them where we were able to contest the second round, was perfectly understood by the fraction of the popular electorate that voted for our lists.

As was the fact that we do not wish to barter the votes of our electors by saying to them “you have voted for us in the first round, now vote for the PS or the PC in the second round” [...]

If the current which expressed itself on our lists manifests itself in the coming period on the electoral level, in the work-

places, the popular neighbourhoods or in the street, to oppose the actions of the employers and the political action of the government and its local representatives, this will have an effect on political life”.

Lutte Ouvrière, March 16, 2001



Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (extracts)

François Ollivier

“OF the lists presented or supported by the *Ligue*, 39 scored more than 5%, 28 more than 7.5% and 12 more than 10%. More than 25 councillors were elected.

Beyond these results, it was a good campaign electoral that we led: 93 lists stood or were supported, of which around 30 were constituted with other alternative political forces or militants and sections of the *Communist Party* (PCF); there were nearly 3,500 candidates on these lists, twice as many as in 1995. We were able to increase the local implantation of the *Ligue* and establish new relations with trade unionists, associations, youth and political activists.

All the far left gained good results [...] This is worth pointing out to emphasise the responsibilities of and sectarianism of *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO), which rejected standing on common lists with the LCR. This election, beyond the specificities of each electorate, shows that there exists a common electoral political space for the radical forces: a space we must occupy together by bringing together the thousands of candidates of the “100% à gauche” (100% left) lists, those of LO and those of the left opposed to the governmental policy [...].

These elections are only a stage. They show, even if in a fragmented manner, that there is a broad sector of the popular electorate which rejects neo-liberalism, disowns the government of the plural left and seeks ways and means for another kind of politics, a real political change.

But if that broadly goes beyond the existing organisations, within this configuration, the LCR and LO have particular responsibilities to prepare for the coming events, both in the struggles and in the presidential and parliamentary elections, for what is at stake is the possibility of creating or favouring the conditions to advance on the path of a new political force, a new party for the workers”.

Rouge, March 15, 2001



to mention only the most important. In the cantonal elections it lost the presidency of the department of l'Allier. The only two towns won were by opponents of the PCF leadership: Sevrans and Arles.

Through the 1930-1970s, there was a PCF municipal policy, which differentiated these municipalities from those, governed by the right or social democracy. However the neo-liberal offensive; the de-industrialisation of the towns it ruled; and its participation in social democratic governments has meant that this specificity has been significantly eroded where it has not completely disappeared.

Thus the municipalities led by the PCF often proceed like the others with the privatisation of public services; reduction of cultural and social expenditure; abandonment of social housing; and the introduction of tax reductions for companies.

In a lesser position in the government, the PCF (which unlike social democracy had maintained for a long time the reformist discourse of a 'peaceful road to socialism') is incapable of making its presence felt. Lacking a project, subordinate to governmental policy, the PCF continues through the force of its apparatus. It still runs 84 municipalities of more than 10,000 inhabitants (111 before March), 29 towns of more than 30,000 inhabitants (against 41 before) and two departments. Its daily *l'Humanité*, despite efforts at renewal, remains in trouble.

The leadership has been taken to task following the municipals. The deputy from l'Oise, Patrice Carvalho, demanded the resignation of party general secretary Robert Hue, while an open letter from André Gerin, a deputy from the Rhône, demanded that the entire leadership do the same. Another deputy, Georges Hage,

demanding the resignation of the Communist ministers from the government. For now Robert Hue is ignoring these calls and preparing a *Nouveau Parti Communiste (New Communist Party)* to be launched at next October's congress. This NPC represents a project of the apparatus rather than any clear political project.

Crisis of the right

The current president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, tried to the last to patch things up among the Parisian and Lyonnaise right wing and it is in these two towns that the divisions of the latter allowed the "plural left" to win symbolic victories.

In Paris, Chirac showed himself incapable of bringing his successor at the town hall and his creation, Jean Tiberi, to heel, and the candidature of the latter torpedoed Philippe Séguin's attempt to mark a clean break with the corrupt Chiracian past in the capital.

In Lyon, trying to profit from the defeat of the centrist Michel Mercier who abandoned the struggle after the first round, Chirac negotiated with Charles Millon — a former minister whose past alliance with the [far right] *National Front* (FN) for control of the region had placed him beyond the pale for the official right — in support of the of the RPR candidate Jean-Michel Dubernard. However, this dubious alliance alienated the centrists and the lists of the partially recomposed right were beaten.

Given the defection of part of the popular electorate, the right won more municipalities than it had hoped for, but it remains divided and does not have a candidate capable of uniting it for the presidential election of 2002. Chirac is undermined by scandals and two other candi-

dates' — the liberal Alain Madelin and the centrist François Bayrou — are preparing to run.

However, Chirac still has at his disposal an electoral apparatus — the Gaullist RPR — which, although too weak to impose its will on the other right formations, remains strong enough to block any redistribution of cards to its detriment.

The far right

The split in the *Front National* (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the appearance of the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR) led by his ex-deputy, Bruno Mégret, weakened the far right but it has not disappeared.

Whereas the FN controlled four municipalities before the split, after the election only Toulon has been lost by the far right; the FN carried Orange from the first round with 60% and the MNR kept control of Marignane and Vitrolles.

If their rivalry meant the FN and MNR could not maintain as many lists in the second round as in 1995 (234 FN lists then exceeded the threshold of 10% of votes cast) and had to make do with 41 for the FN and 37 for the MNR, while a more significant share than before of the far right electorate voted "usefully" in the second round, the two organisations confirmed through these elections the ability to exist independently.

Despite the fratricidal struggle at least two thirds of the 15% of electors who voted for the *National Front* at its apogee have shown their disposition to support the far right by their vote.

For Jean-Yves Camus and René Monzat, who follow closely the evolution of the far right in France, "the far right can evolve in two directions: the first sees the current situation of mimetic rivalry between the FN and MNR continue, with none of these parties gaining the upper hand; or the militant base, conscious that the split alone maintains the far right below the threshold of representation, will push for reunification against the opinion of the apparatuses, something which will only happen when Le Pen retires from political life".¹⁶

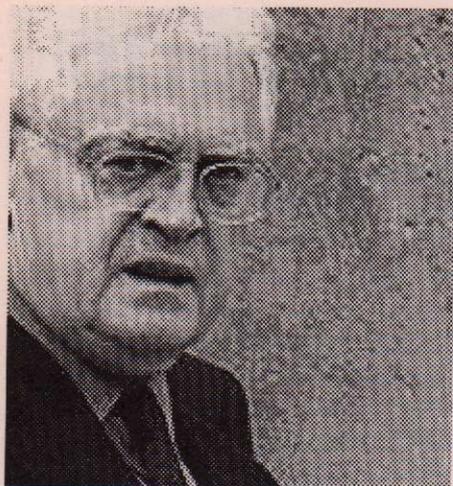
And Jospin continues

If they reveal the profound movements of French society — rise of combativity and radicalisation of the workforce; political polarisation; crisis of representation; break-up of a political scene that the institutions alone maintain in a bipolar framework — the municipal elec-

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Prime minister Lionel Jospin

results do not appear to threaten Lionel Jospin's project for the Presidency. Paradoxically the electoral weakening of the governmental left combines with a growing crisis of legitimacy of the main presidential candidate of the right and the sharpening of the presidential appetites of his competitors, of whom none has the breadth of support to hope to win.

On March 28 Jospin addressed the national council of the *Socialist Party* (PS) on the results of the municipal elections. On the "radical" left, it was the balance sheet of the defeat of the list of the "plural left" recomposed with the *Motivés* in Toulouse that he referred to: "If we must have a dialogue with this left, it should not be to drift towards it, for we lose on the one side without gaining on the other". On the policy of his government he said, "We are not implementing a social liberal policy".¹⁷

However, there is no question of changing economic and social policy. Leave the last word to the pro-government daily *Libération* (March 22nd 2001) outlining the three priorities of the government now: control over expenditure [i.e. holding down public sector wages and social budgets]; lowering of taxes [i.e. reduction of taxes on the highest incomes rather than VAT which hits everyone]; reduction of deficits [i.e. rein-in of public expenditure]. ★

* Jan Malewski is editor of our French-language sister-publication, *Inprecor*, and a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

1. Note that the phenomenon holds true for the smaller towns also: of those with more than 15,000 inhabitants, 40 went to the right.

2. *Le Monde*, March 1, 2001. Top of the list with 49.8 billion profits, up 126.9% on the preceding year, was oil company TotalFinaElf, a big beneficiary from increased oil prices.

3. This threshold was defined in 1996 as half the average standard of living of French people, or 3,500 francs (533.57 euros) a month for a single person, 5,250 francs (800.36 euros) for a couple, plus 1,050 francs (160.07 euros) for a child under 14. Today it should be higher: around 3,800, 5,700 and 1,150 francs, the average standard of living hav-

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ing increased.

4. See Virginie Malingre, *Le Monde*, March 30, 2001.

5. See article by Charles Paz, *Inprecor*, No. 455, February 2001.

6. *Le Monde*, March 7, 2001.

7. Cited by Jérôme Jaffré, *Le Monde*, March 7, 2001.

8. Stéphane Rozes, *Le Monde*, March 7, 2001.

9. *ibid.*

10. <http://www.sofres.com/sofres/etatop2001.htm>.

11. In the regional elections of 1998 the total vote obtained by the lists of the LCR (2 regional councillors) and LO was 11% and in the European elections of 1999 the LCR-LO list obtained 6.7%. However, the discussions between the LCR and *Takticollectif* on setting up a common list foundered, with the majority of the initiators of the project rejecting the presence of political organisations. During the partial legislative election in Toulouse on March 25, 2001 the "LCR-100% à gauche" candidate, Aline Pailler, came third with 5.57%, behind the *Green* candidate supported by the PS

(20.31%) and the new mayor of the town, Douste-Blazy (53.03%) and before the candidate of the PCF (5.49%, down 2%).

12. 'The sectarians with 0.003% don't interest us! We want to rally and attract the votes of all those who are fed up with politics' said their spokesperson in *Le Monde* (March 13, 2001). Yet the combined score of LO and the LCR comes to 8.93%, or more than the *Motivés*!

13. All headlines from newspapers of March 13, 2001.

14. These lists generally scored less than those of LO and the LCR, except where they involved militants breaking from the PCF, where the lists of LO and the LCR did not stand (8.82% in Niort; 6.89% in Saint-Malo) or where they already had a councillor (5.31% in Saintes; 5.09% in Dieppe). They also reflect a vote punishing the government. The PT lists elected 12 municipal councillors.

15. The cantonal elections elect councillors who govern the department.

16. *Libération*, March 22, 2001.

17. Quoted in *Le Monde*, March 29, 2001

British left mounts historic electoral challenge

THE fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the USSR at the beginning of the 1990s and the emergence of higher levels of class struggle in the mid 1990s, in particular the mass strikes in France at the end of 1995, have put this challenge firmly on the agenda. Then the rise of the anti-globalisation movement at the end of the 1990s culminating in Seattle raised it to a new level. As a result of the pressure from these events we have seen the emergence of Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, the United Left in Spain and more recently the Left Bloc in Portugal.

At the electoral level we have seen the LCR/LO election intervention in France resulting in the election of five MEPs to the European Parliament. And in Britain we have seen, first, the emergence of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and then the Socialist Alliances in England and Wales.

Spectacular

The most recent of these developments has been the spectacular rise of the Socialist Alliance in England — which will be standing candidates in the forthcoming general election alongside the Scottish Socialist Party in Scotland and the Socialist Alliance in Wales.

This remarkable development was triggered by the success of the London Socialist Alliance in the elections for the London Assembly last year (at the time of Livingstone's challenge for mayor) — which were themselves the best results the far-left had achieved in Britain for many years — and the decision of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) to fully commit itself to the Alliances.

Tony Blair's decision to postpone the date of the poll from May 3rd until June 7th (almost certainly the new date) is a welcome development for the Alliance. It is an opportunity to complete its preparations. Whilst the Alliance could have stood, and fought a credible campaign, for May 3rd, it will undoubtedly be better prepared for June 7th and will field more candidates.

This is not only because the growth of the Alliance has exceeded the expectations of most of those involved, but

THE left across Europe is under challenge to reshape itself for the new political conditions which are emerging.

ALAN THORNETT

because this growth had not reached its potential by the deadline for nominations for a May 3rd poll.

The recently adopted target of 88 candidates — the number needed to qualify for an election broadcast — has already been reached without any of the token candidacies which, it seemed, at the time, might have been necessary. In fact candidates are still being selected in constituencies where there will be viable campaigns on the ground. The final figure is likely to be between 90 and 100 candidates — far in excess of the 50 envisaged when the all-England Alliance was launched seven months ago.



Ninety-plus candidates in England alongside the 72 the SSP is standing in Scotland (which is every constituency), and the 6 the Welsh Socialist Alliance is standing in Wales, will represent by far the biggest electoral challenge mounted by the left in a general election in Britain in the post-war period.

Driving force

The driving force behind these developments is the sense of betrayal and

deepening hostility felt by traditional Labour voters towards new Labour as it has moved to the right and become the principal vehicle for neoliberalism — not only in Britain but across Europe. Whilst new Labour is a part of a rightward shift of Social Democracy across Europe, it has gone further than any other Social Democratic party in Europe with the aim of turning the LP into a straight capitalist party like the US Democrats.

On privatisation and on a range of social issues from welfare to asylum new Labour is to the right of its Tory predecessor. It has developed a new relationship to the employers and a large part of its funding now comes from the super-rich who are increasingly giving it support.

The Livingstone campaign and victory for London mayor last year was a part of this disaffection of Labour's traditional base, even though Livingstone himself has created a cross class administration involving Tories and Liberal Democrats, and failed to build anything political out of his triumph.

New Labour is still set to win the election, however, and with a big majority, since the votes it is losing amongst its traditional supporters are more than replaced by Tory voters going over to it. New Labour now occupies the ground previously held by the Tories, who have moved to the xenophobic right and are now in deep crisis and more or less unelectable. There is likely to be a bitter battle over the leadership of the Tory Party after the election.

Development

The strong development of the Alliance in England, however, cannot be measured simply in the number of candidates to be fielded in the general election. Equally important is the way the Alliance has developed organisationally and politically over recent months.

New Alliances are still being formed in places where one didn't previously exist. People are being reinvigorated, and coming back into political activity, as they see a new unity being forged by the left and the possibility of building something serious as an alternative to the for-

ward march of Blairism.

The decision of Labour left activist Liz Davies to leave the Labour Party, after two years on its National Executive Committee as a member of the loose left grouping the Grass-roots Alliance, and endorse the Socialist Alliance, is causing many others to think about following her. They recognise that the Labour left is not going to revive in the short term and that the main opposition to Blairism is going to be built outside of the LP though the mass campaigns like the anti-capitalist mobilisations and the social movements.

Individual activists and groups of current and ex-LP members and trade unionists are increasingly coming towards the Alliances. Louise Christian, a prominent human rights lawyer, is an Alliance candidate. Mark Serwotka, the new general secretary of the civil service union the PCS, is a strong supporter of the Alliance as is Dave Toomer, the president of the journalists union, the NUJ.

The decision of the workers involved in the long-running strike action in opposition to privatisation (Private Public Partnership) at Dudley hospital in the West Midlands to put forward one of their number as a Socialist Alliance candidate points to the way the idea of the Alliance, and an electoral challenge to new Labour, is developing amongst those who are in struggles against the policies of the Blairites.

Local Alliances are becoming more structured and are developing as campaigning organisations rooted in local campaigns around issues such as, housing, immigration, education and pensions and are mobilising for national initiatives and demonstrations and for the increasingly important international anti-capitalist protests such as Genoa.

The Alliance is also having an increasing impact in the trade unions, as debates develop around whether the unions should continue to give money only to the Labour party in the traditional way or begin to give to other political formations such as the Alliance — given the role of new Labour on employment issues and its support for the Tory anti-union laws.

The Alliance is having a major profile around many of this years trade union conferences, with a big fringe meeting and high profile at the recent NUT (teachers union) conference. The existence of the Alliance is also creating a strong pressure towards unity in unions where the left has been divided for many years.



Louise Christian

At the same time the Labour left has gone into sharp decline, and the Communist Party, in the past an effective opponent of both the far left and militant trade unionism has broken up and become irrelevant. It will stand a few candidates in the election — as will Arthur Scargill's Stalinoid and sectarian Socialist Labour Party (SLP) — but will be eclipsed on the left by the Alliance.

Undemocratic

Despite the rise and success of the Alliance its vote will still be squeezed by the grotesquely undemocratic first-past-the-post electoral system in Britain which puts small and even medium sized parties at a severe disadvantage. In many ways, however, the important thing is not so much what the Alliance does on the day of the election, but what it does on the day after the election and how it is going to organise itself on an ongoing basis outside of an election campaign.

The most important political step yet taken by the Alliance came at its national conference held in Birmingham on March 10th. This conference, itself an historic event since it embraced virtually the whole of the far left in Britain, adopted an extensive (3,000 word) election manifesto which will take the Alliance not just through the election, and be the basis of its campaign, but through the next stage of its development.

The manifesto was the product of a day long debate — conducted chiefly by the political organisations involved in the Alliance: the SWP, the Socialist Party (SP), the International Socialist Group (ISG), Workers Power, Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), the Communist Party of Great Britain (a splinter of the old Stalinist CPGB which is moving in a Trotskyist direction) and the Revolutionary Democratic Group (RDG — an ex-SWP splinter obsessed with the

constitution of the British state) — which adopted the manifesto clause by clause.

The over-arching political issue behind the debate on the manifesto was the political character of the Alliance itself.

Some organisations — Workers' Power, the CPGB and RDG in particular — argued (from an ultra-left propagandist standpoint) that the Socialist Alliance should immediately adopt a full revolutionary programme including soviets and armed workers defence squads. For them the Alliance must immediately become a revolutionary party — anything less than the full programme of social revolution therefore represented a capitulation to reformism.

The majority, including ourselves (the International Socialist group), the SWP and AWL argued that to take this road would cut us off from our most important audience at this time — people who are rejecting Blairism but are not yet revolutionaries. We all want to see the emergence of a new bigger and broadly based revolutionary party in Britain, but this can not be achieved by prematurely forcing the Alliance down that road. What the Alliance needs is an action programme, including a number of transitional demands, which reflect its present stage of development and represented a clear alternative to Blairism.

Maturity

This was the approach which was adopted, but it was a difficult debate given that the majority of those present at Birmingham — indeed probably the majority of those currently active in the Alliance at any level — are revolutionary socialists. But given the long history of sectarianism on the British left the degree of maturity with which the Birmingham conference managed to address these issues was remarkable. And the commitment of those who had argued for a different approach was also shown by the fact that when the full manifesto was put to the vote at the end of the day only one person voted against it.

It was important that this battle was won since, although the Alliance was initiated by a coming together of a group of far left organisations, it is already far more than that.

The Alliance is not an electoral arrangement or an electoral bloc on the lines of the LCR/LO list in France, it is already shaping itself into a political alliance involving a broad range of people who are rejecting Blairism. The polit-

ical organisations are at the core of it and play an absolutely crucial role in its leadership and organisation, but it is already more than the sum total of what they represent.

Increasing alienation

The only negative factor reflected at the conference the increasing alienation of the Socialist Party (previously the Militant), which had less than 20 members at the conference. At the previous conference, last September which agreed the constitution of the Alliance, they had had 150.

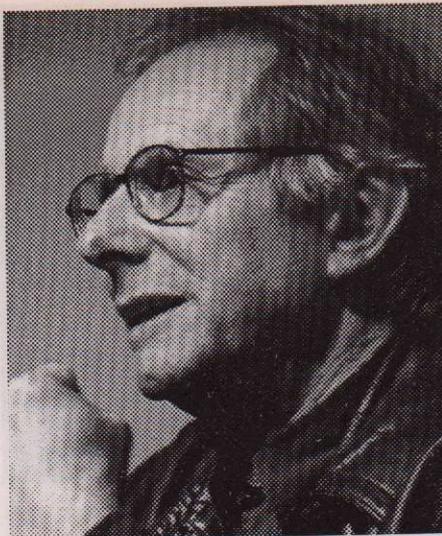
The approach of the SP is to insist that the Alliance is not a political formation but an electoral arrangement between the organisations involved. While Socialist Party member and national chair of the Alliance, Dave Nellist, played a full and positive role, the SP itself intervened from the sidelines on its own esoteric points of policy and was not a part of the main debate — although all SP members voted for the manifesto at the end. At local level, although SP members are standing as Alliance candidates, they are conducting their own campaigns rather than integrating them into the Alliance as a whole.

This however does not detract from the remarkable success of the Alliance up to this time. The plan is to launch the manifesto as a pamphlet which can be sold by activists on the door steps, in campaigns and workplaces, and from street stalls — and hopefully will be distributed by newsagents. This will give us the opportunity to get across the breadth of issues on which we have something to say and present a vision of a society which is fundamentally different from the profit hungry, poverty-ridden Britain which new Labour presides over.

This will go alongside the election broadcast which is being made by the well known film director Ken Loach along with a small team from the Alliance. The aim is that the broadcast will bring into people's living rooms a picture of the breadth of experience, talent and ideas represented by our candidates up and down the country and the priority issues of the campaign.

Profound change

There continues to be discussion within the Alliances on the level of commitment the SWP has to it as a long term project. But those who doubt the SWP's commitment at this stage to the continuation of the Alliance beyond the election



Ken Loach

ignore the profound change which the SWP has already undergone. The degree of collaboration which the SWP now has with most of the rest of the left would have been unimaginable two or three years ago.

This could change if there were serious negative developments within the Alliance, but short of that the signs are that it will not. Most importantly the SWP in Scotland is joining the SSP on Mayday, something which is a major step forward for the SSP and a direct result of the emergence of the Alliance in England.

The SWP rightly see that there are two factors which are reshaping the left in Britain. There is the emergence of a militant anti-capitalist movement at the international level which is responding to the ravages of the neo-liberal globalised market. It is a movement which is here to stay and which is attracting large numbers of young people to its ranks and making anti-capitalism a part of the popular vocabulary. Its next mobilisation in Genoa is expected to exceed 100,000 people.

The Globalise Resistance initiative, which was launched by the SWP but on a broad and open basis, continues to attract large numbers to its mobilisations and events and is itself a new factor in British politics shifting the centre of gravity of the anti-globalisation movement from the anarchist fringe towards the mainstream left.

And alongside Globalise Resistance there is the Socialist Alliance which is bringing people back into activity and building a broad alternative to Blairism. These two developments have the capacity to bring about a fundamental reshaping of the left in Britain. The old reference points are losing their validity and new ones are taking their place.

True, the SWP do not share our own vision that the Socialist Alliance in England should, in the medium term, seek to turn itself into a new party of the left similar to the SSP in Scotland. But they are moving in that direction. They are committed to the full continuation of the Alliance after the election. In fact they are for strengthening its structures towards those more akin to a party. They argue, however, that to call it a party, and present it as a party at this stage would to some extent curtail its development by making it more difficult for those breaking from new Labour to join it.

Legitimate

This is in our view a legitimate concern, but a misplaced one — as the experience of the SSP clearly shows. In fact if the Alliance continues to develop in a positive direction the structure as an alliance, even one with a bias towards a party structure, will no longer meet the needs of exactly the people the SWP are concerned about.

This also raises the issue of the impact the Alliance is having on the left itself — and the separate but related issue of revolutionary regroupment. Already the existence of the Socialist Alliance in England and the SSP in Scotland is reshaping the left in Britain and dissolving old boundaries which have been in place for a long time.

Revolutionary regroupment is a difficulty and complicated process, but it is objectively posed by the broader regroupment which is taking place. How can the left be the driving force of a broad anti-Blairite regroupment if it remains unable, within that, to address its own damaging divisions.

In any case the art of politics is to seize the opportunity when it arises, and if it is not seized now the next opportunity might be a long time coming. ★



A welcome turn

OVER the recent past the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), the largest group on the British far left, has been undergoing major changes, most graphically demonstrated by its new open relationship with other left groups and individuals within the Socialist Alliance.

The political basis of this development has been given clear expression in two recent keynote articles, by John Rees in *International Socialism* and in a piece on the SWP website from Alex Callinicos, written to explain the split with the SWP's sister organisation in the United States, the International Socialist Organization (ISO). For both Callinicos and Rees, the anti-globalisation demonstration in Seattle is the key, a turning point in the class struggle, legitimising direct action and providing a new language — anti-capitalism.

Alex Callinicos identifies two further developments — the growth of new political milieus such as the ATTAC movement, and the development of new critiques of capitalism from such as Naomi Klein, Susan George and Walden Bello.

At the same time Rees understands that, as social democratic leaderships adopt the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy, the space for traditional reformist consciousness narrows — and an increasing minority of left reformists are forced to draw more left wing conclusions — and turn to the anti-capitalist movement.

Within the Socialist Alliance, and more generally on the left, there is sharp debate on the nature of Blairism. If New Labour is now neo-liberal, has the Labour Party fundamentally changed its nature? John Rees has a more sophisticated analysis compared for example to those in the Socialist Party who argue that Labour is now irredeemably bourgeois. Rees argues that, however right wing Blair is, he is no worse than his political ancestors.

However naked new Labour is in its espousal of capitalist policies, in practice it is no different to any previous Labour government in practice. Despite all the business donations now flowing into Labour's coffers, Blair remains reliant on its financial links with the trade unions.

With a worsening economic situation developing, the crisis in reformism will deepen. How should revolutionaries react? John Rees points out that there are no quick fixes. It will take a long



time to erode the influence of reformism — but the possibilities are stronger than for a long time.

In the trade unions the issue of independence of action is vital. The union bureaucracies have so far been able to turn back what developing mood exists, closing ranks behind "their" government. But there is a growing politicised left in the trade union movement. Rees correctly identifies the need to build a new rank and file movement independent of ties to Labour.

In the past the SWP's view of rank and file organisation has led to them building "party"-controlled currents in opposition to genuine broad left movements. Part of the recent development of the SWP has been for their trade union militants to become involved with other broad left currents. Whilst this has varied from union to union there are positive signs of a new approach.

Secondly, Rees calls for joint work with the new activists moving into political activity in order to rebuild the left. Employing the notion of the united front is essential for this, we are told. Rees calls on revolutionaries to "show in practice that their methods of struggle are superior". But that said, the frame of reference is still unclear. It is true that the SWP has changed dramatically in its relations to the rest of the left. But this has been partial and contradictory. Some campaigns have remained as SWP-led affairs where other organised currents are only barely tolerated.

That this is no longer the norm is to be welcomed. However fact that the initial shift took place empirically means that its theoretical implications have not been fully worked through by the organisation as a whole — nor its practical consequences taken to their consistent conclusion.

In the Rees article the Socialist Alliance is described as a "united front of a particular kind... uniting left reformist activists and revolutionaries

in a common campaign around a minimum programme". Whilst this is now seen as a long-term structure, it is not a "party".

But in recent issues of *Socialist Review* a debate has raised the possibility of allowing the Alliance to develop into a working class party in which revolutionaries would be a minority.

Talking to ordinary SWP members, it is clear that the organisation is serious about making a change. But at the same time, for many, this is entering uncharted waters. Callinicos accuses the ISO of failing to react quickly and thoroughly enough to the new line. Despite being the most important other member of the International Socialist Tendency, the SWP's loose international current, it seems that the SWP would rather lose comrades than allow them to drag back the movement.

And herein lie two fundamental problems. On the one hand Callinicos argues that the SWP should not allow the development of permanent destructive factionalism, which he claims was the fate of the Fourth International (FI) in the 1970s. On the other he continues to argue that it is premature to "launch an international organisation with its own leadership and discipline before the development of the kind of mass working class radicalisation that made it possible for the Bolsheviks to make the Communist International a major pole of attraction".

For all the problems of the 1970s it is just not true to say that the FI ceased to be an effective political forum. And though clearly the conditions that produced the Communist International will lead to the formation of new international relations superseding the Fourth International as currently organised, building an International in the here and now is the only way to ensure the development of the revolutionary movement.

Despite these caveats, the turn by the SWP outlined by Callinicos and Rees is to be warmly welcomed. The experience of collaboration in the Socialist Alliance has been a positive one. In campaigns and in the trade unions there are the beginnings of new healthier joint activity. At an international level, despite the odd jibe, the work, for instance in Nice between the SWP and the LCR, and now in building for Genoa indicates new possibilities emerging. The turn by the SWP is an opportunity which must be embraced.

★ Greg Tucker

The return of Berlusconi?

ON May 13 Italy will hold parliamentary elections, as well as municipal elections in many towns including Rome, Milan, Turin and Naples. The results, together with those of the March municipal elections in France and the British general election which seems likely in June will make it possible to draw a meaningful picture of the political trends currently at work in the European Union.

LIVIO MAITAN*

IF the polls are to be believed, (although the French elections have shown once again their very relative value), the conservative pole, renamed 'House of Liberties', will gain a comfortable majority and Silvio Berlusconi will again be head of government, seven years after his resignation at the end of 1994. The right has already been largely victorious in the regional elections of spring 2000.

Whatever happens, the Italian elections are likely to confirm two phenomena of a more general nature: the volatility of the electorate and the wave of abstentionism. It seems to us unarguable that this stems from the fact that the differences between right and left (or centre-right and centre-left) are being progressively eroded — notably in the area of the essential economic options and the orientations of international politics — hence the disarray of large layers of citizens.

A lamentable balance sheet

What balance sheet can be drawn of the three centre governments (headed respectively by Prodi, D'Alema and Amato) which have succeeded each other over the past five years?

Their supporters say that these governments have scored two major successes: entry into the European Monetary Union (EMU) at the first possible stage through abiding by the parameters laid down at Maastricht; and Italy's fully fledged participation in the "humanitarian war" against Serbia. No further comment is necessary.

In fact on the socio-economic front the centre-left has nothing to be excited about. Italy has in recent years not really experienced an economic upturn and now it is recording a slowing down in relation even to recent predictions.

The crucial disequilibria between the regions of the north and those of the south have in no way been reduced.

The transformation of the labour market has been clearly unfavourable to workers and the other popular layers: part time, fixed contract and temporary work has grown unceasingly and unemployment remains above 10%.

The country's main daily newspaper, *Corriere della sera*, has stressed the significant modification in the distribution of income: between 1980 and 1999 the percentage of incomes derived from waged work fell from 56% to 40% whereas profits and rents have grown significantly. This tendency has not been rectified under any form whatever during the five years of centre-left government.

The balance sheet is hardly better in the area of the much heralded institutional reforms. There has been a partial, so called 'federalist', reform involving greater autonomy for the regions in a guise with dangerous implications in the present context. In the area of education, concessions have been made to private teaching, against the letter and the spirit of the 1948 Constitution. The main beneficiary has been an increasingly aggressive Catholic church, towards which much servility has been shown, above all during the Jubilee year of 2000.

If the weakening of the centre-left is certainly the consequence of this balance sheet and the resulting disappointment among those who had voted for it 5 years ago, it is also the fruit of the heterogeneity of this coalition, which has led to it getting through three successive prime ministers.

The coalition is currently composed of the *Left Democrats* (DS, ex-PCI, then ex-PDS), the *Italian Popular Party* (PPI, former Christian Democrats), *Democrats* (partisans of Romano Prodi), *Greens*,



Italian Renewal (organized around the former prime minister and current foreign minister, Dini), another formation of Christian Democratic origin, (whose leader, Clemente Mastella, had belonged to the rightwing alliance before supporting the D'Alema government), and finally the *Communist Party of Italy* (PcDI) which originates from a split in the *Party of Communist Refoundation* (PRC) under the auspices of Armando Cossutta.

It is, then, a fairly varied palette and this is reflected also in the European parliament where the MEPs of the centre left belong to four different groups, indeed to different currents inside the same group.

Beyond all the nuances, to use a euphemism, the major divergence is between those who wish to maintain, more or less, the existing political formations, welded together in a coalition, and those who wish to give birth to a new formation conceived as democrat-progressive, on the model of the US Democratic Party.

What is more, the DS, by far the most important formation, is itself divided. Whereas some, including D'Alema, favour the option of a social democratic party, others, including the current secretary Veltroni, are partisans of a progressive democratic party. A left current exists, although currently very weak, which is critical towards all of this and advocates a rapprochement with the PRC.

As for the partisans of Cossutta, they are happy for the instant to defend their coterie in the hope of gaining some seats in Parliament, courtesy of the DS.

The rescue of Berlusconi

If Berlusconi's fortunes have revived and he can hope to win on May 13, it is above all the centre-left which bears the responsibility, because of its calamitous record and its insistence on persevering in its orientations and its methods.

Its candidate for prime minister, Francesco Rutelli, is waging an electoral campaign similar to that of Berlusconi, with enormous personalised posters and

hollow slogans which seek to exploit the most conservative fears and reflexes of the public. He has recruited at great cost as director of his campaign a US 'expert' who was adviser to Gore during the US presidential elections of November 2000.

Berlusconi's major concern has been to re-establish an alliance with the Northern League of Umberto Bossi, forgetting the bloody insults that they hurled at each other for some years. A reconciliation was a primordial necessity in as much as Berlusconi's coalition had been beaten in 1996 precisely because of the fact that Bossi had pursued his own agenda.¹ This time Bossi has agreed to fall back in line — the evidence is that he is losing momentum and would, in isolation, risk a stinging defeat.

Lessons

The Berlusconi formation, *Forza Italia*, has drawn at least two other lessons from the defeat of 1996. Berlusconi himself had to note that he could not build a real party and still less govern on the basis essentially of the people who had helped him to build his economic empire.

He has tried to gain an anchorage in 'civil society' emphasising personalities who are supposed to represent it, like the mayor of Milan, Albertini, or the mayor of Bologna, Guazzaloca. The regional and municipal elections last year indicated that this approach had a certain success.

On the other hand, Berlusconi was concerned to gain an international image with the aim of putting an end to the mistrust felt towards him. He began by establishing privileged links with Spain's prime minister Aznar, whom he presented as an example to follow on the socio-economic front.

However, this was only a trampoline for a more ambitious operation, namely the acquisition of a recognised status at the level of the European Union. This he finally obtained through his integration in the *European Popular Party*.²

All the same, the mistrust seems to be still there, if one takes account of some recent articles in the *Financial Times* and the words of some ministers of EU countries (for example, a Belgian minister). Such attitudes are inspired notably by Berlusconi's links with Bossi, whose xenophobic tendencies are feared, and with the (far-right) *National Alliance*, which, in spite of its leader Fini's attempts to distance it from its past, still has fascist sympathisers in its ranks.



Francesco Rutelli

The misgivings of EU leaders also stem from other preoccupations, for example, concern that the drastic measures of tax reduction advocated by the centre-right might lead to budgetary disequilibria violating the parameters of the EMU stability pact.

It is interesting to note that the Italian employers, at least until now, have not explicitly backed the 'House of Liberties' despite the charm offensive of its leader. If they are increasingly critical towards the centre-left government (which they accuse of being subject to the pressures of the trade union federations, the CGIL above all, and having timorous attitudes, for example, in the area of 'freedom' of the labour market and on the question of pensions), the Italian employers have not forgotten either that the Berlusconi government, by defying the unions, provoked the most powerful mass mobilisation of the last two decades in autumn 1994. Moreover, big entrepreneurs, political officials and representative journalists have not hidden their disapproval of Berlusconi's electoral campaign, marked by an extreme demagogy and pseudo-populist declarations bordering on megalomania.³

In the final analysis, the question is posed as to whether the advent of Berlusconi in government could represent the emergence of a new political layer which can replace that which broke up at the beginning of the 1990s. We will return to this subject after the elections when an exhaustive balance sheet will be possible. For the instant we incline to reply in the negative.

A difficult fight for the PRC

In the context that we have summarily recalled, the *Party of Communist Refoundation*, despite all its weaknesses and contradictions, remains the sole formation which defends the political autonomy of the workers' movement by reject-

ing the socio-economic orientations of the dominant class and the politico-military enterprises of the imperialist countries.

On the electoral level, it had no choice: there was no real basis, however small, for an agreement with the centre-left. Even on the more strictly tactical level, it was not possible to withdraw as in 1996. The electoral law, which the centre-left did not want to change, makes things very difficult for any formation outside of the two coalitions vying for government.

Responsibility

Nonetheless, to show responsibility and avoid being portrayed as responsible for the victory of Berlusconi, the PRC decided not to present candidates in the constituencies for the Chamber of Deputies which are elected on the basis of majority (first-past-the-post) vote, which leaves no room for independent parties: it has only put forward candidates for the proportional seats (25% of the total).

For the Senate (the second chamber, where the prerogatives are the same as that of the first, but whose mode of election is different, even if only 25% of senators are elected proportionally), it is standing everywhere.⁴

It should be added that, employing subterfuges going against the spirit of the law, the two supposedly opposed coalitions are trying to reduce the representation of the smaller parties.

It is therefore possible that the PRC will have fewer representatives elected than it would have obtained under a proportional system. Its main opportunity consists in leading a radical campaign, confirming that it will remain in all cases in opposition, and presenting itself as the sole anti-neo-liberal and anti-capitalist pole.

It could thus regain ground, notably among those left layers who have in recent years tended to abstain and who would be tempted to maintain the same attitude on May 13. ★

* Livio Maitan is a central leader of the *Fourth International* and a member of the leadership of the *Party of Communist Refoundation*.

1. On the elections of 1996 see *IV* No. 278, June 1996.

2. The PPI, which is part of the centre-left governing coalition, also belongs to the *European Popular Party* group.

3. Berlusconi proclaimed himself a worker prime minister, Italy's biggest entrepreneur, a peasant in his youth and a football maestro. He went on to say that a man of his breadth, as big employer and politician, existed nowhere else in the world!

4. Three comrades belonging to the *Bandiera Rossa* current aligned with the *Fourth International* are candidates to the Senate: Gigi Malabarba in Milan, Livio Maitan in Rome and Antonio Moscato in Pouilles.

Portugal after the presidentials

THE erosion of Portugal's Socialist government is accelerating. At the beginning of March, the tragic collapse of the bridge at Entre-os-Rios, in the north of the country, led to 70 deaths and to the fall of Jorge Coelho, minister for infrastructure and strongman of the Socialist Party (PS) apparatus.

LUÍS BRANCO*

INSTEAD of taking the opportunity to remodel the government, replacing the most unpopular members, prime minister António Guterres has chosen to leave things as they were, placing his confidence in the polls published before the accident which guaranteed him an advantage over the opposition *Social Democratic Party* (PSD).

Incompetence and negligence in the maintenance of the road network in Portugal has become the most widely debated issue in recent weeks. It is clear that Portugal holds the European record for road deaths, that the causes of these accidents are linked to speeding and drink driving, and that the parlous state of the roads is revealed in every bout of rainfall.

However the collapse of this century old bridge over the river Douro was not an unexpected tragedy.

On the contrary it had been predicted by local representatives and people, who in recent years have demanded that the government build a new bridge given the precarious state of the existing one. When the bridge collapsed the government met with criticism from every side.

Many other areas of governmental policy have come under fire from the opposition and the social movements. In education, secondary pupils have protested against a proposed 'reform' which forces them to choose aged 14 or 15 whether they wish to opt for a university or technological training in the final years of high school. If they opt for this latter, it will be hard to change their choice without losing a year of work or more.

The government also wishes to end restricted intakes in the universities, leading to street protests by students. More generalised protest is taking form in the universities, after some years in which the student movement has been quiet,

especially against the system of financing: the registration costs paid by students go to pay the running costs of the establishments, above all wages, which the government had promised to meet. The absence of a just system of social action and poor employment opportunities after examinations are the other central themes of protest.

The chaotic state of the health system in Portugal remains one of the main concerns for the public. Inefficient budgeting in the health system, the absence of doctors and health centres capable of meeting needs in the interior of the country; the lack of qualified nurses; and the enormous waiting lists in dentistry have all been major issues.

The most visible opposition came when the government expected it least: at the concluding ceremony of the government's programme for reducing waiting lists the minister was to visit the hospital which had best fulfilled the plan, in Santarém.

However, the director of the hospital refused to be present at the ceremony, saying he would not participate in a government propaganda stunt. The minister had seen his party spoiled and announced live on television that he expected the resignation of the director. Filipe Rosas, a militant of the *Left Bloc* and brother of its candidate for the presidency of the Republic, refused to resign and faced

The PSR's 12th Congress

THE 12th Congress of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) takes place on April 21st and 22nd. It is the first Congress since the foundation of the Left Bloc, so the balance sheet of this experience will be one of the important points of debate.

The agenda of the Congress also includes discussion of the PSR's political manifesto: a text which traces the fundamental political axes which characterise the Portuguese section of the Fourth International, its evolution since the Revolution of April 25th 1974 and the debates it has experienced, oriented towards the elaboration of proposals for the definition of a third camp on the Portuguese left and for the renewal of the opposition.

Another substantial point to be debated at this Congress is the resolution on the construction of the Party, which continues the discussion opened at the organisational conference of October 2000. The debate here concerns the role of the PSR inside the Bloc and the characterisation of the Bloc itself:

"The systematic development of a strategy of transitional demands which tend to raise political and social demands originating in the immediate consciousness of the masses and extending to more direct confrontation with the regime and aiming to construct social organisations which are autonomous from the bourgeois state is a programmatic element the PSR has valued historically. However it has never been a significantly important reference in our public identification, essentially because of the lack of political weight of our current.

*This dynamic of demand and action was formulated in a text at the end of the 1930s, the **Transitional Programme**, which Trotsky put forward on the basis of the political programmes of Marx (**Programme of the German Communists**) and Lenin (**The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It**), and applied in the Russian and German revolutions.*

"Paradoxically it is a unitary policy, and not simple self-affirmation, which has allowed the PSR to be part of a movement which for the first time has given substance to the strategy of transitional demands: for example, the proposal for a wealth tax instead of abstract propaganda on the expropriation of capital. Such is the essential basis of identification between the PSR and the Bloc, and that has been the touchstone of the political impact of the Bloc's proposals.

The essential reason for all of its founding currents to have confidence in the future of the Bloc should be the same: the certainty that the concretisation of its essential programmatic objectives in the class struggle flows from the stability of its unitary policy which has given birth to a movement with a life of its own". ★

with the opposition of the doctors at Santarém, the minister was forced to withdraw his threats.

Among the most significant workers' struggles has been that at the Clarks shoe factory in Arouca in the north of Portugal. This multinational proposed dismissing more than 350 workers and transferring the factory to India, where the working conditions would guarantee it easier profits. The situation led to a great wave of solidarity from the people of the area, who filled the streets of this village in the biggest demonstration anyone can remember since the April 25 revolution.

Left Bloc continues to grow

The presidential elections confirmed the beginning of the decline of the *Socialists*. President Sampaio was re-elected, although with a narrower margin than the opinion polls predicted. At the end of the day he had 56% of the votes, in an election where half the registered voters abstained.

The candidate of the right, a former minister of public works in the PSD government, won 34% and the *Communist* (PCP) candidate scored hardly more than 5%. Fernando Rosas, the *Left Bloc* candidate, received 3% of the votes while Garcia Pereira, a media friendly lawyer and the eternal candidate of the MRPP (Maoist) scored 1.5%.

Analysing the results from a nationwide point of view, Fernando Rosas did better than the candidate of the PCP in nearly half the country's municipalities - a clear trend in the interior and the north, even on the islands of the Azores and Madeira.

However, the results of the *Bloc* candidate show substantial differences with those in the parliamentary elections where the vote was concentrated in the big urban centres. This time, the *Bloc* lost votes in absolute terms in Porto and Lisbon, while gaining significantly in the areas where the movement has had a weak implantation.

This growth represents a natural tendency in as much as in the presidential election 'every vote counts', whereas in the parliamentary elections the election of a deputy is much more difficult in the small constituencies.

In any case, in absolute terms, the Fernando Rosas vote remained a little below the best result of the *Bloc* (131,000 votes in the parliamentary elections of 1999) but this time with a much higher rate of abstention.

Left Bloc leadership meeting

THE National Round Table of the Left Bloc will hold its second Convention on May 19 and 20.

One of the subjects to be considered by delegates is the manifesto on local government, a document that in the (as yet incomplete) version discussed by the Round Table includes 21 electoral commitments for Bloc candidates.

Participatory and democratic planning, one of the big ideas in the document, implies the renovation of the traditional organisation of local elections, which is on the verge of exhaustion. Also proposed are the limitation of mandates; the training of local representatives and technicians; the creation of 'observatories' to evaluate local government involving associative movements; and public debate about urban planning projects.

Popular participation in drawing up the Budget and Plan of Activities is another key point of the Bloc proposals. This starts from a simple principle: between April and September of each year, it is possible to organise decentralised debates where each citizen is presented with alternatives and priorities for investment in their neighbourhood and in the rest of the municipality, in the short and medium term. Such would be the basis for a participatory budget in Portugal.

Another commitment is resistance to attempts to entrench a PS-PSD monopoly of local government, through draft laws ending proportional representation in the municipal executives, without substantially enlarging the powers of municipal councils.

To ensure transparency in the use of public money, the Bloc defends the necessity of inquiring into the complex of institutes, foundations, municipal enterprises and private concessions set

up by local collectives.

Beyond these commitments applicable to all municipalities, the Bloc will also campaign around certain questions which are part of its political heritage: like the restriction of car circulation in the towns; and the social and ecological contract; heavy tax penalisation of unoccupied buildings; an end to the urban expansion of metropolitan areas through the renovation of existing housing; a new policy of combating drugs dependency through combating the sources of insecurity, among other measures.

To deliberate these matters among others, the Bloc has held a series of conferences from March onwards. However, local government issues will not dominate the agenda of the Convention.

The draft political resolution proposes that the central campaign for 2001 will be the question of abortion, which is still banned in Portugal.

In 1988 parliament approved a law allowing the termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks. Since then, the PS and PSD concluded an agreement to submit the question to a referendum, an instrument never before used in Portugal.

Although the polls predicted the victory of the 'Yes' camp the terrorist campaign of the Church distanced many people from the debate and the rate of electoral participation was less than 40% of those registered. Hence technically, the referendum was invalid.

Among those who voted, the majority was opposed to decriminalisation of abortion. It is this situation that the Bloc now wishes to change, with a parliamentary initiative capable of unifying the women's movement and building a campaign that wins a new referendum. ★

The dominant theme of the *Bloc's* campaign centred on the question of the effects of depleted uranium during NATO's bombings in Yugoslavia.

The news of the death of a Portuguese soldier that the army had tried to conceal, by refusing to pass on to the family the reports of the results of the autopsy, brought Portuguese participation in these operations into the debate and highlighted the role of those candidates (Sampaio included) who had involved Portugal in this senseless war.

In the final days before the election

the government sent three ministers to the zone where Portuguese soldiers are operating to measure the contamination. Although the results of the analyses have still not been produced, on their return to Lisbon the ministers claimed that there was no danger of contamination, appealed for calm, and offered some precious assistance to the president whom they represented. ★

* Luis Branco is a member of the leadership of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International), one of the founding organizations of the Left Bloc.

Banning the NPD?

“FORWARD in the struggle against the regime of the governing politicians! We create now the anti-capitalist economic order!” says the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD - National Democratic Party of Germany).

GERHARD KLAAS*

IN 1969 the NPD was represented in seven regional parliaments and had nearly 28,000 members. However, until recently it had become reduced to a party of ‘traditionalists’ limited to a propaganda activity banalising the crimes of the Third Reich, while trying to mobilize petty-bourgeois resentments.

Faced with its crisis, the NPD responded by emphasizing a *völkisch* anti-capitalism (this term designates in Nazi ideology the ‘natural’ ethnic unity of the German people/nation against its ‘artificial’ division into antagonistic social classes) and by keeping its distance from the anti-Communist camp of the parties of the traditional bourgeois right.

Udo Voigt, president of the party since 1996, incarnates the new line well: he emphasizes his rejection of Communism primarily because of its internationalist aspect. In an interview in the respectable daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Voigt claims: “We have more in common with the PDS than with the parties of the right”.¹

Extra parliamentary tactics

According to the intelligence services specialising in the struggle against ‘extremism’ (*Verfassungsschutz* or ‘protection of the Constitution’) at both the federal and *Länder* (state) level, as well as independent observers, the new strategy has allowed the NPD to score some successes, above all in the new *Länder* of the ex-GDR which the party has chosen as “the main battlefield”.

In the east of Germany, but also in the west, the NPD recruited heavily in the

milieu of the far right organizations dissolved in the 1990s. Since then, it has relied more on extra parliamentary mobilisations.

Propaganda in favour of acts of violence against refugees and immigrants, leftwing militants and disadvantaged minorities in general (including particularly the disabled!) is left to *die freien Kameradschaften* (‘independent companionships’), the bands and singers of the Skinhead-Nazi subculture, with whom they have close relations and who they can mobilise for public demonstrations.

The last report of the federal *Verfassungsschutz* spoke of 6,000 members of the party, and growing. In summer 2000, when the far right became an issue in the mainstream media, several hundred new recruits joined the party. In the *Länder* of Saxony (in the ex-GDR) for example, the structures of the NPD are much stronger than those of the *Greens*. The NPD has more than 1 000 members and is represented in the municipal councils and in the constituency councils. Other parties and groupings of the far right, like the *Republikaner* (REP), the *Deutsche Volksunion* (DVU) and the *Bund Freier Bürger* (which remains marginal) can only dream of such success.

“Anti-capitalism of the right”

The specific reason for the success of the NPD is its extra parliamentary tactic.

It has succeeded in linking itself to a veritable subculture, and its propaganda in the area of economic policy has played a significant role. Whereas the REP and the *Bund Freier Bürger* — who seek acceptance by the established, ‘moderate’ milieus of the right — have largely adapted to the neo-liberal line of the Austrian FPÖ (which is in their eyes the model to follow), the NPD fulminates against the “anti-popular policy of transnational capital and the federal government which is in its service”.

The formula is that of Michael Nier, a member of the commission for economic policy that the leadership of the NPD created in 1998. Originally from Chemnitz, this character was a lecturer in “Marxism-Leninism” in the technical universities of Dresden and Chemnitz before 1989. Another member of this commission is Reinhold Oberlercher, from Hamburg, a former leading member of the SDS [Socialist Students’ League — a 1960s New Left group — Ed.]

This “anti-capitalism of the right” is in no way an invention of the NPD. Already at the time of the Weimar repub-

lic, “anti-capitalism” was a constitutive part of the so-called ‘conservative revolution’. Its adherents interpreted capitalism as a cultural phenomenon which destroyed the unity of the nation, presupposed to be a natural given. In consequence, such “anti-capitalism” has no material base and is in the first place anti-democratic and anti-liberal (that is political liberalism). Marxism itself is treated as sub-species of liberalism.

The relations of production and questions of property play no role in this concept. In the programme of the NPD one can read: “The objective of the national democratic economic policy is the synthesis of the freedom of the entrepreneur and of social responsibility”. It is why the party favours “the free entrepreneur conscious of his social responsibility” and wishes above all to strengthen the position of small and medium entrepreneurs as “a vital part of our national economy”.

At the centre of the NPD’s critique is the sphere of circulation: monopolistic capital as opposed to productive capital — of course, that is also closely related to the party’s anti-Semitism — for finance capital, not linked “to the soil”, will be in contradiction with the means of material production well rooted in the soil of the nation.

Another characteristic of this critique of capitalism of the far right is the strong personalisation of the argument. Exploitation is the work of “corrupt politicians”, “bigwigs” and “speculators”; it is not analysed using the instruments of the critique of political economy but rather described in the categories of ethical or moral order.

Some of the anti-fascist organisations correctly stress the need to distinguish ourselves from such an “anti-capitalism” by correcting certain “modes of argument in the framework of the critique of neo-liberalism and globalisation”. For them, it is necessary “to rethink certain theoretical bases of our own action” so as “to be able to reject false partners”.

Looking at it more closely, one can say there are many aspects marking the difference between a genuine anti-capitalism and a demagogic one. For the “anti-capitalism” of the far right does not obviously question a policy in favour of German economic hegemony inside the world markets.

At the same time, it makes itself champion of an aggressive protectionism (in appearance, through demands directed against the big companies active at the international level), which was reflected

in the declaration of the NPD at the federal elections of 1998 in the following fashion: "Banning flights of capital to the low wage countries", "public programmes of job creation", "use profits to create jobs".

The strategists of the NPD are conscious that the form of the party in itself is not a guarantee of success. Franz Schwerdt, a leading member, suggests, "in our country, politics is not carried out only in the parliaments". Hence the necessity to, "create a nationalist environment which is not exclusively linked to the party".

The results of some studies on trade union youth are in this context pouring oil on the fires of the NPD. These studies show that among such youth the proportion of people voting for the far right is higher than in the rest of the population, with support for the demand "work for Germans first!" Jürgen Schwab, editor in chief of the NPD organ *Deutsche Stimme*, wants to win them "for the future of the German national movement".

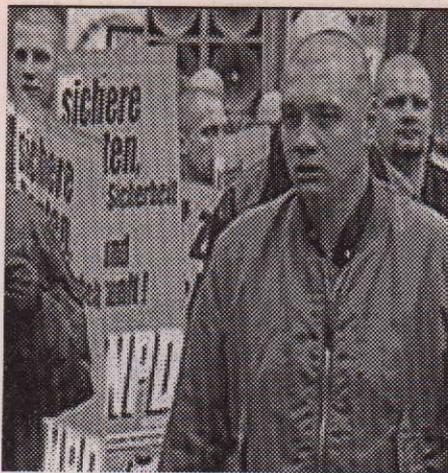
The most aggressive section of the NPD in this area, where the aim is to recruit and win new allies through agitation on the theme of "anti-capitalism", is in Saxony, where it is also numerically the strongest. A base for such new alliances will be found, among others, in resistance to the privatisation of public services and "against the destruction of the German culture and mentality".

A phenomenon long banalised

The young Skinheads who are mainly responsible for the acts of violence of an anti-semitic, racist and neo-Nazi nature are under the influence of the NPD although not normally found at the leading levels of this well rooted party.

At the crossroads between these Skinheads and the NPD there are the *freien kameradschaften*. Some representatives of the internal political security service (*Verfassungsschutz*) speak of the first signs of a "brown terror", while claiming that the latter do not from a logistical point of view carry the same potential as the [left-wing urban guerrilla] *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction) of the 1970s.

Many politicians, in the ranks of the SPD too, like to compare "the extremisms of right and left", often to demonstrate that both "threaten the rule of law". It is notable that the head of the internal security service, minister of the interior Otto Schily (SPD and ex-Green) is still



trying — including in his most recent report — to minimise far right acts of violence through statistical manipulation.

Thus when it comes to "violence of far left motivation", the crime of "resistance against the public authority" figures in the statistics, but for the far right this crime is not taken into account. The "violence of far right motivation" is limited to homicides, attempted homicide, physical wounding, firebomb attacks and crimes against national security. In 1998 the *Verfassungsschutz* had recorded 708 crimes of this type and by 1999 it was 746.

In September 2000, sections of the liberal bourgeois press exposed this arbitrary administrative behaviour. The dailies *Tagesspiegel* (Berlin) and *Frankfurter Rundschau* showed that instead of the 26 deaths attributed to far right violence since 1990 by the administration, the correct figure was 93 victims. In spite of this, Schily continues to obscure the facts although he now speaks of 36 victims.

A favorable climate

A recent study (Ahlheim/Heger) on xenophobia in Germany describes the climate which makes such acts possible and explains the successes of NPD propaganda. The result of the study, which is based on figures from 1980-1998, are alarming and confirm other studies on the link between the social situation and racist resentments.

According to these results, 53% of the unemployed in the East have xenophobic feelings as against 37% of the unemployed in the West. East and West, unemployment and lack of job security coincide with an upward tendency of xenophobic prejudices. The authors of the study claim the assumption that it is the behaviour of immigrants which engenders racism is erroneous. For it is precisely in the regions where the immigrant

population is lowest that "xenophobic sentiments are at their sharpest".

For example the proportion of "foreigners" (*Ausländer*) in the new *Länder* of the ex-GDR is very much lower than in the old *Länder* of the west. Nonetheless, the study shows that "xenophobia is more widespread in the east than in the west of the Republic".

The study also makes it clear that the debate on "the struggle for the future of the location of German production" since the beginning of the 1990s has encouraged the view that "the foreigner is above all perceived as a 'competitive factor' in the areas of well-being, employment and housing".

The evaluation of the empirical data shows that the subjective perception of the personal social situation plays the same role as the objective social situation as a cause of xenophobic resentments. Among the pessimists in the controversy over the spatial location of German manufacturing, racist attitudes are more widespread.

The authors of the study sum up the result of their research in the following manner: "The flexibility and absolute mobility that capitalism, victorious on the world scale, demands of individuals everywhere has its consequences. The power of the market destroys the traditional social, cultural, religious milieus and decomposes familial, neighbourly and local relations [...] It is precisely there that the 'modern nationalisms' promise to rebuild social relations and restore a meaning to life".

The growing popularity of the positions of the far right is also the result of the racist propaganda of the Christian-conservative parties who have made it their hobbyhorse in recent electoral campaigns. Last year alone there was the collection of signatures against the right to dual citizenship (the right to be a naturalised German while remaining a citizen of another country) in Hesse; and the "Children not Indians" campaign ("*Kinder statt Inder*", a slogan invented by the CDU leader in Rhineland-Westphalia, Rüttgers) led against work permits introduced to attract a qualified labour force (above all in information technology) from India. All this in a situation where the SPD continues a harsh policy of deportation of political refugees and an austerity policy against the destitute, justified by the "constraints of globalisation".

To this add the general disarray *vis-à-vis* established politics fed by the various

★ Germany

corruption scandals. In the future, the process of European capitalist unification, austerity programmes under the patronage of the European Commission, and the undemocratic nature of European Union institutions could strengthen the parties and movements of the far right.

The demand to ban the NPD

In February 2001 the government, parliament and the chamber of the *Länder* (*Bundesrat*) demanded the banning of the NPD before the Supreme Court. There are two main reasons for this.

First, German entrepreneurs and the government fear that investment from overseas will be put off. The attacks perpetrated against synagogues and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries could have this effect. The attack in Düsseldorf against Jewish immigrants from the ex-USSR was noted with great emotion in the USA.

The second reason relates to the growing international competition for highly skilled workers. In April 2000, during the computing trade fair, CEBIT, in Hanover, the biggest of its kind in the world, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) said for the first time that Germany also would need this kind of workforce. Neo-Nazi attacks obviously do not encourage people to come to work in Germany.

A more or less camouflaged thesis has arisen in Germany that racism and the rise of the far right are in some way reactions "of legitimate defence". A view that has its adherents even in the academic social science milieu, for example among the devotees of the "risk society" [paradigm associated with German sociologist Ulrich Beck — Ed.] who believe that the young Nazis are only victims of 'modernity'. This is absurd.

The successes of the NPD, the murders and attacks committed by youth with neo-Nazi motivations in Germany is not explained solely by the precarious social situation of the guilty but also by a racism propagated officially by the state for some years. From the beginning of the 1990s, this official propaganda suggested a massive danger, warning against "the flood of asylum seekers" and crying "the boat is full".

The successes of the NPD are also the consequence of the weakness of the majority of leftwing forces. The official policy of the trade unions is aligned on the defence of the "German base of production" instead of envisaging the possi-

bilities of an internationalist and anti-racist policy.

The anti-racist and anti-fascist movements in Germany have until now not succeeded in linking up with the mobilisations of the unemployed and the insecure. An important part of the academic left plays with post-modern "discourse theories" or concern themselves with identity questions rather than political problems.

The PDS emphasizes social problems, but at the same time it tries to be recognised by the established political forces as "constitutional party" and participates in governmental coalitions with the SPD, for example in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. As junior partner of the SPD at the level of the *Länder*, it takes responsibility for antisocial austerity measures. That does not help its credibility. The new leadership of the party, elected at its recent congress in Cottbus, now wants "to positively engage with the national question".²

A breach that must be enlarged

But as the bourgeois parties — with their own motives, of course — have opened a breach in the struggle against the neo-Nazis, there are also new possibilities for the left to go beyond ritual anti-fascism. The anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations have more publicity than before. That gives them the possibility to emerge from their isolation and address a broader public.

The banning of the NPD could slow but not stop the current evolution. For the positions of the NPD are found in the heads of many people, largely beyond the members of this party, notably in the ranks of the CDU and CSU.

The rise of far right parties and movements can only be stopped by a powerful counterforce which propagandises vigorously for the principles of equality, which genuinely poses the social question and fights for a socialist, democratic and internationalist alternative to capitalism. ★

* Gerhard Klaas is editor of the bimonthly *SoZ* (*Sozialistische Zeitung*) published by the Union of Socialist Politics (VSP).

1. PDS, *Party of Democratic Socialism*, implanted mainly in the ex-GDR (German Democratic Republic) where the majority of its cadres come from the former governing party, the SED (*United Socialist Party*) is to the left of social democracy. SPD, *German Social Democratic Party*, currently at the head of the coalition government with *Die Grünen* (Greens), dropped any reference to Marxism at the congress of Bad Godesberg in 1959. CDU, *Christian Democratic Union*, and CSU (*Christian Social Union*, its autonomous branch in Bavaria) constitute together the main German conservative party and is currently mired in financial scandals when Helmut Kohl (CDU) was Chancellor.

2. See Winfried Wolf, "A good Germany?" *IV*, No. 327, January 2001.

A strategy to beat back fascism

THE initiative taken by Germany's ruling parties to ban the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD - *National Democratic Party*) is a significant political fact.

MANUEL KELLNER*

IT is not aimed at a marginal group-cule but at the party which is currently at the centre of the recomposition of fascism in Germany. Bourgeois circles support this approach and the accompanying article by Gerhard Klaas sums up the reasons for this. The SPD, the *Greens*, the majority of the trade union leaderships and the PDS are content to call occasionally for ritual demonstrations and hope, beyond this, that legal procedures will solve the problem.

Inside the anti-fascist committees as in the currents and organisations to the left of the PDS, it seems hard to find an adequate political response to the official policy, and it is perfectly understandable. But the chance that this offers to strengthen and reorient the mass movement can be diverted down a dead end.

It is therefore necessary to debate the strategy of anti-fascists on this issue.

Political evaluation

To illustrate the problem of political evaluation of the problem, I quote the written contribution of a militant antifascist from Cologne, which is very characteristic: "State and legal measures should not be supported, for they will be turned against the left itself. The alternative that remains to us is to organise the daily civil and popular resistance. The struggle against racism and violence from the right should be led publicly in the street, in the workplaces, in private life and in the media [...] It should not be forgotten that the police and the judiciary, who do not work openly under the eyes of the broad public, are themselves auxiliary forces of racism in the framework of the official policy relating to 'foreigners'."

Among currents owing an allegiance to the ideas of Leon Trotsky an argument

of this kind could well be convincing.

It is true that Trotsky and the *Left Opposition*, in the final years of the Weimar republic, had strongly — and rightly — polemicised against the view of the Social Democrats that the rise of Nazism could be fought by legal means and police repression by the bourgeois state, even in a democratic parliamentary regime.

On the other hand, they had also shown the possibility of linking the immediate needs felt by the masses (starting notably with the need for self-defence) to a perspective of mobilisation with revolutionary potential. Today in Germany, we seem to be far from that situation.

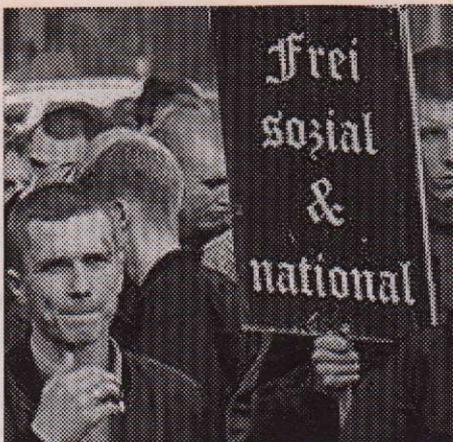
What is done by the Left is primarily propaganda, explaining that the mobilisations which the governmental parties call for serve only to camouflage their own racist policy, which is hypocritical; that the motives for their change of line fit in with the interests of big capital; that the initiative for the banning of the NPD serves to falsely reassure people and could be used against the ‘far left’ organizations; that the banning will not lead to a real dissolution of the NPD, and so on.

However, explaining these indisputable truths does not constitute a real political response or a strategy for how the mass movement could progress. It is true that tens, indeed hundreds, of thousands of people in Germany are ready to mobilise against the criminal acts and inhuman propaganda of the neo-Nazis and against the NPD in particular. In comparison to that, it is only a small minority who mobilise in defence of asylum seekers and the victims of multiple forms of discrimination (for whose oppression the government parties are politically responsible).

Link

In order to link the two movements, we cannot start only from the higher political consciousness of those who are ready to mobilise against the existing government, but must also take account of the consciousness of the majority, who wish ‘only’ that the racist attacks should stop and that the NPD and its ilk disappear, but do not see (or not yet) the link between the rise of violent neo-Nazism and the government’s policy.

The first thing to grasp is that the ruling parties (the SPD and the *Greens*) are running a certain risk with their initiative. Not only the risk that the Supreme Court could come down against the banning of



the NPD.

There is another danger: the procedure before the Tribunal could last nearly two years. It is a long period, during which attacks could continue and a mass movement would have the time to ripen, reflect, and draw conclusions, go further, perhaps even grasp the extent to which the official policy is complicit with neo-Nazism or at least encourages the rise of neo-Nazism.

In these conditions to say that the banning of the NPD would accomplish nothing is to turn one’s back on the concerns of youth, trades unionists and so on. They hope that this banning will serve precisely to beat back the Nazi threat. It would be better to explain how the banning of the NPD, imposed from below, could lead to a real dissolution of the NPD and a real blow against neo-Nazism and the far right as a whole.

Back to zero

It is clear that if the NPD is not banned by the Supreme Court, we start again from zero. It is clear that also a ban in two years time is too late — every day there are new attacks, and the NPD is preparing to reorganise in the event of a formal suppression of the party. Another thing must also be explained: if the NPD is banned not for its continuity with historic Nazism and not for its racist politics, but as a “subversive”, “anti-constitutional” organisation, nothing will be gained either. The antifascist committees, the far left organisations and even the PDS could be the next victims of bans founded on the same jurisprudence.

We can also explain that there is enormous complicity between certain sectors of the police apparatus and the far right and that this apparatus is not then a serious guarantee for a true dissolution of the NPD. One can add that even a genuine dissolution of the NPD resolves nothing for there will still be the ‘independent companionships’, the violent Skinheads

organised locally and their subculture, and so on.

The conclusion must be that it is necessary to mobilise at the base to gain a true dissolution of the NPD and beat back the far right. This could be agreed by the mass of people ready to do something against the far right and the minority who already make the link between the fight against neo-Nazism and a critique of government policy. In activity, the majority could more easily learn about the hypocritical nature of the official policy.

Not to speak of a too distant past (Weimar Republic and so on), we only have to go back a decade or so towards the end of the GDR, when there was a mass movement against that regime’s political police, the STASI. Rank and file “committees for the dissolution of the Stasi” were formed.

The idea was good: self-activity at the base is the best point of departure for destroying a coercive apparatus. In the framework of the unification of Germany under capitalism and the reign of the West German bourgeoisie, the movement at the base became decomposed, and the dissolution of the STASI became the task of another state apparatus: that of the Federal Republic of Germany. The result was that the emancipatory élan of the mass movement was broken — and, among other results, that there was the rise of the neo-Nazi movement.

This experience should lead us today to the constitution of broad “committees for the dissolution of the NPD”, of a mass character. Their point of departure would be that they are favourable to the banning of the NPD to bring about its dissolution and to the decomposition of the far right milieu as a whole.

These committees would bring together the existing anti-fascist committees and movements and far left organisations, the PDS, trades unionists, trade union sections or unions, some sectors of the SPD and of the Greens and more generally all the individuals ready to mobilise against the NPD and the far right in general.

Objectives

The objectives of these “committees for the dissolution of the NPD” could be the following:

■ Throughout the banning process before the constitutional tribunal, to observe what happens and react by mobilisation if the proceedings drag and if the argument of the tribunal turns towards “the struggle against extremism



in general”, and so on;

■ During this time, to study closely the reality and the activities of the NPD as well as the far right as a whole in the towns and the regions and make public this reality;

■ To organise self-defence against the Nazis if necessary and organise the defence of their habitual victims (political refugees, immigrants, their cultural centres and meeting places, the offices of Jewish communities and their cemeteries, the disabled, and so on);

■ To choose centres of activity of the far right extremists as targets for the mass mobilisations for the dissolution of the NPD and its ilk, of course before the tribunal makes its decision;

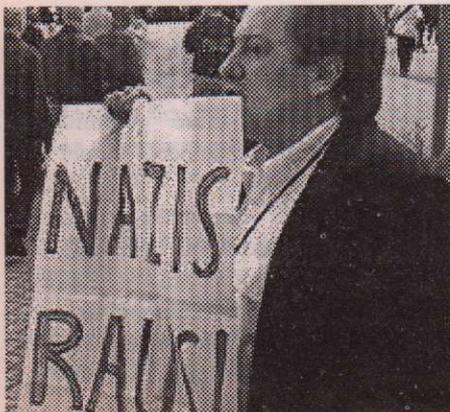
■ If the tribunal finds in favour of the banning of the NPD, to be ready to organise the concrete dissolution of this organisation and other similar or worse organisations at the local level;

■ To form with others “committees for the dissolution of the NPD” at the regional and national level to choose the dates of big unitary antifascist demonstrations at these levels.

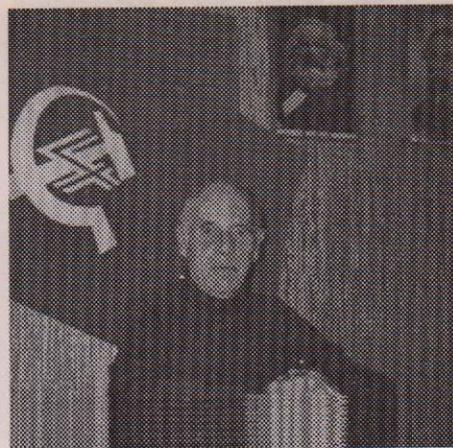
Such an orientation could offer a field of activity to all those who wish truly to beat back the far right. It combines the will to mobilise against the NPD and the far right with a political approach to the legal process unleashed by the parties in government.

If the creation of such a movement succeeded, it would contribute a great deal more than a passive ‘wait and see’ attitude on the one hand, and propagandist self-marginalisation on the other. ★

* Manuel Kellner is a regular contributor to the bimonthly SoZ - Sozialistische Zeitung published by the Union of Socialist Politics (VSP).



Interview with Rudolf Segall



Rudolf Segall

COMRADE Rudolf (Rudi) Segall was 90 years old on April 6th, 2001. Ten years ago, our German-language sister publication, *Inprekorr*, wrote: “Rudi belongs to a generation which is dying out, who as Jews have suffered oppression, anti-semitism, racism and who have nonetheless rejected the temptation of Zionism which believed that the ‘Jewish question’ could only be solved to the cost of the Palestinian people. His internationalism remains as unshakeable as his loyalty to the *Fourth International* ...” Daniel Berger spoke with Rudi as his birthday approached.

■ You fled the Nazis in 1934 and emigrated to Palestine. While there you split from the Zionist movement because you could not bear the contradiction with your own socialist beliefs. What made you a socialist?

To become a socialist is really problematic. For me it was certainly a conscious opposition developed in my parents house and at school. Among my own circle of friends, there were no socialists.

I had involved myself strongly in the youth movement, the *Wanderbewegung*, which was also intensively involved with the cultural phenomena of those times. Here there was the beginning of political discussion, at the bigger meetings some groups sang revolutionary songs; we went to exhibitions and the theatre (Brecht was being staged in Berlin).

Thus, I turned slowly from my ‘model’, Walter Rathenau, to Landauer (“Call to socialism”). I studied for a year in Königsberg in 1930, where I read Trotsky’s *My Life* — that had a strong influence on me.

However, I still was not clear about my future path during the rise and eventual victory of Hitler. Through my links with a Zionist group my image of a different society fused with the conceptions

that were common to all workers movements with this image of a socialist society, which largely connected with my earlier ideas. As a socialist, I identified with the group *Haschomer Hatzair* (“Young Watch”) that believed the Zionist state must be socialist.

■ You visited Israel a few years ago. What has become of this country? Was what the Zionist state does today, i.e. the oppression of the Palestinian population, already present in the Zionist ideology of the 1930s? Was the establishment of Israel through the expulsion of the Palestinians already central in the political philosophy of Zionism?

The plan for the Jewish settlement of Palestine, without consideration for the population already living there, ensured that basically between the beginning of the Zionist project and today nothing changed.

From 1935 to 1939 I lived in a *Haschomer Hatzair* kibbutz, at a time when this ‘socialist island’ understood itself as a pioneer of Zionist society. This conception is today completely outdated, but the Kibbutz was already at that time in reality a bastion for the penetration of Zionist colonisation against the interests of the Palestinian population. Thus it is no miracle that a high percentage of the Israeli military elite came from the Kibbutz. For some of us the contradiction between the socialist ideal and the behaviour in relation to the resident population became ever bigger, so that a large group left the Kibbutz in order to carry out political work.

■ How do you deal with the reproach, which is somewhat common at least in Germany: “those who are against the state of Israel and who fundamentally criticize Zionism are anti-Semites”? Is it really the case that one cannot sepa-

Cult of the Oranges

THE dynamism of the class struggle in the twentieth century shows itself in the demise of the institution of monarchy.

ARTHUR BRULS

AT the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of the people of the earth lived under the rule of a monarch.

At the beginning of the twenty first century only the Scandinavian countries, Britain, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, Spain, the greater part of the Arab Peninsula, Morocco, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Nepal, Tonga and Japan and some marginal quasi-independent countries like Swaziland, Lesotho, and Bhutan have a monarch as their head of state.

There exists a distinct pattern as to why these countries have remained monarchies. The Scandinavian countries, Britain, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg are extremely stable imperialist countries that either stayed neutral or were on the victorious side in the two imperialist world wars. Monarchism among the masses is always identification with the powerful, the belief that things will stay as they are, so it is very difficult for a monarchy to survive defeat in a war.

These countries also show that it is fetishist to believe that monarchism brings political stability to a country, when it is just the other way around, countries who were relatively stable in the twentieth century have kept their monarchy.

Although it is interestingly this fetishism that explains why Spain — hardly a stable capitalist country in the twentieth century became a monarchy again after the death of Franco. The Spanish monarchy is a joint venture of genuine conservative monarchists and the fetishist beliefs of social democrats that wanted their country to be just as stable and prosperous as Denmark, Sweden or Holland.

rate anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism, that the two are related?

Here we are dealing with completely different phenomena: anti-Zionism is a fight against imperialist oppression, exploitation and expulsion, thus a fight against a nationalism of the worst kind. Anti-Semitism is the utilization of nationalistic feelings for the *maintenance* of imperialistic goals. These two attitudes are thus absolutely contrary.

■ You joined the *Fourth International (FI)* in 1938 in Palestine. In 1947 when you returned to Germany, you found there were only a few surviving comrades of the FI. The others had died in the concentration camps, emigrated, or been killed by Stalin's murder gangs. There was thus only a very weak organization of the FI here. What induced you to remain a revolutionary Marxist at a time of the triumph of Stalinism on the one hand and the emerging cold war on the other?

In Palestine we believed firmly in the coming revolution in Germany (and in Europe), on the basis of Trotsky's prognosis that that would be the outcome of the war. In the last months of the war we had observed that things were turning out differently than forecast; but it was quite a while until we realized finally the true state of things.

It seemed to me nevertheless that our revolutionary hopes would not be buried for always. We hoped firmly that we would strengthen our movement over time so that it would play an important role in the coming events. The unshakable optimism of Ernest [Mandel] certainly had a very large influence on us. The internationalism of our movement above all helped me to believe in future success.

■ How did the structure of the German section develop after the war? Who were these people, where did they come from, what did they do? Were you still in fear of the Stalinists?

One must say first of all that only a few comrades survived the Nazi period, and those who emigrated did not return. Admittedly a set of Austrian comrades from Palestine returned, who for a whole time continued to work in Austria. The only comrade who returned from the comrades operating in former times in Germany was George Jungclas (he spent the Nazi period in Denmark).

Later still Wolf Salus returned. He was born in 1909 in Prague and was in the youth wing of the KPD. In 1929 (at the age of 20) he was a cofounder of the Trotskyist movement in Germany — he was in a concentration camp. After the war he helped build the movement in Czechoslovakia, before fleeing to West Germany, where we worked together. In 1953 he was murdered in a Munich hospital by a GPU agent.

Ernst Scholz (born in 1904) was also driven out from the Sudetenland, and was active in Augsburg from the early 1950's up to his death in 1997. From Palestine there was Sigi and Ruth Rothschild and, later, Berthold Scheller and Jakob Moneta. The remaining comrades were recruited by Schorsch (George) Jungclas.

■ In recent years at least there has been much talk of the impossibility of socialism. Since 1989, we have been politically and ideologically on the defensive with the big difference from the post-war period that there is now no longer a mass workers party. Where do you see the parallels with the late 1940's/early 1950's and what can you pass on from your long political activity in post-war Germany?

We divided our activity, although perhaps not consciously at the time, into two directions. On the one hand it fell upon us to win new individual members who through discussion felt that our organisation would be the right place for them to achieve their aims.

On the other hand however we always strove to look out for organisations who shared the same objectives as us where it would be possible not only to win over individuals but the whole group to our position.

In principle our activities do not change at present. The non-existence of a mass workers party meant however that we have had a lot of ground to cover. The attempt to co-operate with those organizations close to us is necessary, but each such collaboration — with the goal of fusion — can only have prospects of success if basic preparations are made.

In terms of the post-war period we gained much experience and shed some illusions. Personally my experience showed me that the only constant is continuing change.

I hope firmly that once again the emergence of mass movements throughout the world can be taken up by us and our allies, in such a manner that the way to socialism remains possible. ★

★ Holland

The Moroccan monarchy survived only thanks to the French occupation of the country, not because of the religious hold it has supposedly always held on the Moroccan people. It is clear that the French occupation forestalled a bourgeois revolution just as happened in other countries on the periphery of the imperialist heartland like Turkey or Mexico. The monarchies of the Arab Peninsula are the symbols of pseudo nations, created and sponsored by imperialism, to prevent the income generated by oil being shared by all Arabs.

Monarchy persisted in Swaziland, Lesotho, Nepal and Bhutan thanks to the extreme underdeveloped character of these societies and also due to the interest British Imperialism had in maintaining some sort of presence in these areas after the independence of India and South Africa. Japan and Thailand are certainly countries where the role of the monarchy is more complicated than can be described in a short article like this.

Holland is one of the countries where the monarchy as an institution and monarchism — Orangeism, after the house of Orange — as a popular ideology, has stayed strong throughout the twentieth century.

The strength of the monarchy in Holland — and this is true for many monarchies throughout the world — lies in the fact that, precisely because the monarch is constitutionally forbidden to speak in public about political issues, every one can project their own views of the way the queen really is onto the institution.

Since every Dutch person can imagine the queen as being perfect according to his own moral standards there always lingers the dangers that the queen becomes exposed, that the difference between the way the queen really is and the way she is imagined becomes too big. This isn't that difficult since the nineteenth century Oranges lived and thought like German *Junkers* (nobility) and their twentieth century descendants as American billionaires. This has resulted in a range of minor and major scandals.

The latest of these has been the desire of the Dutch heir to the throne, 34-year-old Willem Alexander to marry Maxima Zorreguieta, the daughter of a former junior minister of agriculture in the Argentine military dictatorship headed by Jorge Videla. The paper of the *Socialistische Arbeiderspartij* (Dutch section of the Fourth International), *Grenzeloos*, takes sides in this debate in a recent editorial we reproduce here. ★

Love of the uncommon people

WE are not indignant because Willem Alexander wants to marry the daughter of a former junior minister in a fascist government. Contrary to common wisdom in Holland, the members of the Orange family are not common people. They form one of the most important capitalist clans of Holland and are as such part of the international network of capitalist clans from all over the world. This international network has its own social environment and it is much more logical that Willem Alexander should make Maxima Zorreguieta's acquaintance than to do so with ordinary citizens of this planet like you and I.

Jorge Zorreguieta was not only an obscure dignitary in a dictatorial regime, but plays an important role in many organisations of employers in Argentina and in the world of international agricultural organizations. Just as the sons and daughters of the French seventeenth century nobility were waited upon at the palace of Versailles, the daughter of such a global capitalist has worked for some time at the Latin America desk of an international bank in New York.

The past of Jorge Zorreguieta has never been a problem in this environment. The end has always justified the means, whenever the power of these networks was threatened. Although the way in which this was done is preferably hushed up in an age of triumphant neo-liberalism.

Those who favour Jorge Zorreguieta's presence at the wedding of his daughter hush up history again. Can one forbid a father to attend the wedding of his daughter for political reasons? Exactly when it comes to family matters, the military dictatorship has shown its worst side. To this day, parents do not know what happened to their children. Sometimes the murderers of their own parents raised the children of "disappeared" political activists. The total legacy of the military regime is one of barbaric cruelty, corruption and waste, which resulted in a towering national debt, conformism, anti-Semitism and hostility towards the democratic and humanistic ideals of the Argentines.

For years those Argentines who did not want to hush up history have been threatened or called fools. Whenever the movement against all

this injustice gained momentum, society was threatened with another coup. In the struggle for truth many Argentineans kept their dignity. Others regained it by showing remorse for their actions in the service of the dictatorship. But the fact that for many years the authorities have denied the gruesome facts damages the self-esteem of every Argentine concerned. Exactly this feeling of self-esteem would be hurt again if Jorge Zorreguieta were received with all regards by the Dutch government.

There is also the question of why Maxima Zorreguieta — unlike her sister, a painter who identifies with the dictatorship's victims in her art — never dissociates herself in public from this regime? And should she do so now, isn't it reasonable to suppose that she is only acting out of political expedience?

We are therefore against Maxima Zorreguieta gaining any political role and we therefore are in favour of the Dutch parliament using its constitutional right to refuse to give permission to the marriage of an heir to the throne.

Some people on the left and most on the right think that one cannot refuse to give this permission. They argue that members of the royal family have also their right to a private life. They argue that one shouldn't judge Maxima on the deeds of her father. And they also state that the events in Argentina occurred a long time ago.

These are strange arguments.

The distinguishing mark of a monarchy is the cult around the private life of the family of the person who has the political role of head of state. The distinguishing mark of a monarchy is that someone becomes head of state because of the fact that his or her father or mother was also head of state. The distinguishing mark of a monarchy is also that the history and the traditions of the royal family and the institution itself play an important role in legitimating the institution of monarchy and glorifying the royal family.

If the proponents of parliamentary consent to this marriage would take their arguments seriously, they should draw the logical conclusion and bring up for discussion the whole institute of monarchy and the cult around the Orange family." ★

José Lungarzo (1922-2001)

ON Sunday January 28th, 2001, Argentine revolutionary José Lungarzo, known to us as comrade Juan, died following a heart attack. He had spent his life in defence of the socialist perspective on humanity and the principles of Marxism and the *Fourth International* (FI), which he joined after a very brief period as a supporter of the *Communist Youth*. A metalworker until his dismissal from the Siam factory in Villa Castellino, then Argentina's main industrial concentration in the country, he joined the ranks of the *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (*Revolutionary Workers Party* — then Argentinean section of the *Fourth International*), serving on various bodies and taking on numerous responsibilities. He was a member of the central committee of the organization.

In 1960 he was sent by the then Latin American Bureau of the FI to help organize the Cuban section. He collaborated in the editing of the Cuban section's periodical *Voz Proletaria* and helped prepare an edition of Leon Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Fighting for the class independence of the Cuban proletariat, for socialist democracy and the deepening of the Cuban Revolution, he was detained and sent to prison. In prison his conduct was, as always, exemplary. Although surrounded by counter-revolutionaries, he had the boldness to state that he was imprisoned for fighting for the defence and deepening of the Cuban Revolution and not against it. He never capitulated in prison and was released and returned to Argentina.

In fulfilment of his internationalist duties, he then went to work with the militants and miners of Bolivia. Back in Argentina, he continued his activism in the labour movement, always in defence of the independence of the working class and its autonomy from the state and the bourgeois parties. He lived in secrecy during the successive dictatorships and managed to survive the repression of the last genocidal military dictatorship.

Old and ill, he continued working to survive, living an austere, almost Spartan life and continuing political activity as part of the *Militantes Socialistas* of the CTA trade union federation.

His death leaves a vacuum which is very difficult to fill: his experience, his fine capacity for analysis, his human warmth, his understanding that socialism is not only the abolition of the existing social relations but the construction of

new ones, egalitarian and free. He has gone to join that numerous and heroic brigade of Marxist fighters who have laid the foundations of the future society. ★
Angel L. Fanjul

Lucía González Alonso (1947-2000)

LUCÍA González Alonso, a long time militant in the workers' movement in the Spanish state and the *Fourth International*, has just died after a long illness. Born in Madrid in 1947, she became involved in the struggle against the dictatorship when she was a student. Condemned to 5 years in prison in 1969, she fled to France, where she joined the *Ligue Communiste* (then French section of the FI). Returning to Spain in 1972, she played a leading role first in the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* (LCR — then section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state), later in *Izquierda Unida* and in *Espacio Alternativo*.

We reproduce here extracts from the eulogy of Manolo Garí at the Lucía's funeral on December 20, 2000 in Madrid.

"Lucia was above all our friend. We noted all through our lives that when we needed her, either in joy or in sorrow, she was with us and gave us all that she had — her company, her words, her encouragement; her hospitality...

She struggled every day as a communist, internationalist, resistant without a pause even in the face of defeats. She was always present without expecting any recognition, any promotion to leadership posts: in the *Fourth International*; in the LCR; at the beginning of the feminist movement when it was still ignored by the majority of the left; in the trade unions; in *Izquierda Unida* and in *Espacio Alternativo*; on innumerable occasions and in many projects. Lucia was a part of ourselves, that part to which we will always be true." ★

Jesús Albarracín (1942-2001)

JESÚS Albarracín has died at the age of 57 following a long illness. Born in Madrid, an economics graduate, he had been a university lecturer since 1967 and a member of the Department of Studies of the Bank of Spain since 1968. He began his militant activity in the early 1970s, joining the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* (LCR — section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state), of which he was for many years one of the leaders.

In the last period of his life, he was a

member of *Izquierda Unida* (IU) and its Executive Commission. A militant in the *Workers Commissions* since the time of the dictatorship, he was one of the organisers of the currents critical of the leadership in this trade union federation. We reproduce below the speech made at his funeral, attended by representatives of the entire Spanish left, by his comrade and friend Pedro Montes.

"The death of Jesús is a hard blow for his comrades and leaves a vacuum on the alternative left which it will be very difficult to fill. As Brecht put it, many people are necessary, but some are indispensable. Jesús was one of the latter.

At such a difficult time, where the prevailing tendency is to adapt passively to a repulsive world and accept the idea of the lesser evil, the left had in Jesús a stubborn resistant who continued to defend with enthusiasm its values and projects. His vigour and his intellectual passion, his polished Marxist training, the tenacity of his political commitment, in the LCR, later inside *Izquierda Unida*, and always in the *Workers Commissions*, allowed him to represent an unflinching opposition to conformism, to ideological poverty and to degenerate practices. A vigorous polemicist, he exploited his inexhaustible energy, his eloquence and his consistent thought to fight capitalism and defend the working class and socialism. This is how the militants of the LCR, IU and the critical sectors of the *Workers Commissions* will remember him.

Endowed with a rich and unshakeable background in Marxism and an indisputable intelligence, he was a fertile economist, skilled and imaginative. He left his imprint as much at the Department of Studies at the Bank of Spain, as at Complutense University (where he led the struggle of anti-Francoist lecturers) and more recently the Carlos III University.

Ideologically incorruptible, he always maintained his resolve even in the most difficult times without ever becoming demoralised, confident in the historic role of the working class and in its potential to finally overthrow capitalism. He combined this political resolve and toughness with a generous, open and simple attitude on the personal level.

It could be said that he died without ceasing to struggle, despite his grave illness. Until the last he worked on an essay on the causes of the decline of the left. He always behaved in an exemplary manner as a communist and lived life to the full. We will not forget him." ★

Spanish state steps up repression

ON March 6th Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon ordered the arrests under the anti-terrorist law of 15 leaders of the Socialist-Independentist Basque youth organisation *Haika*. They were all charged with belonging to the Basque armed organisation ETA.

JUAN GARCIA

THE arrests were carried out throughout Euskadi in a spectacularly co-ordinated operation involving 300 police in which the houses of those arrested and offices of *Haika* were searched and numerous materials confiscated. Masked police pointed guns to the heads of family members of one of those arrested after breaking into his house at night and used a kind of violence reserved until now for the arrest of armed ETA members, as if to confirm before hand the charges.

The arrests met with an immediate response. Thousands of youth organised demonstrations across villages and towns in Euskadi and in some places erected barricades and burned buses. Aside from protests from the usual organisations of the Basque national liberation movement, the arrests have been condemned by the leadership of the moderate *Basque Nationalist Party* (PNV), the non-nationalist *United Left* (IU), and left nationalist organisations that oppose ETA's violence like *Zutik*, *Hautsi* and *Batzarre*. IU and PNV both pointed out that the arrests were legally unsound and have clear political motivations intended to strike a blow at the independentist movement and favour the government's candidate in the coming May 13th elections to the Basque Parliament.

After the arrests, 50 *Haika* members gave a press conference in which spokesperson Asier Tapia asserted that the arrests were: "... part of the complete fascist offensive by the Spanish and French states whose aim is to annihilate *Euskal Herria*" and assured that "*Haika* will respond to those responsible for this attack and their collaborators". The following day he too was arrested for "apology of terrorism".

Haika called for a "day of struggle" on Friday with a general strike in univer-

sities and schools and demonstrations to protest against the arrests.

Haika and Garzon's charges

Haika is a mass youth organisation created on the 22 April of last year from the fusion of the Spanish-Basque youth organisation *Jarrai* and the much smaller French-Basque *Gazteriak*. The new organisation was launched at a political camp organised in France attended by 20,000 youths. According to *Haika* spokesperson Igor Ortega the new organisation has been growing fast and today counts 4,000 activists. It's the first Basque national political organisation in the sense that it encompasses Basque



youth living in both France and Spain thus overcoming the political division of Euskal Herria.

The charge sheet in which Garzon justifies the arrests of the 15 youths is from beginning to end nonsensical. It refers to *Haika* as a "criminal underground organization" when everyone knows it's a (legally constituted) organisation that carries out all of its activities in public. It states that *Haika*: "is committed to illicit ends such as the breaking up of the territorial unity of the state and the subversion of the present legal-constitutional order and advocates violence against society to fulfil these ends". Does Garzon mean that advocating independence for Euskadi and the reform of the

Spanish constitution to allow for the exercise of the right of self-determination are now illegal in Spain? While it's true that *Haika* has always said that all forms of struggle for independence are legitimate, it has never explicitly called for the use of violence.

Garzon also claims that *Haika* is responsible for the direct execution of the *Kale Borroka* (street struggle), and that it's subordinated to the (armed struggle) ETA-EKIN, ETA-KAS complex. The Spanish authorities have been obsessed for years with the consistent militancy and radicalism of young Basque independentists. It accused *Jarrai* and now *Haika* of being nothing more than the recruiting and support ground for ETA and of being behind the *Kale Borroka* a "training ground" according to Garzon for future ETA activists.¹

Cotino, the Spanish police officer in charge of the police raid said: "These youths start by throwing stones, then they move on to throwing molotov cocktails and finally end up picking up a gun or placing a car bomb".

The other main accusation launched against *Haika* is that it's considered the breeding ground of ETA. This accusation is based on the fact that many of the ETA activists captured by the police since the end of the 1998 truce had been at some point in their past members of *Jarrai*.

On the basis of suspicion, Garzon and the Spanish Ministry of the Interior want to legally criminalize all members of *Haika*, not because of what they have done, but because of what they could do according to Garzon before it's done. *Haika* members, as a collective, are being arrested for what they think and believe not because what some of its members actually do or are personally responsible for.

As so many other times before, the anti-Basque nationalist Spanish media and government have trampled on the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'. The arrests have been surrounded by an intense propaganda campaign that immediately presumed the guilt of those arrested even before they have been produced before court. They then moved on to give extensive speculative reports on how *Haika* is part of ETA without corroborating these accounts. *El Diario 16* had a headline reading "*Haika*: school of ETA terrorists", similarly *El Pais* referred to *Haika* as the "Breeding ground of terrorists".

In a typically ludicrous article in *El*

Pais entitled "Trained to hate" Spanish journalist Calleja for example stated: "The detention of the 15 *Haika* members is positive because it attacks impunity and takes out of circulation a group of individuals who sooner or later will end up using a gun ...".

The crack down on *Haika* cannot be understood as an isolated incident but as part of a carefully elaborated campaign against the left nationalist movement that has seen six such operations against legal pro-independence collectives in the past two years. These operations have popularly become known in Euskadi as "Garzonadas" because judge Baltasar Garzon with the full support of the PP government and the Spanish media has been at the head of everyone of them.

"Garzonadas"

Garzon has become popular abroad as a progressive judge fighting for justice and human rights in his attempts to prosecute Pinochet and Argentinean military officers involved in gross human rights violations. However, he's much less well known abroad for his role in repressing legal political Basque organisations.

In 1998 he became the first judge since the Franco dictatorship to close down a legal newspaper: the independentist Basque daily *Egin*, which was the third most widely read newspaper in Euskadi. Despite having been made bankrupt and with many of its leading staff behind bars, *Egin* was replaced a few months later after an extensive popular fund-raising campaign by the equally successful mass readership daily *GARA*. Garzon's charge against *Egin* had been that it supplied coded messages intended to give ETA activists instructions to act. These charges proved groundless and Garzon was forced to reverse his verdict on *Egin* a year later.

Garzon then invented the phantom of the ETA-KAS (later renamed ETA-EKIN) "criminal complex". According to him KAS and later EKIN were the political umbrella organisations of ETA through which the armed group directed the activities of practically every major left nationalist organisation in Euskadi.

Having fabricated this new phantom with the aid of a propaganda campaign by the Spanish media, Garzon now made use of it to declare XAKI (an organisation linked to the legal political party *Herri Batasuna* and intended to popularise the independentist struggle abroad) illegal and arrest its leading members. It accused XAKI of being part of the ETA-KAS



complex and of being the "ambassadors of ETA" abroad.

In the case of XAKI, Garzon has recently been reprimanded by the 4th section of the National Court for carrying out legally unsound political arrests. The Court reminded him that in accordance with Spanish law Garzon must prove that those involved had committed a crime on an individual basis and could not maintain a case on the basis of criminalizing a whole legal collective and thus turning all of its members into criminals. The Court also found that none of the activities of XAKI could be considered as collaboration with terrorism. Curiously enough the criminalization of a whole legal collective and of all of its members is exactly what Garzon is trying to do again with *Haika*. Yet despite the clarity of the law, the Spanish government and media continue to ascribe to themselves the role of supreme judges when they affirm that anyone that belongs to *Haika* is a criminal.

After XAKI, more arrests followed when Garzon declared EKIN, a public independentist organization working within *Euskal Herritarok* (EH), illegal.²

Leading figures of the *Fundacion Zumalabe* were also arrested for promoting a text under the title "Piztu Euskal Herria" advocating peaceful civil disobedience to fight for independence. According to Garzon civil disobedience was also part of ETA's official strategy to "destabilise the state and subvert the constitution". Little did he care that those arrested were part of a tendency within EH that advocates civil disobedience as an alternative to armed struggle and have publicly opposed violent forms of struggle.³

The same was done with AEK, a popular organisation dedicated to the promotion and teaching of the ancient Basque language. In the case of AEK Garzon was

also forced to release those arrested due to the weakness of his claims that it was part of ETA-EKIN.

Then came Pepe Rei, editor of the popular independentist magazine *Ardi Beltza* (with over 8,000 subscribers) who was arrested for "pointing to the victims of future ETA attacks" because he investigated the collaboration of Spanish journalists with the PP government to manufacture a propaganda campaign aimed at criminalizing the Basque nationalist left.

In these entire operations judge Garzon was always acting on information supplied to him at the right moment by the Ministry of the Interior, reflecting the complicity of Garzon with the conservative *Popular Party* (PP) government's political interests.

The roots of the Basque conflict

Garzon's and the PP government's objectives are clear and fool no one except those who share their political interests or who have become willingly blinded by a very understandable hatred and disgust with ETA.

Having fabricated the illusion that the "Basque conflict" is not a political one but merely a criminal problem involving a minority of terrorists within the "mafia-terrorist-gang ETA", successive Spanish governments have promised to defeat ETA by police repression.⁴ But ETA has carried on killing in the name of independence for 40 years despite thousands of arrests, the dictatorship of Franco, the PSOE and UCD government sponsored death squads in the 1980s, French police collaboration etc. It's thus clear that the government has not been dealing with a small handful of apolitical criminals as it wants us to believe and that police repression as a solution has failed.

While this thesis was put to practice, ETA killed over 800 people, government-police death squads killed dozens, democratic rights and human rights suffered due to the adoption of "exceptional measures to fight terrorism", and thousands of Basque and Spanish families suffered from the loss of loved ones killed by this politically motivated violence. Add to that the dispersion of ETA prisoners to places far away from their relatives and the arrests of thousands of young Basques under the anti-terrorist law.⁵

In order to cover up for the blatant failure of the "police solution" thesis, the PP government has now amended it by saying that to finish off ETA the government has to target its social support base,



which supposedly involves the over 200,000 supporters of the Basque nationalist left. Furthermore, it now says that Basque nationalism in general, which over 50% of the Basque electorate supports, is to blame for ETA's continued existence.⁶

According to the PP, Basque nationalism has implicitly given cover to ETA's violence by defending things like self-determination, political dialogue as a solution to the conflict and the right of Basques to decide for themselves their own future.

The objective of the government's crusade is now not only to criminalize legal Basque organisations linked to the nationalist left but to remove the Basque nationalists altogether in the coming Basque May elections from the Basque government. According to the PSOE and PP this needs to be done to guarantee "freedom" and "democracy" for those Basques who are not Basque nationalists.

The PNV nationalists have remained in power in the Basque country since the creation of the autonomous government. The PP now intends to replace them by some sort of pro-Spanish Constitution coalition between themselves and the Socialist Party (PSOE).

The PP government has seen how a hard pro-Spanish nationalist and police stance towards the Basque conflict has helped it to win support from the most conservative elements of Spanish society and from those Basques that consider themselves Spaniards.

It's running the former Minister of the Interior Jaime Mayor Oreja on the basis of his repressive record as candidate for *lehendakari* (Basque president), despite having failed abysmally in his promise to

wipe out ETA through police operations in a couple of years when he came to office in 1996.

Political solution needed

Academic Ramon Zallo and many others, both nationalist and non-nationalists alike, who have consistently condemned ETA's brutality, have argued over the years that the Basque conflict is mainly a political one that needs to be addressed on the basis of its fundamental political causes through non-exclusionary political dialogue.⁷

Its underlying cause is based around the simple fact that a large section of the Basque people are not satisfied with their actual relations with Spain and support the exercise of self-determination. ETA uses this fact as an excuse for its violence, but its existence is merely a manifestation of this deeper political conflict and it will not disappear until the political causes for the conflict are resolved.

The PP government in turn is attempting to use ETA as an excuse to politically wipe out Basque nationalism, which it considers to be its real enemy. The Spanish nationalist PSOE-PP anti-terrorist pact signed this year, which is based around the defence of the Spanish Constitution and opposition to any talk of self-determination or political conflict couldn't have stated it more clearly.

Actions like those taken by Garzon and the PP government against the legal Basque independentist movement only serve to justify ETA's thesis that the Spanish state has placed Euskadi in an exceptional situation in which the only way left for those who struggle for independence is the armed struggle.

The political lynching of Basque

nationalism in general by the Spanish media and PP serves ETA's interests equally well, since it confirms its thesis that Spain is interested in wiping out Basque nationalism along with ETA.

The revenge killing by ETA of a Basque autonomous police officer who was a member of the PNV shortly after the raid against *Haika* also did little to help encourage the mobilisation of popular outrage at the arrests. As so many times in the past just when the potential exists to mobilise large numbers of people against the unjust repressive policies of Madrid, the moral outrage provoked by yet another brutal ETA action only serves to demobilise this support.

Any possibility of creating a lasting peace now will depend solely on the ability of the majority of Basque and Spanish citizens to break away from the mutually reinforcing ETA-PP tandem and assert the need for a just and democratic solution to the conflict.

This solution must tackle the political causes that are at the root of the conflict and be based on the dialogue of all those involved, without exclusions.

Only in this way will Basques and Spaniards move beyond being used by ETA and the PP as political hostages to advance their interests at the expense of peace and become the main actors in a democratic future in which political violence is finally absent. ★

1. The *Kale Borroka* consists of violent actions committed by radical Basque youths during weekends against police stations, bank and government offices, public buses and other public infrastructure, and offices of Spanish political parties.

2. EH is the main electoral coalition of Basque independentist forces. It emerged after the 1998 ETA truce from a coalition between *Herri Batasuna*, *Zutik*, *Batzarre* and independents. With over 240,000 votes or 17% of the electorate it has become the third largest electoral force in the autonomous community of the Basque country after PNV and PP and the second in Navarre after UPN-PP.

3. 50,000 people attended a demonstration in San Sebastian organised by the nationalist left to protest these arrests and defend the legitimacy of civil disobedience as a form of struggle.

4. The "mafia-terrorist-gang ETA" is how Spanish public TV regularly refers to ETA in a repetitive pathetic attempt to convince the Spanish public that ETA has no political principles and that it's just a mafia style gang formed by a minority of people without any social support.

5. Some readers might think it trivial to dwell on the suffering of the families of jailed ETA members whose sons are sent thousands of miles away from their homes making it very difficult for their families to keep in contact; however this suffering is also very real and the majority of Basque society and the Basque parliament take it very seriously and have repeatedly called on the Spanish government to relocate the 600 jailed ETA activists to prisons near their homes in Euskadi as the law stipulates they should be.

6. There are three Basque nationalist parties, the moderate PNV (Christian Democrat), EA (Social Democratic) and HB (radical left-independentist). The PNV is the largest and oldest and has always held government in Euskadi. The next largest is HB-EH followed by EA.

7. An example of this is the PSOE mayor of San Sebastian, Odon Elorza, who has recently declared that he supports a referendum and self-determination for the Basque people to resolve what he sees as a political conflict. The PP has called on the PSOE leaders to "discipline" him for this.

Towards a police state?

THANKS to a left movement with strong democratic principles, a consequence of the period of resistance to the military junta that collapsed in 1974, Greece has long resisted numerous attempts to establish a police state.

These attempts, in their majority expressing the ideological views of the traditional Right, the political party of "Nea Demokratia", have mainly taken the form of so-called "antiterrorism" laws that suppressed a wide spectrum of political rights and freedoms under the pretext of fighting against a practice which was actually very restricted and without political resonance within the classes of the revolutionary Left in Greece.

All these attempts ended in failure, producing however, from 1974 and onwards, a great number of political prisoners who, after being at first presented to the public as alleged terrorists by the police and a large part of the Greek mass media, were then declared innocent by the courts. Now it is the governing "socialist" party, PASOK, which is taking the initiative in imposing a police state in Greece, submitting to the strong pressures exerted by the USA on the one hand, and on the other, wanting to strengthen itself against the inevitable reactions that will result from the neoliberal institutional and economical reforms resulting from the country's accession into the Economic and Monetary Union and the globalised economic system.

The establishment of the police state will be implemented mainly through three bills that have already been introduced or will be introduced in the near future into Parliament for voting.

The first bill targets immigrants. Greece is a country with a long tradition of migration. The first large migration wave towards the USA already developed at the end of the 19th century and peaked during the period of 1950-60. This country, according to European statistics, now stands in the first place among European countries with respect to xenophobia, racist attacks against immigrants are an every day phenomenon, while the state's racist



Greek PM Costas Simitis

practice comes near to medieval behaviour.

The picture is now completed with the introduction of the new anti-immigration law. According to this bill, those immigrants that have crossed the country's borders illegally, in other words the majority, and get caught, will be deprived of any kind of protection and any kind of political and social rights.

The provisions included in the bill penalize all forms of assistance to "illegal" immigrants, providing for imprisonment and heavy fines for law-breakers. Most of all, "illegal" immigrants are deprived of any right to use public services with the only exception the right to appeal to the Council of State, a legal process which is extremely costly.

In addition, the bill forces medical doctors to become informers, demanding that they refuse the medical services to immigrants lacking a permit to stay — except for urgent incidents — and to report immediately to the police every incident of medical treatment given to "illegal" immigrants.

Imprisonment and fines are also provided for against any individual who would offer hospitality or rent out their house to an immigrant without papers, or would "obstruct" their arrest by the police, penalizing therefore any form of solidarity to the immigrants.

The second bill refers to "fighting against terrorism and organised crime". Its provisions provide for the abolition of the presumption of innocence of the accused (from now on the accused will have to prove their innocence rather than the state having to prove their guilt), the penalization of personal relationships with "terrorists", the abolition of the institution of juries (since juries are con-

sidered less vulnerable to political pressures and more socially sensitive than professional judges), the potential for supporting accusation based on anonymous witness's testimony, whose identity is not revealed during the penal process, the potential to widely violate the secrecy of one's personal life through extended secret supervisions, and so on.

The reality is that in Greece the activity of the armed organisations has eased off and is isolated from the social movement. Therefore, this law actually targets those that keep resisting, the Left and the anti-authoritarian current.

Indicative of this is the fact that a recent annual report of the State Department includes the demonstrations against the war in Yugoslavia and other anti-imperialist demonstrations as "terrorist actions". The Greek government has opted for "cracking down on terrorism", stepping over the dead body of citizens' rights.

The third bill aims at restricting the right to demonstrate, imposing on those questioning the dominant policy the obligation of getting a "demonstration permit" and naming a person as "responsible" for the demonstration, who will be prosecuted in case of riots, while setting at the same time restrictive conditions regarding the place of demonstration and so on.

The Greek left movement opposes and will keep on resisting all these laws, which pave the way for converting the country into a police state.

The transformation of the country into a fortress, which is being attempted by the neoliberal Simitis' government, aims at developing a generalised climate of obedience within society, with a view in particular to the Olympic games of 2004 that will be held in Athens.

With this report we open up a process of information and we ask for the solidarity of all our comrades living abroad, in our fight against the repressive policies of the Greek government. ★

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Disappearance of the Israeli left, reappearance of the good old Zionist consensus

THE Israeli political arena is perceived by most of the Israeli, Palestinian and world opinion, as sharply divided into two main blocs, headed by the Zionist parties of Labor and Likud.

TIKVA HONIG-PARNASS

These two blocs are considered to represent the classical division of 'Left' and 'Right' which presumably includes in its Israeli version, opposing positions towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: the 'peace camp' which supports massive territorial concessions and a Palestinian state on the one hand, and the 'national camp' which strives to establish Israel's rule throughout entire historic Palestine on the other.

Moreover, from the recent election campaign for prime minister, it becomes rather clear that this perception actually also prevails within the Israeli Left itself, including radical parts of the Israeli 'peace camp'. Therefore it is important once again to refute this imaginary perception which misleads many, preventing the growth of a true Left which struggles for social and political transformation of the Jewish-Zionist state, which is an essential condition for a just peace.

Shared ideology and policy

Both blocs, Left and Right, do not embody any significant difference in economic-social interests, as is classically attributed to 'social democracy' vis-a-vis 'conservative' or 'right wing' in Western Europe. Both politically represent the Ashkenazi (European Jewry) economic, military and political establishment.

Thus, from the 1980s on, they accepted the dictates of the US and the World Bank and began a policy aiming at integrating Israel within the processes of capitalist globalization. Namely, a free market economy; reducing governmental expenditures on infrastructure and education; privatization of health and welfare services; and freezing or reducing employee wages which have come under stiff competition from foreign workers (meaning that foreign workers are brought with the aim of reducing wages of local workers). The widening income gap in Israel has thus become one of the largest in the Western world. The top

income bracket now lives on an annual income twelve times larger than the bottom, in comparison to 8.6 times ten years ago.

The government of Barak, the general chosen by Labor's leadership and a sworn disciple of Thatcherite economics, followed the Labor Party's long objection to a minimum wage law. Furthermore he opposed raising the present minimum wage; intended to annul the rights of tenants in public housing (most of whom are Mizrahim-Jews of Middle Eastern origin); to limit the social benefits of those whose wages are less than the official minimum thus inflicting even more severe damage to the working class, the majority of whom are also Mizrahim.

However, the goals of Zionism, namely, the colonization of the land and its control, are not achievable with the non-intervention of the government in the economy and with wild free-markets, because of the collective national projects confronting it.

Hence the absurd situation which characterizes Israel, according to which precisely some of the prominent leaders of the Right, (headed by Sharon) favor state intervention, naturally not for bringing about a more just redistribution, but to carry out national projects like preserving Jewish control over 'state lands' and 'Judaizing the Galilee and the Negev'.

At long last, the agreement between the camps regarding macro-economic policy is comprehensive, hence their silence concerning these issues during the election campaign.

Both Barak and Sharon were interested in continuing the process of dismantling the welfare state in the service of capitalism, in the exact dose that would ensure the strengthening of Zionist colonization goals.

And indeed, the meeting that took place shortly after the elections between the representatives of the capitalists (who

financed the Labor campaign) and Sharon, in his ranch, North of the Negev desert, left them extremely satisfied. Sharon promised to continue with privatization and with state subsidies to industry; to reduce taxes on capital; to strengthen the economic links with international finance capital; and to transfer more industries to neighboring Arab countries where the labour force is extremely cheap.

The fact that the two Zionist parties represent similar class interests is reflected in their approach to the solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But, while their similar attitudes towards the economic policy are expressed openly, (although the argumentation is different), this is not the case with the political process. In regards to 'peace', the agreed deception about 'the most severe rift in Israeli society' has been kept and sustained by both camps.

A shared Final Solution

And indeed, the only issue that has differentiated Israeli "Left" from "Right" is their claimed contradictory positions regarding the peace process in the framework of the Oslo Agreements.

However, all Israeli governments, both Labor and Likud, exploited the 7-years-plus since Oslo to implement Israeli goals by means of mass settlement and by-pass road building to perpetuate the continuity of Israeli rule over the West Bank and Gaza and prevent the possibility of a viable Palestinian state.

During election broadcasts and interviews, Barak announced that if Arafat insists, as at Camp David, on the 'Right to Return' and on 'sovereignty over the Temple Mount', his (Barak's) government, if elected, would keep the commandment 'We are here and they are there' to which the senior commentator, Akiva Eldar adds: "what he meant was that he will annex to 'here', temporarily, 20-30% of the territories and leave for 'there' the rest of the area." The issues of the final borders, Jerusalem and the refugees were supposed to wait for an 'opportune moment'.

The seemingly innocent 'separation' slogan is misleading, because the map of the settlements indicates that it was designed precisely to prevent separation, and so, enable the continuation of Israel's control over 'there'.

But the separation goal valued widely by the Left, is also dangerous: the rationale on which it is based can easily lead to the conclusion of transfer, as M. K.

Rehavam Ze'evi, head of the Transfer party, says, when responding to some of the Left who opposed joining a government with him: "Barak also adopted the slogan, 'we are here and they are there'. All the difference between us is where the 'there' will be. On the whole it is only a matter of moving the border a few kilometres to the East" (*Israeli Radio, Channel 2*, 25th February).

However, the mere mentioning by Barak of the conditions for the final agreement, (stated above) being fully aware that they were unacceptable to the Palestinians, as well as his announcement of the end of Oslo, justly raises doubts if Barak was at all interested in an agreement at Camp David in the first place.

The editorial of *Ha'aretz* (18th February) also joins this mistrust: "Barak, as yet, has not delivered any soothing answer to those who believe that the burial of the Oslo Agreements is actually in line with his own world view."

And, indeed, only three days after his resignation speech from Chair of the Labor party following his defeat in the elections, in which he still boasted of his compromises offered at Camp David, he had already written to the US president that Sharon's new government is not committed to the ideas and agreements that were achieved at Camp David and Taba, and that in fact, they do not exist any more. He thereby cleared the way for Sharon to take up even stiffer positions.

Recently we have been hearing explicit declarations from senior Labor leaders like Shimon Peres, now the Foreign Minister in Sharon's government, who support an interim agreement or a partial agreement of the kind Barak spoke of in his "here and there" speech.

This is also Sharon's attitude towards the agreement with the Palestinians, which is the official stance of the Bush administration as well. Following is the explanation of this new maneuver against the Palestinians as presented by Shimon Shifer in the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot* (2nd February):

"A long term interim agreement, unlimited in time, promising a territorial continuum to the Palestinian Authority by building bridges, digging tunnels and handing over areas that, in any case, will be given to them as part of any agreement in the future, namely, turning Areas B into Area A, over which the Palestinians have full control [sic] while Israel continues to keep the strategic assets, whose fate will be decided only in the framework of the final agreements, at the end of the conflict."



Thus doves and hawks are now getting together to support a solution which will enable the establishment of a Bantustan state on 50% of the 1967 Occupied Territories, whereas the remaining areas will be annexed de facto to Israel, where additional 'facts' will be established that will finalise Israel's control over them.

And so, the Oslo process, one of the greatest deceptions in modern history, is dead and buried. The supporters of it themselves, in a roundabout way, admit that "it is the concept of Oslo that has collapsed", namely "the idea to bring here people from Tunis, give them a territory, and impose on them to keep order and security for us — and believe it will work." (Shlomo Ben Ami, Foreign Minister in Barak's government)

The progressive commentator, Haim Baram, adds to this: "Beilin's boys have sold to the public the illusion that it is possible to achieve peace at the lowest price, with a united and expanded Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty and with 81 settlements within the Palestinian area. Beilin himself tried to sell Abu Dis to Arafat as a capital, claiming that this neighborhood is Jerusalem. Since the missionaries in Black Africa had bought stretches of land, each of them the size of entire Europe, in return for some glass beads — never has there been such a transparent attempt to buy peace and general Arab acknowledgment at such a cheap price."

A unified government

And indeed the "disappointment" from the process that was built on deception and the affinity in positions with the Likud explains the crawling of the Labor party to participate in the Unified National Government headed by Sharon, the worst war criminal of the entire Israeli leaderships, alongside Rehav'am Ze'evi, head of the Transfer party.

Tom Segev (*Ha'aretz* 23rd February) reminds his readers of the explanation that then MK Benny Begin (Likud, son of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin) gave in 1991 when the Transfer party was established, regarding its platform:

"What do we mean when we use the word 'transfer'? Even if we add the words 'willful' or 'consensual', as Ze'evi is doing, the plan is to starve, to thirst, to burden and to frighten the Arabs of West Eretz Israel [between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean] till they leave willingly".

It is difficult to find any significant difference between this plan and the aims of Labor headed by Barak. Nobody among those who now express some superficial opposition to participating in the unified government such as prominent Labor leaders as Haim Ramon, Shlomo Ben Ami, and Yossi Beilin should be "surprised" by the decision lead by Peres and Barak to join Sharon's government, because they knew about the talks of a unified government that were being held by Barak and Sharon simultaneously with the election campaign.

Furthermore, they should not be surprised because their policy regarding both the negotiations and the suppression of the Intifada is proof of the fact that their 'peace camp' is empty of any unique content which could prevent a unified government with Likud.

Indeed, the most significant common denominator uniting Labor and Likud is their commitment to Zionism; to the Jewishness of the state; and to the continuation of the existence of the agencies that fulfill the goals of encouraging and subsidizing the immigration of Jews to Israel and the preference of Jews within the state, as stated in the first draft of the 'Guidelines of the unified government' (*Ha'aretz* 26th February):

"Article 6.1: The government of

★ Israel

Israel will place the Zionist national agenda at its top priorities.

Article 6.2: The government will act, together with the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Federation, to encourage immigration to the country, to intensify the Jewish-Zionist education of the young generation in the diaspora ... to fortify the unity of the Jewish nation around Israel, and to ensure the Jewish, Zionist and democratic nature of Israel".

Moreover, the aim of the unified government is not only the continuation of the functioning of the 'national' institutes, which even amongst Labor leaders including those like Beilin who thought that achieving a forced peace over the Palestinian people would make these blatant apartheid institutes obsolete. The unified government even explicitly declares the need to strengthen these bodies by intensifying the cooperation of the state with them. It seems indeed, that the new era in which "there is no partner for peace" will postpone the implementation of privatisation of the Zionist institutions.

Ashkenazi 'Left', Mizrahi 'Right'

The aims of Zionism regarding the nature of the Jewish state are accepted by the majority of the extra-parliamentary Israeli Left. The 'Peace movement' has traditionally committed itself to supporting the rule of the Labor party and to preventing the ascent to power of the "Nationalistic Camp" headed by Likud. However the blurring of boundaries between Left and Right regarding the economy and the conflict with the Palestinians, is accompanied with what seems to be the "unnatural" constituencies of these two blocks.

The Mizrahim, who as previously mentioned comprise the majority of the working class in Israel (together with the Palestinian citizens), have been committed to vote for the Right over the past three decades, while the Ashkenazi big business and middle classes support the Left.

Thus, in the recent elections, for example, while in upper middle class communities such as Kfar Shmaryahu and Ramat Hasharon, Barak received 75% and 62% of the votes respectively, in the "developing towns" such as Sderot and Ashdod, he received 13% and 9% respectively.

These differences in voting patterns reflect the Israeli situation in which belonging to the Left/Peace camp (and voting Labor) entails indeed, not so much different political positions than those

who voted for the Right, but a shared Ashkenazi "cultural identity" which the Mizrahi vote is a reaction against.

This cultural identity consists of Orientalist, racist positions wrapped in a self-perceived image of enlightenment, rationalism, secularism, and democracy versus the 'backwardness', 'traditionalism', and 'primitiveness' attributed to the orthodox supporters of the Right (see interview with Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin in *Between The Lines*, February 2001).

The examination of these self-perceptions however, reveals that the main object of Ashkenazi hatred is not the secular Right nor the National Religious Party (Mafdal, who lead the settlement movement) but the Shas party which embodies in their understanding a potential threat to the Ashkenazi hegemony inherent in self-organisation of Mizrahim.

Neither the Likud nor the National Religious Party was disqualified to join



the unified government that Barak tried to set up after the victory of the Labor party in the 1999 elections. The racist slogan "Just not Shas" (demanding that Shas will not be allowed to join the government) was heard from the Zionist Left and Big Business, that financed huge advertisements in many Israeli daily newspapers.

Furthermore, the secularism that the Zionist Left claim has nothing to do with a world view which is based on democratic values, centred on freedom of conscience and religion. On the contrary, the collective goals of Zionism were perceived and are still largely perceived today, as justifying the subordination of individual rights to the needs of 'the nation and the state'.

A real commitment to humane and universal values is inevitably weakened when faced with the Zionist affinity to

religious sources, symbols, and the identification of nationalism with religious belonging, which all lead to religious legislation in central areas of individual and social life.

Characterizing Shas solely on the basis of its orthodoxy, as is done by the Zionist left, intentionally ignores the fact that the majority of its supporters are not orthodox and that their support stems from their protest against the cultural, political and economic marginalisation of Mizrahim by the political and cultural establishment of the Left, headed by the Zionist Labor movement. This identity aims at presenting the struggle against this movement as 'the battle between the forces of enlightenment versus those of darkness', and thus delegitimising Mizrahi attempts at protest and organization.

The Betrayal of the Israeli Left

Over the seven years since Oslo, the extra-parliamentary Israeli Left has supported the Labor dictates in the negotiations with the Palestinians, while being almost silent about the massive increase in settlement building. Moreover, even the more radical parts of the Left, largely the followers of Hadash (the front headed by the Communist Party, and whose members are largely 1948 Palestinians) and Meretz, (the Civil Rights party considered to be left of Labor), by not declaring that the peace process in its present form is occupation and oppression in disguise, helped to preserve the misleading conception of it as such. In effect, this led the Left to rest assured that what was going on was indeed a peace process aiming to fulfill the national rights of the Palestinian people.

Thus, when the time came, the entire spectrum of the extra-parliamentary Israeli Left was ripe to accept Barak's version regarding the failure of the Camp David talks (as well as those in Taba), adopting his claim that "there is no partner to peace". Furthermore, when the Intifada broke out, most of them accepted — either explicitly or through their silence — the brutal means in attempting to suppress it.

Despite the mass killing of more than 400 Palestinians including 13 Israeli citizens, the Left called for 'voting Barak' in the recent election while depicting him as the man 'who can ensure the implementation of the peace process'.

The traditional commitment to the Zionist Labor movement was shared by even more radical circles of the Left.

Intellectuals and academicians, known for their genuine adherence to the mission of a 'just solution', were revealed to have actually accepted the virtual division between "Left" and "Right" as representing positions of "peace" versus "war".

They had accepted the assumption that despite the appalling and oppressive means used by Barak (and disregarding his Thatcherite economic policies) he 'went further than any politician before him in presenting compromise suggestions to the Palestinians'.

For example, Prof. Ze'ev Sternhell, who revealed in his book *Nation Building or a New Society* the quasi-fascist nature of the 'National Socialism' adopted by the Zionist Labor movement, called for people to vote for Barak because his proposals to the Palestinians were "a great step forward" and because "Barak had freed himself as had Rabin and Peres from the myths to which he was captive", such as "the myth determining that Israel has the ability, due to its technologic and military power, to force the Arab world to accept its terms" (*Ha'aretz*, 26th January).

Hadash, which accepted the Clinton-Barak proposals at Camp David, delayed its call upon its constituency to cast a blank ballot, till 3 days before the elections, as they waited to see Barak's success in achieving any agreement at Taba. And even then, they did not listen to the pressure that came from the Palestinian street in Israel and did not join most of the leaders who called to boycott the elections.

The connection to the Labor party, which is still rather strong amongst the Hadash leadership, is reflected in an interview given by M. K Muhammed Barkeh two days after the elections, in which he almost apologized for calling to cast a blank ballot: 'We continued speaking to Barak's ministers until the last minute, but they left us no alternative [and we were forced] to accept the blank ballot which is the worst option that a person can reach' (*Ma'ariv* 9th February).

Thus, Hadash actually has not actively participated in the historic turning point in the political behaviour of the Palestinians in Israel.

A Few True Left Israelis

Contrary to Hadash, a very small group of Israeli Jews have adopted unequivocally the position of avoiding voting (mainly through casting a blank

Escalation and war of attrition

THE situation in the Middle East could be approaching a new and murderous stage, after the Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon in the week of April 16-23. More than ever, the Palestinians need protection.

The editorialists have discovered that in the end Sharon remains the intransigent general-politician that he always has been. The image of the "old wise man" propagated by his electoral advisers has fallen flat, and those who wanted to see in him an Israeli De Gaulle have been disenchanted: fight, fight and fight again is the programme of the government of national unity, in which the Labourites are not necessarily the most moderate, as shown by the bellicose defence minister Fuad Ben Eliezer, who in 1967, as commander of an élite unit, had several dozen Egyptian prisoners of war assassinated.

The killings of Palestinian leaders continue, the murderous incursions into the autonomous territories multiply, the bombardments are daily and, contrary to certain official declarations, the siege of Palestinian towns and villages has not ceased. Destructions of houses, interrupted during the final months of the Barak government, have resumed while Jerusalem's mayor, Ehud Ulmert, has announced the destruction of 17 Palestinian houses in Jerusalem.

The Sharon-Peres government can pursue this policy because of the existence of a broad consensus: "never has the policy of the Israeli government enjoyed such broad support" was the Prime Minister's well founded boast on Saturday April 14, during the ceremony concluding Passover, and the rare actions of protest carried out by the Peace Bloc, the Coalition of Women for Peace or the Committee Against the Destruction of Houses, if they have a significant symbolic and educational value, are not capable of counteracting the invidious effects of the betrayal by the big battalions of the peace movement.

"The Palestinians are only getting what they deserve", say the former supporters of Barak in justifying their support for war crimes. Through his intransigence, they argue, Yasser Arafat is responsible for the failure of the process of negotiations and the victory of Ariel Sharon. "Palestinian violence", derisory compared to Israeli state terrorism, provides a justification for everything, including assassinations and the taking of nearly three million civilian hostages. The demand for the right of return of the refugees – to which the Israeli peace camp had long turned a deaf ear – becomes synonymous with the Holocaust, and legitimates all measures of repression, perceived as measures of self-defence.

There is the feeling of having gone back in time 30 years, when an Israel prime minister could say: "the Palestinians? They never existed", and liberal opinion bathed in its good conscience. With two main differences: first, the Palestinians are most definitely there, in their country (or at least a part of their country), with an embryonic state and sufficient military capacities to create a condition of permanent insecurity. Second, Israeli society has lost its capacities of endurance to an enormous extent and, as *Haaretz* commentator Zwy Barel has pointed out, it will take very much less than was the case 20 years ago to bring it round to more realism and moderation.

A war of attrition is unfolding and it is not always the most powerful who wins this type of confrontation, particularly they have been a long time spoiled by an abnormally patient and moderate enemy. But the price to pay to win this war could be enormous, and the international community cannot allow itself the luxury of marking time and awaiting a well publicized massacre to intervene. It is high time that the European Union translated its official positions into acts, and took measures to free the three million hostages on the West Bank and Gaza. More than ever, the Palestinians need international protection, and European democratic opinion must raise this demand. ★

Michel Warshawski

ballot) however with its full political implications. They based their position upon their strong objection to the Oslo process and its recent Camp David version as well as on their deep commitment to the national rights of the Palestinian people. This position indicates the turning of their backs to the Zionist Left including its traditional disregard of the Palestinian citizens of Israel or alternatively their patronizing attitude towards them.

Contrary to the majority of the Israeli Left, this group supports unequivocally the Palestinian Right of Return (ROR), which is the ultimate test of adopting a position of a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Supporting without reservation the ROR indicates a recognition of the real roots of the conflict, namely, the Zionist project which aimed from its inception to establish an exclusive Jewish state in entire historic Palestine, and which led to the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland in 1948.

This recognition implies the necessity of a fundamental transformation of the Jewish apartheid state to a state of all its citizens. In contrast, adherence to a Jewish state inevitably entails the rejection of the ROR, which, according to the prevailing perception, 'threatens the Jewish state' with its preferential status to Jews.

The prospects that a radical Left will emerge among Israeli Jews that will genuinely fight for the national rights of the Palestinian people is indeed dependent not only upon disconnecting from the hegemony of Zionist Left, but also upon challenging of the nature of the Ashkenazi Zionist state in which the oppression of Mizrahim as well as Palestinians is structurally inherent.

At this stage however, the way which leads to translating the Mizrahim protest, (which has been historically against the Left by voting Shas and Likud), into a struggle against their oppression by the entire Ashkenazi establishment, not withstanding against that of Palestinians, is blocked.

Strengthened national consciousness

It was amazing to see the massive response of the Palestinians in Israel to the call to boycott the elections. 82% of them did not vote at all, and out of the 18% that did vote, only a few percent responded to Hadash to cast a blank ballot.



This massive boycott indicates their refusal to continue their participation in the game orchestrated by the Zionist Left and their liberation from their traditional loyalty to the Israeli "peace camp".

It may turn out to be a step forward in strengthening the national identity of the Palestinians in Israel, which implies both solidarity with their brethren in the '67 Occupied Territories and in the diaspora and their readiness to struggle for their collective rights as a national minority in Israel.

Adopting the slogan of collective rights raised by the National Democratic Alliance (Tajamu) by a widening strata of Palestinians citizens of Israel, is a large step beyond the goal of "cultural autonomy" (which recently some Jewish liberals are willing to adopt) because it entails the necessity of a major transformation of the Jewish nature of the state.

It seems that on the Israeli scene today, precisely the national crystallization of the Palestinians within it, both in terms of consciousness and of political organisation, is exactly what most severely threatens the Zionist Apartheid regime, because it directly targets the foundations of the Zionist state. This is why they can and should be the driving force in building a real Palestinian-Israeli Left.

The disconnection of these Palestinians from the Zionist Left, constitutes the removal of a central source of legitimation which 1948 Palestinians used to give to the commitment of the Jewish Left itself to the Labor (and Meretz) positions. Stripped of this fig leaf, they may help convince wider circles in the Israeli traditional Left to adopt a genuine, just, position on the conflict.

However, a necessary condition for the Israeli Left to grow into a sweeping anti-occupation and anti-apartheid move-

ment, is divesting itself of the Orientalist and racist views towards the Mizrahim masses whose oppression makes them the most promising potential to challenge the foundations of the state of Israel within Israeli Jewish society.

Only then may the way be open to a joint struggle of those dispossessed and marginalised by the Jewish Zionist state, both Palestinian and Israeli. The need for a joint struggle for radical democratisation has become conspicuous in the light of the establishment of the Unified National Government and the new era opened in its wake.

Now, that the mirage of the Left has disappeared, it may well be that we are back to the days in which most Zionist streams were united around a warrior policy presented as serving the "security" of Israel. Sharon has never hidden his identification with the Right Wing of the Zionist Labor movement. Together with Shimon Peres, the winner of the Noble Prize for Peace, he is an admirer of Ben Gurion's "security" policy on which he was raised, and which in its implementation, he participated as a young officer.

With no real opposition and with the legitimation of Labor ministers of 'defense' and of foreign affairs, anything seems acceptable beneath the pretext of 'national emergency'.

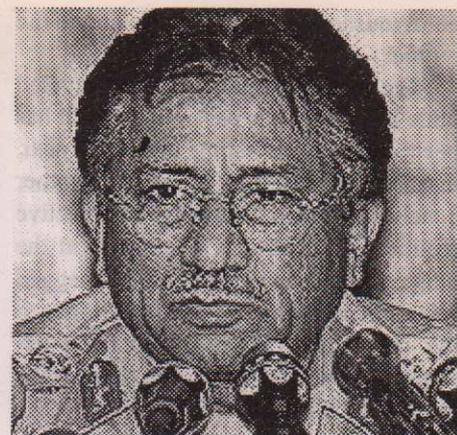
Also, with no real voice for the hardships of Mizrahim workers and the unemployed, this pretext can serve well to silence them for some time more. That is why it becomes so urgent for the structurally weak Israeli Left to ally with the emerging militant forces of the Palestinians in Israel in struggling for their common goals of national and social justice and equality. ★

This article is taken from *Between the Lines*, vol. 1, no. 5, March 2001 (the address of the review is PO Box 681, Jerusalem).

Regime arrests democrats

DURING March 2001, several leading comrades from the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) were arrested by the military regime of General Pervaiz Musharraf.

FAROOQ TARIQ*



General Musharraf

THEY were among many hundreds of other political parties who wanted to hold a rally on March 23rd in Lahore. Most of the arrests were made before the rally and political activists were picked up from their houses early in the morning.

The main leadership of the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) including myself was arrested on March 21st from the house of a Muslim League leader while holding a meeting to finalize the arrangements of the public meeting.

The ARD leadership announced that they would go ahead with the meeting despite the ban and arrests. They asked the component parties to go ahead for the public meeting.

On 23rd of March, the Mochi Gate ground, where the meeting was due to be held, was sealed off by the police and a large contingent of state forces were deployed around the area. It was an unofficial curfew in the area around Mochi Gate. The Musharraf government was determined to not let any activist come near the public meeting place, let alone to hold the rally.

Ban defied

LPP had organized that at least 20 leading comrades should reach the venue and defy the ban by raising slogans in favor of democracy. LPP chairman Shoaib Bhatti was in charge of the whole operation. He was not so for picked up by the police. All the leading comrades were eager to show that they are the best fighter for the class.

At least 10 were able to reach the venue despite several police barricades and search for every one passing through the barricades. It was 4pm already and none of the political activists from any party had arrived. All the LPP comrades were in one's and two's group. They were waiting for comrade Shoaib's go-ahead call. First arrests at Mochi gate were two

female leaders of PPP, one secretary to Benazir Bhotto and her companion was PPP Lahore women wing president. They both were manhandled and pushed into the police van.

Then came Zafar Awan, general secretary LPP Punjab and chairman of the All Pakistan Para Medical Staff Federation, shouting slogans like restore democracy, no to military government and release Farooq Tariq. Several dozen policemen started beating him with wooden sticks but he did not run and stood raising slogans until he was bundled to the police van, then Tariq Shahzad, deputy editor of the *Weekly Mazdoor Jeddohud* did the same and received the same treatment by the police. It was then the turn of Maqbool, chairman of Lahore LPP center unit, who was also arrested.

The two female comrades, Nazli Javed, joint secretary LPP and Azra Shad, general secretary Lahore LPP, courted arrest with the same courage and slogans. They both were also arrested. Several more PPP activists also courted arrests. All the LPP comrades threw stickers in the air, which call for restoration of democracy. The *Daily Dawn* praised the courage of LPP comrades and said only LPP and PPP workers were able to reach the venue out of over 18 political parties.

Although the government claimed next morning in the newspapers that they had successfully stopped the ARD holding the public meeting the message of ARD has gone around the world that this regime is an undemocratic government and is using repressive measures to curb those who are raising the slogans for the restoration of democracy.

This first challenge of ARD since its formation on December 3rd, 2000 has exposed the extremely weak social nature of the regime. The regime was terrified of the perspective that if the first ARD

meeting is successful. It would lead others to take initiatives and more defiance challenges would appear on the political scene.

By suppressing the public meeting on 23rd March, the regime is successful in temporarily delaying the mass movement under the auspices of the ARD. But it had aspects, negative and positive. It has led to a mass consciousness that the regime will be challenged by the political parties and there is no one way traffic as was the case in the past one and half year. It has also created an effective opposition platform against the regime.

It has paved the way to stop the march of the religious fundamentalists forces, which were seen as the only effective opposition to the "system". By taking this initiative, the ARD has exposed the close collaborationist policies of the religious fundamentalist forces with the regime. In showing a distance from the regime, the Jammat-I-Islami, the main religious fundamentalist force, had to condemn the regime for suppressing the public meeting.

Media condemnation

For the first time, almost all the main stream media including the *Daily Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqat*, *Pakistan*, *News International*, *Nation*, *Dawn* and *Business Recorder* condemned this act of the regime in their editorial. Some of the known columnists were of the opinion that if the ARD would have been allowed to go ahead with the public meeting, they would have not been able to gather over 10,000 in the most favorable case.

They were wrong in this assessment; it was exactly the same fear by the regime of mass anger that could have been shown by this public meeting. If the ARD could have been allowed to go ahead, the Mochi Gate would have seen one of the best-attended public meetings at this historic park. This is due to the change of the

★ Pakistan

consciousness of the masses about the regime.

The mass consciousness has traveled quite fast during the past few years. It has been engaged in testing one after next, disappointed and then coming to another conclusion due to the change in objective realities. The Nawaz Government at the height of its "popularity" in 1997 begged seats amounting to two third majorities in the parliament. When Musharaf overthrew it in two and half years time it had lost almost all the mass sympathy.

The consciousness on October 12th, 1999, when the regime took over, was generally of "relief" from the Nawaz Government and "wait and see" for the regime. But to fulfill the conditional ties of the IMF and World Bank, the Musharaf regime resorted to an unprecedented taxation and price hike of almost all the consumer products. This led to mass disillusionment towards the regime. The masses in general are not happy with the regime but the period of Nawaz and Benazir government is also not easy to digest by most.

So a dilemma is seen of despair and distrust alongside with anger and disappointment. In this background, the ARD movement for holding of the March 23rd rally has to be seen. The mood was changing but not to the level of defiance by the masses yet. It was always up to the political activists to show the courageous moves to lead a way of defiance. The first stage of such has passed away in favor of ARD.

Trend

Although the majority of Muslim League Nawaz Group activists have not come to this conclusion that defiance is necessary but there is a growing trend towards that. A new layer of leadership in the Muslim League is emerging with its utmost heatedness towards the military regime. It defied the normal traditions of the Muslim League of conciliation and compromises with the ruling elite and offered arrests. The PPP new breed in Punjab leadership is a product of the 90's. It has not been tested in the heat of any movement. By going to the jail for the first time, this new leadership of Punjab PPP has strengthened its credentials of PPP traditions of fighting the military regimes as was the case in past. The Awami National Party (ANP), Jamhoori Watan Party is in the main of political heat in the North West Frontier Province (PakhtoonKhawa) and Balochistan has yet to be tested during the probable future



ARD leader Nasrullah Khan (centre)

movements of ARD.

LPP is a new entry and has done well. According to Ehsan Wain, the senior vice president of ANP, LPP came third among the ARD political parties to court arrests after PPP and Muslim League.

Some left intellectuals and political parties including Imran Khan of Tehrik Insaaf and Abid Hasan Minto of the National Workers Party have opposed the ARD. Their argument is that it is the same old parties who are corrupt and looted the state assets. Their arguments can be summed up in this phrase "a good military coup is better than a bad democracy". For them, the "cleaning up of the mess" by the military regime is necessary before the restoration of democracy.

They are wrong in their assessment of the situation. They forgot the real purpose of the military regime to remain in power. It is not to clean up the mess of the political parties but to introduce that structural adjustment programme and neo liberal policies dictated by the international institutions by force that were not implemented by the previous civil governments successfully. The key economic policies of the present regime do not differ from the previous ones, but the difference is that it is able to introduce them to some extent, as was not the case earlier.

The Nineties has seen successful civil regimes overthrown by presidential orders and the introductions of transitional governments for three months. These three monthly governments would introduce far reaching economic reforms in favor of international monopolies, will hold elections and then let the future civil governments implement on these lines. The difference this time is that a transitional government has come to power not for three months but for three years. But the conduct of the present three yearly regimes is of no different than of those three monthly transitional governments.

The ARD main components parties PPP and Muslim League are the main victims of the onslaught of the military government. They cannot wait for three years to be butchered by the regime so they had to do something. They waited a

good one and half year to come to the conclusion to go onto the offensive. They had to wait for the change in the consciousness of the masses.

No sharing

The LPP has no sharing of its political programme with the rest of the political parties. The best options could have been a Left alliance for the overthrow of the present regime. But in the circumstances, where the remaining insignificant Left forces have been bitterly divided in its attitude towards the regime, to wait for a time where the Left could come to conclusion for a Left Alliance would have been a criminal mistake.

To get rid of the military regime is a dominant mood among the working class in Pakistan. It is also true that the LPP is also an insignificant force at present with its handful of comrades to have a solo flight for the restoration of democracy. Was it a correct decision to join those parties of the rich in this alliance to which we have never given any support in the past? It was and the experience of the future events will further prove the LPP right to join this alliance. This is not to compromise with the LPP's revolutionary programme. The ARD unity agenda is not a minimum programme but one point, that is to struggle to get rid of the military regime and for immediate general elections. Every party in the ARD has its own meaning of democracy. They can fight for their ideas to win support from the mass. The LPP will propagate its own meaning of democracy and its own Socialist programme.

The struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and feudalism would be strengthened by the overthrow of the present military regime. Our struggle is not in stages. The struggle against the military regime for a democratic set up goes hand in hand with the struggle to overthrow capitalism and feudalism. This is done by independent actions of the LPP at the same time as joint struggle of the ARD. The LPP has nothing to loose from participation in the ARD but more to win.

The ARD will have no choice but to organize some sort of movement against the regime. Although some of the political parties, while opposing the future course of actions, will take refuge in the argument that the masses are not ready. It will be opposed by LPP and will be advocating a mass campaign for the overthrow of the present military regime. ★

* Farooq Tariq is General Secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP).

Next stop Gothenburg!

DURING the first half of 2001, Sweden holds the European Union (EU) presidency. From June 14th-16th, this summer's EU summit meeting will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden. The fact that the US president George W Bush will be in Gothenburg at the same time changes the situation drastically. The Gothenburg meeting will take on the characteristics of a global summit.

The Attac movement are planning to have a big countersummit with participants from all over Europe. The Swedish Attac and local Attac groups that are being created very quickly all around the country are focused on Gothenburg as a first test for the movement.

In order to organise a powerful counter summit in Gothenburg, a true demonstration for another Europe, your participation is required. A broad coalition of Swedish environmental, special interest, union and political organisations are already planning a massive counter summit in Gothenburg to coincide with the EU summit; seminars, meetings, actions and demonstrations will all be taking place.

Activities

Attac: The Attac movement are planning to have a big meeting with participants from all over Europe and possibly Ralph Nader from the USA.

Fritt Forum: Fritt Forum is an activist group created especially for the counter summit. They have several circus tents of varying sizes that will be in a centrally located area, near many other activities. The tents will be filled with different cultural and political activities, debates and lectures. There will be concerts, food and stalls for different political groups.

Network Against Racism: The Swedish Network Against Racism is planning an "Anti-Racist Centre" at Musikens Hus, located not far from the Järntorget area. Many of the groups in this network are planning activities here, including a series of lectures and workshops. Some larger lectures will be held in the Fritt Forum area. In addition, the European-wide anti-racist network United will be holding its bi-yearly conference in Gothenburg from Friday, June 8 to Tuesday June 12. Many United representatives will remain in the city and participate in the anti-racist centre activities.

President Bush: George W. Bush will be arriving at the Gothenburg airport on the morning of June 14th; 2000 American administrative, security and media people will be with him. He will be staying at the SAS Radisson Hotel on Södra Hamngatan in central Gothenburg. There will be protests, but their form and circumstances are not clear yet.

Blockade of EU summit: A coalition of civil disobedience and globalisation-critical groups are planning a blockade of the opening of the EU summit on the morning of Friday June 15th. The action is styled after the Ya Basta "yellow block" in Prague on S26 and will be confrontational yet non-violent in character.

No to EU: A Swedish anti-EU coalition has scheduled a demonstration for Friday, June 15, 2001 at 6 pm.

GBG 2001: A broad demonstration "GBG 2001" is planned for Saturday, June 16, 2001. A permit for 25,000 demonstrators has been applied for. As the EU summit is scheduled to end at noon, the demo is scheduled to begin no later than 10 am. The coalition "GBG 2001" are planning many different activities, amongst them common seminars and panel debates, starting on Wednesday evening and continuing to Sunday. These will be held in Folkets Hus and "Fritt Forum" area near the square Järntorget. During the afternoon after the demonstration there will be a Fourth International meeting, organized by the Swedish FI section "Socialistiska Partiet", with Alain Krivine as main speaker. ★

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