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US Labor Against the War

3 February 2003, by **Dianne Feeley**

Right after 9/11 New York City Labor Against War (NYCLAW) formed around a petition calling for just and effective responses, which meant no war, justice not vengeance, defence of civil liberties/opposition to racism and aid for the needy not the greedy. It has been signed by over 1,400 trade unionists.

Similar committees sprang up in Albany, NY, the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area, Detroit, Portland, Seattle and Washington, DC. They took up a variety of tasks, including training sessions in how trade unionists could raise these issues with co-workers and organizing labour contingents - even if small - at anti-war demonstrations.

These committees also made the point that the dramatic increase in the military budget was at the expense of social needs. Additionally, swift passage of the U.S. Patriot Act set back labour's demand that the federal law making it illegal for an undocumented worker to hold a job be repealed.

After 9/11 Congress passed legislation requiring those who screen passenger luggage at the airport to be citizens. Over 800 screeners at the San Francisco airport - many of whom had worked five-ten years there, and who had won a union contract with higher wages and benefits only two years ago - faced being fired because they were

not citizens. Along with immigrant rights organizations and SEIU Local 790, the Bay Area committee protested this unnecessary restriction, pointing out that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was unwilling even to 'fast track' the screeners' applications.

Bush's drive toward war against Iraq has seen greater questioning or outright opposition to the war on the part of trade unionists. That is because of the unilateral position the administration first took, its arrogant articulation of a pre-emptive strategy, and the fact that Iraq has no connection to al Qaeda.

Perhaps even more importantly, over the past year reality has hit - this permanent war has huge domestic implications. The economy is still tanking, and even if it revives, little hiring will follow. The dramatic expansion of the military budget is draining resources from U.S. social needs. The recently passed Homeland Security Act - requiring the massive reorganization of 22 federal agencies and affecting 170,000 union members - has given Director Tom Ridge the authority to suspend current civil service regulations including union rights. Yet the Office of Personnel Management could not cite one single example showing that unions had ever compromised national security. This act parallels business demands for greater 'labour flexibility' at the

workplace.

Finally, President Bush's willingness to invoke the Taft-Hartley Act and send the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) back to work indicated his determination to intervene in labour disputes. Currently the ILWU is voting on whether to accept the employer group's offer, but had they not come to a tentative resolution the Bush administration was discussing other legislation that could have been used to bludgeon the union into settling. This is clearly a warning to other unions: militant action in defence of workers' rights will be treated by the administration as harmful to the economy and the battle against terrorism.

Over the late summer and early fall a number of labour bodies passed resolutions opposing the war in Iraq. The UE and AFSCME are the first national unions to oppose the war, but 100,000 California teachers union and Teamsters Local 705 - the second largest Teamster local in the country - also passed strong statements. A number of Central Labor Councils have also endorsed specific antiwar demonstrations or voiced their opposition to a war in Iraq. More important than the text of the resolutions - or even their actual passage - is how they reflect discussions in offices, factory floors and union halls.

The combination of some small steps of labour opposition against the war with Bush's targeting of Iraq led to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's October 7th letter to members of Congress. The letter asserts that debate over war is needed and that evidence and considerations must be presented before war. True, it basically instructs U.S. policymakers in how they should go about getting consensus, but the letter's importance is that it provides a lot more political space within the union movement to raise questions and debate the Bush scenario.

This questioning at the top is a factor in giving radical labour activists some time and space to illustrate how war is used to attack the U.S. working class. Passage of the Homeland Security Act and the U.S. Patriot Act have set a political framework that reinforces racial profiling and a variety of anti-immigrant practices, including a dramatic rise in workplace INS raids.

This moment is also an opportunity to

confront U.S. foreign policy. We can point to the double standards that exist:

- According to Bush it's bad for Iraq to have weapons of mass destruction, but fine for Israel.

- Although Bush doesn't talk about it, essentially it was okay for the United States to have given Iraq biological weapons when Saddam Hussein was the friend of past administrations, but now the Bush administration has the right to police the country. Of course the media fails to note that many of Hussein's crimes took place when he was Washington's favourite.

And it's also a chance to talk about how U.S. policy in the Middle East is driven by oil.

In the auto plant where I work, many workers have served in the Military - not just Vietnam era workers who were subject to the draft - but many younger workers who enlisted in order

to get some skills. Some are still in the reserves. So when there is talk of war, it is very close to the bone. My co-workers often raise the idea that we must do everything to keep our soldiers from being in a war. Even veterans of past wars have spoken up to say they distrust the pro-war propaganda they hear.

In Detroit our Labor Committee for Peace and Justice is working with the Detroit Coalition of Labor Union Women to pull together a forum in February: 'Why Labor Should Oppose the Coming War.' Our perspective also includes organizing a workshop directed toward labour activists whenever teach-ins are organized by some of the larger local antiwar coalitions.

As the Detroit Labor Committee for Peace and Justice leaflet against the coming war in Iraq points out, if we don't trust Bush's domestic policies because we see how destructive they are for our needs, why should we trust his foreign policy?

A changed situation

3 February 2003, by Penelope Duggan



- The collapse of the 1990s 'dot.com' economic bubble in the US and other advanced countries, and the slide of the world economy towards the worst recession since 1974-5. This turnaround was anticipated by the economic collapse in Asia in 1997, and the financial blow-out in Russia in 1998. Â• Linked to these processes, developing economic crisis and even financial collapse in a series of third world countries, particularly in Latin America, where the economic and social catastrophe in Argentina has been followed by one in Uruguay, and may soon be repeated in Brazil.

- The response to this by the ruling class internationally in trying to

deepen 'neo-liberalisation' - attacks on workers conditions and welfare rights - something impacting particularly strongly in Europe (for example in Italy and the UK), but also in the United States.

- Bitter counter-offensives launched by the working class and the oppressed against these attacks, noticeable particularly in the present wave of workers' struggles in many European countries, and again in the huge mobilizations against the destruction of living standards in Argentina.

- The growth of the mass movement against neo-liberal globalization, starting with Seattle at the end of 1999, and culminating with the 90,000-strong World Social Forum and the 60,000-strong European Social

Forum, both in 2002. In several countries this mass movement has fed into a powerful anti-war movement. Without doubt this movement has been decisive in changing the situation of the left internationally.

- The effects of September 2001 on world politics, particularly in the launching of the US 'war on terrorism', an attempt to reorganize world politics to the right under US leadership.

- The accession to government of a number of left-inclined or populist governments in Latin America (Venezuela, Brazil), representing a massive rejection of neo-liberalism continent-wide.

These developments have substantially changed the place of the

Fourth International. In the last three years militants from its sections have found themselves centrally involved in decisive mobilizations, often in leadership positions.

Particularly noteworthy has been the role of the Italian comrades of the Bandiera Rossa current in the Party of Communist Refoundation, many of whom played a vital role in the mobilisations for the Genoa demonstrations and the Florence-based European Social Forum; the role of the Brazilian comrades in developing the influence of the Brazilian Workers' Party, including their decisive enabling role in the World Social Forum, thanks to their strong position in Porto Alegre; and the role of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire in France in leading the mobilizations against the far right candidate Le Pen, resulting in the strong electoral showing of the LCR presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot.

These three examples are just part of a significant turnaround for the FI, which has in many countries begun to recruit new members, sometimes in large numbers, and often among young people. This political and organizational renewal has helped bring to an end a period of political and organizational difficulty.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the FI went through a series of sharp internal debates, which resulted in some organizational attrition. Such debates were inevitable in view of the huge change in world politics, and especially the giant defeats of the workers movement internationally, symbolized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the launching of the first Gulf war by the US, and the electoral rout of the Sandinistas.

In the situation of widespread demoralization and pessimism in the workers' movement and the Left - something already dramatically receding - it was difficult for any political trend rooted in the real world to maintain its bearings, against the twin dangers of demoralized collapse on the one hand and the wishful thinking of rote sectarianism on the other.

If the FI has been able to steer through that period, it was above all by maintaining its openness to the mass movement, its insistence on the efficacy of the united front, and its championing of the mass movements of the oppressed. This was at a time when the usefulness of this approach was not always obvious, and when closed-in sectarian propagandism of the Lutte Ouvrière type sometimes seemed more effective. Once the mass anti-globalization movement developed, the relationship of forces in the revolutionary left began to change.

Key axes of debate

Despite the changes referred to above, the key documents for the world congress reject any short-term euphoria and locate the present period in the light of the giant historical changes which have taken place, notably the rise to power of neo-liberalism, the historic defeats of the workers' movement, the collapse of Stalinism and the abject ideological and political collapse of social democracy. The document on 'The role and tasks of the Fourth International' insists that the rebuilding of the workers and popular movements, and of the political Left, is only beginning and that we face a prolonged battle.

"The historical mutation of the workers and social movements has only reached an initial phase. We face a long period of rebuilding. The turn in the world situation has broken a prevailing sense of political powerlessness and fatalism in activist circles. Failing a historical, emblematic event resulting in a spectacular upheaval in the international situation, the reorganization of the anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist social movement will take the form of a series of social and political experiences, which can reunify the exploited and oppressed layers, today fragmented and divided, around social choices and choices of demands; reconstitute the militant teams and militant cadre in the social movements; and develop a 'transitional' anti-capitalist programme with global implications

on the basis of capitalism's current contradictions and the activity of the exploited and oppressed classes."

Moreover: "We find ourselves in a new, very particular situation. The working class is still in a position of weakness, on the defensive, but the radical left is recovering and regaining the political initiative on a grand scale. Its goal is to affirm a bold, anti-capitalist, social and political left that aims at influencing and orienting struggles and mobilisations."

The document makes a further series of key judgements:

- That it is vital to fuse together the different elements of the opposition to neo-liberal globalization, most notably the global justice movement and the trade union struggles against austerity and neo-liberal 'modernization'.

As the document puts it: "The movement against capitalist globalization is a strong lever in the renewal of the workers' and social movements, and the development of a new emancipatory perspective. From the start of the new cycle, militant, radical forces (political, social, trade-union, civic and intellectual) outside the control of the traditional workers' movement bureaucracies have been playing an integral role and even taken the initiative...A fusion has become possible between a new, young generation, bearing a re-politicization and a new radicalism, and activists who are still active from the experienced generations of the 1968 and 1985-95 cycles.

- That the centre of the renewal of the left is the fight to build broad anti-capitalist parties:

"Our goal is to form proletarian parties that are anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist; are broad, pluralistic and representative are deeply attached to the social question and steadfastly put forth the immediate demands and social aspirations of the world of labour; express workers' militancy, women's desire for emancipation, the youth revolt and international solidarity, and take up the fight against all forms of injustice; base

their strategy on the extra parliamentary struggle and the proletariat's self-activity and self-organization; and take a clear stand for expropriation of capital and (democratic, self-managed) socialism."

- That a decisive pivot between the global justice movement and the new left formations which have emerged - like Communist Refoundation and the Scottish Socialist party - is the fight for militant, class struggle trade unionism. It is the terrain of the direct working class struggle against neo-liberalism that the essential background for a resurgence of the social movements and the emergence of militant left parties and alliances is created. The document declares, "The Fourth International will pay increased attention to the world of labour."

Programmatic renewal

The Congress will mark an important stage in a long process of programmatic renewal which the Fourth International has been undertaking since the mid-1980s. The starting point of this process of reflection has been that the foundation programme of the movement - the 1938 'transitional programme' - could not possibly answer all the questions posed all the questions posed by 60 years of historical development, the emergence of new social movements and other innovative political movements not foreseen in the 1930s, and indeed the results of decades of research from within the Marxist and other progressive movements. Indeed this process had already started with the adoption in 1979 of a major programmatic resolution on 'Socialist revolution and women's liberation' which stated the FI's commitment to the necessity of building an autonomous women's movement before, during and after the revolutionary process, and the adoption in 1985 of a resolution on 'Socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat' affirming the necessity and desirability of pluralist expression of the oppressed and exploited. The programmatic resolutions proposed at

this congress are 'Ecology and socialism' which attempts to lay out a revolutionary Marxist analysis of the causes of ecological disaster and a long-term programme for defence of the environment. A resolution 'On lesbian and gay liberation' building on the gains of the 1979 resolution affirms the indissolubility of free expression of sexuality and human emancipation. In all these cases the FI's commitment is not simply a programmatic one but a commitment to actively build the movements.

Congress documents also reflect a discussion that has been going on for about 15 years on the role of the Fourth International itself. On the one hand there is widespread agreement that the ambitions and claims of the International at the time of its foundation - that it was, or would soon become, the 'world party of socialist revolution' and indeed it was the only authentically revolutionary current - cannot be sustained today. Congress documents set the task of the FI as helping to bring into existence a 'mass revolutionary international', which could only be composed of much more diverse political forces than the FI itself. On the other hand it is clear that the usefulness of the FI as a grouping of active organizations, grouped around central programmatic reference points and with a wealth of experiences in the mass movements internationally, has been vindicated in the last few years, especially in the development of the global justice movement, but also in playing a role, sometimes a vital role, in the creation of broad left formations which can help to overcome the crisis of political representation of the working class and the oppressed - thus demonstrating a continuing need to strengthen this grouping that is in no way counterposed to the battle to create broader formations.



Moreover, it is important to remember that the current stage of the dramatic emergence of the global justice movement and the re-building of the workers movement and the left, does not come out of nothing and did not simply start with Seattle. As the

document on the World Situation explains:

"This turning point did not come out of thin air. It was the result of an accumulation of discontents, rising consciousness, a new spirit of solidarity, and major struggles, albeit ones that all ended in impasses, setbacks or defeats: in the US, the long pilots' and UPS strikes; in Europe, national or sectoral general strikes in Britain (the miners, 1984-85), Denmark (1986 general strike), Belgium (in 1986, then in public services in 1987, a general strike in 1993, a protracted teachers' strike spread over two years), Spanish state (general strikes in the early 1990s) and Italy (1992 and 1994). In Latin America Ecuador, Brazil and Bolivia, and in Asia, South Korea and Indonesia, experienced mass movements and major workers' struggles.

The strike movement against the Juppe government in France (winter 1995) was the first sign of this change. With the European March of the unemployed, casualized and excluded to Amsterdam (June 1997), there began to be a change in the state of mind of activist layers in France and the rest of Europe. Other direct initiatives, already underway, such as the campaign for cancelling the third world debt, certain very radical peasant movements (Brazil, India...) added to this. The confrontation in Seattle in November 1999, opened the road to the 'movement against globalization' which came together in Porto Alegre in the first World Social Forum, moved by a radical, internationalist and potentially anti-capitalist spirit, carried by a new generation. This spirit of radical internationalism on a feminist basis was also clearly expressed by the 2000 World March for Women, the preparation of which predated Seattle.

In Genoa, for the first time, this movement was able to combine with radical sectors of the mass trade-union movement in a direct confrontation with the government and its neo-liberal policies. Then it once again was broadened and strengthened. After the 11th September it was able, in specific forms depending on the country, to transform itself rapidly

into an anti-war movement with hundreds of thousands of demonstrators throughout the world against the imperialist war in Afghanistan. It was also one of the sources of political and organizational support for the Palestinian people, crushed by the Israeli state."

The direct 'parent' of the post-Seattle global justice movement was the decade-long campaign against third world debt, with successive mobilisations at G7, IMF and World Bank conference. Throughout this it was the sections of the Fourth International which were often the backbone of these mobilizations, at a time when other far left forces were simply not interested.

The FI is a significant factor in the evolution in a host of movements, alliances and movements worldwide, and the very existence of important structures, for example the regular conferences of the European anti-capitalist left, is due to the conscious activity of the Fourth International.

As the document on the role and tasks of the FI puts it: "the situation of the FI, as an organisation, can be defined as:

- an international organisation of revolutionaries based on the method of the Transitional Programme and the strategy and tactics flowing from it;
- an unrivalled body of programmatic references, collective and individual political experiences with a capacity for elaboration and reflection particularly on issues such women's oppression, gay and lesbian oppression, issues which have been little developed by other revolutionary

currents, with sections in several countries based on the needs of the working class of the region;

- an organisation which respects the autonomy of the mass movements and their democracy and which practices pluralism of tendencies within it;

- and thus a living tool... The fact that we have preserved this structure and that it is undoubtedly the only international grouping of its kind is a precious asset in the new political period as new activist generations emerge."

New challenges

While saluting the new wave of struggles and noting the vital role of the global justice movement, the conference documents are extremely sober in their assessment of the world situation. Not only is neo-liberalism still the dominant ideology and practice in the main capitalist states, but to this decades-long assaults on the conditions of working people has now been added the threat of permanent imperialist war.

Militants of the movement face a whole host of responsibilities in the post-conference situation, notably:

- Building the broadest possible anti-war movement against the war drive of imperialism.
- Continuing the fight to create new anti-capitalist parties and to build those which already exist.
- Helping to rebuild the workers' movement and to fight for class struggle trade unionism, putting

revolutionary marxists at the centre of the massive round of workers struggles developing.

- Arming the mass movement to confront social catastrophe in Latin America, and especially preparing the giant political struggles which are certain in Brazil after the election of Lula as president.

- Continuing the development of the global justice movement, and helping to build the strongest possible solidarity between movements in the 'North' and 'South' through the World Social Forum and the associated continent-based forums.

- Aiding the rebuilding of the mass movements of the oppressed - of women, lesbians and gay men, indigenous peoples and others - which will re-emerge with renewed force in the next period.

This is a massive agenda, and a massive set of responsibilities. Conference documents note that to do that - with all the international, as well as national, tasks it implies it is necessary to strengthen the organisation and co-ordination of the FI in the next period. And on a national level "our main problem is not in general sectarianism, but a kind of political and organisational behaviour that undervalues or dilutes revolutionary Marxist organization." To carry out its giant agenda the Fourth International aims to strengthen its international organization, strengthen the profile of its sections and ensure that (something already happening in numerous countries) the radicalization of young people results in a renewal of its leadership and cadre.

The challenges for the new government

3 February 2003, by **Fernando López Romero**

The victory of

Lucio Gutiérrez

and the role of the organized popular sectors



From the 1980s onwards, when the end of the oil boom and the project of industrialization through import substitution forcefully promoted by the military governments of the 1970s, Ecuador has been systematically subjected to the blackmail of the foreign debt, the deepening of unequal exchange and the radical policies of structural adjustment from the late 1980s onwards under the programmatic dictates of the Washington Consensus. The results have been devastating: the Ecuadorian economy has been weakened in the context of the Andean area; an increasing ecological deterioration has taken place in all regions of the country; unemployment has grown, as have migration from the countryside to the cities, the concentration of land ownership, and the presence of transnational companies in areas like service industries, food, oil and telecommunications. The state's role as provider of services and guarantor of social rights has been reduced to a minimum, with the areas most affected being those of education and health.

The crisis deepened in the 1990s. Since 1995 the Ecuadorian economy has not emerged from a deep recession caused by policies that raised the value of the currency with interest rates that at times reached almost 100%, and which opened Ecuadorian markets to foreign manufactured products, ruining thousands of artisans and small industries. The ultra-neo-liberal policies in favour of financial capital created the conditions for the serious banking crisis of the late 1990s, which led to the military and popular uprising of January 21, 2000 that overthrew the neo-liberal government of Jamil Mahuad. The banking fraud impoverished and ruined hundreds of thousands of small and medium savers and caused the flight of more than a

million and a half people, especially to Spain. This has deepened the discontent of the majority of the populations, and has been translated into despair and anger.

The Pachakutik Movement of Plurinational Unity New Country and the January 21 Patriotic Society, supported by the Democratic Popular Movement, were and are, along with the most important forces of the popular movement: the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); the National Federation of Indigenous, Peasant and Black Organizations (FENOCIN); the Ecuadorian Federation of Free Trade Union Organizations (CEOLS); the National Union of Educators (UNE); the affiliates of Seguro Campesino and finally the National Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals (FEINE), supported a candidacy that harnessed the popular rejection of the political system and neo-liberal policies. This meant that in the first round a united front was constituted as an electoral force that won support from workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, small traders, former military, artisans, unemployed, teachers, university students, public and private employees, and small proprietors in the countryside and the city.

The electoral Program has as central elements support for production rather than the corrupt banks, for honest industrialists rather than dishonest ones, and opposition to corruption and the system of political parties, without clearly approaching crucial questions like the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the foreign debt. This vote is also a reflection of the crisis in Argentina, the rise of the popular movement in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia and concern over Plan Colombia.

The election results reveal the continuity of the democratic struggles which have taken place since the 'No' victory in the plebiscite on privatization and political reform in November 1995; the growth of Pachakutik; the overthrow of the government of Abdalá Bucarám in February 1997; the fight for the constituent assembly in 1998; and the overthrow of the Mahuad government in January 2000.



The vote for Gutiérrez is also the expression of a layer of popular and indigenous leaders, who do not follow in an unrestricted way a military caudillo, but see in the conjuncture an alternative of power.

The influence and authority that the military still have in Ecuadorian society have been capitalized on by Gutiérrez. Nationalism is a significant ingredient in the consciousness of important sectors of a population that yearns for a strong leadership. This was a vote of indignation vote, a vote against the conditions of life, a vote of protest against the political system. It reflects the radicalization of important sectors of urban and rural youth that enter for the first time in the political life of the country. With a significant vote in the most important cities, Gutiérrez gained the majority of his support in the peripheral areas of the country, especially in the central provinces of the Sierra where the indigenous peasantry is strong, and in Amazonia. This victory comes within the framework of important electoral victories and advances in Latin America like those of the MAS in Bolivia, or the PT in Brazil.

A scenario of contradictions and conflicts

The new government will face complex and difficult economic, political and social conditions. There is a set of interlinked problems.

The financial sector and the big exporters and importers support a neo-liberal free trade programme. In spite of the moderation Gutiérrez's discourse, there are economic groups and political sectors of the right and the center - in the Congress, local government, big business, mass media and the unions - that are prepared to fight a battle to wear him down and box him in.

Right now, the weight of the foreign debt is untenable. Servicing it requires more than half the income of

the state, which prevents it from dealing with growing social necessities. Dollarization is exacting an ever higher price from the popular sectors and for the internal production of goods and services in an economy that incessantly buys more and sells less, that lacks internal and external productive investment and that is characterized by increasing inflation and fiscal difficulties.

Dollarization has meant the loss of monetary sovereignty as well as enormous gains for the import sector in consumer goods. The predicted benefits of dollarization, as a mechanism to stop inflation, lower banking interest rates and attract external investment have not been fulfilled. Interest rates border on 20% and inflation on 30%. Only the high price of Ecuadorian oil and the remittances of emigrant workers have sustained dollarization. In the months to come, the export sector will bring pressure to end dollarization, whereas its maintenance benefits importers. However, beyond the concrete interests of the economic groups of the bourgeoisie, a dollarized economy is ultimately untenable if it does not improve exports and external investment.

The fiscal crisis is serious due to a deficit of more than 700 million dollars for December of this year, which means a crisis of payments, that some sectors want to resolve through an increase in the price of gas of domestic use and gasoline, measures that in Ecuador always hit the popular sectors hardest.

The most immediate response is the threat of strike action by more than 100,000 teachers who have not been paid since November.

The application of Plan Colombia and the existence of the US military base at Manta jeopardize the sovereignty of Ecuador and threaten to increasingly involve the armed forces in the imperialist internationalization of the Colombian conflict. In spite of the contradictions between the programmes presented at the first and second rounds of the election, and the change in class composition involved in establishing a government of national unity, the popular

organizations maintain their support to the future government. The Pachakutik Movement, which has a perspective of arriving in government by the end of the decade, is sharing responsibility for what it considers to be a transitional government, jockeying for position with business and political sectors. The strategy of Pachakutik is to maintain a government of coalition with business sectors that lacks clear ideological definitions. Pachakutik is against the big monopolistic groups, especially of the coastal region, and will promote policies that favour their peasant and indigenous social base, strengthening the local governments under their control while capturing spaces of resistance within the State. Within this strategy of fighting for positions in the government, it has stuck strongly to Lucio Gutiérrez and his party. Pachakutik is gambling its future as a political project.

The Ecuadorian indigenous movement, trade unions, popular sectors and peasants are going to share government with economic groups that have drawn closer to Gutiérrez before and after the elections. We can point to the presence of the economist Mauricio Pozo as economic adviser - he is very close to the IMF, the Bank of Pichincha and the PROINCO group, that has interests in the Sierra in particular and has capital close to 3,000 million dollars.

Much closer to Gutiérrez is the banker Mario Canessa, of the Bolivariano Bank, linked to banana export sectors that represent about 500 million dollars. Canessa could become Minister of Economy and is connected to economic groups like that of the Quirola family which owns the Bank of Machala, exporting shrimps and bananas, and the Wong family which is also involved in the banana export trade and represents capital of about 250 million dollars. Another economic adviser is Guillermo Lasso of the Bank of Guayaquil, a key figure in the Mahuad government. Also involved are the Grupo Carrera Drouet and the Maspons and Dunn families, who account for about 1,000 million dollars. These are importers linked to the Noboa Corporation, the most powerful economic group in Ecuador,

worth about 2,000 million dollars and headed by Alvaro Noboa, the losing candidate in the last elections.

The Febres Cordero group, owned by the family of the rightist ex-president Leon Febres Cordero, is keeping its distance. This Group represents about 600 million dollars and the greatest influence on the Social Christian Party, the biggest political party in Ecuador.

The challenges for the popular movement

The coming weeks and months will be ones of intense expectation and social mobilization. The main body of the popular movement has decided to grant the new government initial support and time.

The bourgeoisie is divided. There are sectors that are prepared to co-govern, whereas others hope for an easing of the situation through the approaches Gutiérrez has made to the international financial bodies, and the governments of the US, neighbouring states and Spain and Germany, as well as his calls for dialogue with all sectors. The greatest initial opposition will be concentrated in Congress.



Among the popular classes, we aim to bring about a joining between the spontaneous consciousness of the masses and the organized sectors. The challenge is how to deepen, develop and give continuity to a situation of the struggle for government and of political and economic crisis. The people have developed a consciousness of the necessity and possibility of political changes that finish with the old system and a rejection of neo-liberalism that is potentially anti-capitalist. It is fundamental to connect with the level of present consciousness and advance it, to link the immediate and present demands with those that fundamentally question exploitation, domination and oppression.

The central elements of this program are those that allow an extension of the democracy from the popular sectors; that confront the FTAA and Plan Colombia; the dictatorship of

financial capital and neo-liberal policies; that place in the centre demands to end structural adjustment, the non-payment of the foreign debt, the closure of the US military base at Manta; and the struggle for water,

land and natural resources. All this should harness the self-organization, expression and independence of the popular sectors. That is what is at stake.

The Argentinazo one year on

3 February 2003, by **James D. Cockcroft**

On November 21, 2002, I concluded my hour-long interview with three woman workers at Brukman Confecciones, an historic worker-controlled textile factory in Buenos Aires' Neighbourhood Eleven. Realizing the threat their example posed to the capitalist system, I asked: "Are you afraid?" "No," they responded with broad smiles. "I was afraid at first," one added, referring to the scary night of December 18, 2001, when she and 19 others of the 115-person workforce, mostly women, stayed overnight in the owner-abandoned factory in order to preserve their jobs. "But after we consolidated our self-organization, I was no longer afraid."

Prior to that night, the Brukman brothers had run off with the workers' last three months of salaries and contributions to pension, unemployment, and health funds to stash them in foreign banks or in real estate. This is a common practice by Argentina's once affluent capitalists during the present depression.

The workers, whose numbers soon grew to 54 (of whom 10 were men), did not trust the garment workers union SOIVA, which was backing the Brukmans' request for a declaration of bankruptcy liquidation. Through internal democratic assemblies, they organized a worker-controlled factory - from purchase of inputs to production, wages, and sales - and had it up and running in a month's time. They even created classes to convert unemployed workers into skilled operators and started hiring them at wages like their own.

Twelve hundred kilometres to the southwest, a similar approach had become standard practice among 300 workers at the worker-controlled Zanón ceramics factory in Neuquén's industrial park, a large modern factory that once had produced porcelain products for the national and international markets. Backed by leftist parties and several other organizations, workers at Zanón, Brukman, and other seized factories now spearhead a national anti-capitalist movement, joined by workers seizing idle urban and rural lands.

These workers have placed production for social use above the 'normal' markets and production goals of their former bosses. As one woman told me, "the capitalist system is what ruined us. We prefer to sell here at our own store. The neighbourhood people and others come here to buy the clothes we make. We want to produce sheets for the hospitals too, for the people, you know?"



16 November 2002 - potbanger mural commemorating fallen comrades. "Neither dictatorships nor corrupt politicians will do us in: for a people's participatory democracy" - in Chacarita neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, a few blocks from the worker controlled Grissinopoli factory

Some 150 of Argentina's 1,200 factories in bankrupt liquidation have been "recuperated" by 13,000 of their

workers and are producing again, either as cooperatives or as 100-percent worker-controlled establishments like Zanón and Brukman. According to 'The Wall Street Journal', some financially strapped provincial governments have decided to encourage the trend in order to reactivate businesses shut down by the economic crisis. In the cases of some of the occupied factories, the federal government pays the rent and promises not to evict workers for one or two years.

The 'Journal' does not mention that the governments are trying to co-opt the growing workers' movement, while simultaneously attacking its anti-capitalist wing led by workers at Zanón, Brukman, and other workplaces. These include: Pepsico Snacks (US); the industrial bakery co-op Aguante (ex-Bakery Five); the Chilavert Printing Press; Ghelco Foods; the Rão Turbio coal mines; JunÃn Clinic of Córdoba; Tiger Supermarket in Rosario; and FrigorÃfico Fricader (meatpacking plant in Rão Negro).

I visited the Grissinópolis bakery, occupied by sixteen workers since early June 2002, and interviewed a woman leader there as well as a Zanón worker also present to build solidarity. A typical poster stated: "Jaque al patrón, todo el poder al peón" - "Screw [literally checkmate] the boss, all power to the worker." I also visited the metallurgical and plastics factory IMPA, where 300 workers have introduced workers' control and express the same attitude.

The 'Wall Street Journal' does note

that Argentina's "economic contraction" is "twice as severe as the one experienced during the great Depression" and that "Neither the government nor the Bush administration has offered significant ideas about how to revive Latin America's third-largest economy. Instead, Argentina has been saved, for now, by the resourcefulness of hundreds of grass-roots leaders in schools, factories and neighbourhood associations." [1]

I asked the women at Brukman: "What if you are attacked by the repressive forces?" They broke into a ripple of confident laughter. "Don't worry," one replied, "we are self-organized."

Three days later, in a pre-dawn Sunday raid, hundreds of Federal Police, some not in uniform, others hooded, with no judicial order, used axes to break through the Brukman factory doors. Armed with machine guns and cellular phones and backed up by assault vehicles, fire engines, moving vans, and civilian cars, they beat up the reduced night-shift staff and hauled six off to jail, including a nine-year-old daughter of a worker. From the street, Jacobo and Mario Brukman looked on approvingly, joined by several of their smiling former employees.

Children of the workers, including a three-year-old, rushed to establish an 'encampment' in front of the factory. One asked his mother in a taxi rushing to the scene, "Why are you crying out to the neighbours?" She replied, "Because it's our jobs, how I get the money to feed you when we go shopping these Sundays. Now they want to take away our work." The child then began yelling out the car window: "Neighbours, neighbours, come help us!"

Actually, help was already underway. Hundreds of workers, students, unemployed, and neighbourhood residents rose up as one to defend the factory and remove the police, just as they had done once before - on March 16, 2002, when they had turned back the police's first attempted eviction of the workers. By 11:30, the workers were back in their factory, cleaning up smashed machines and lockers. The police had known exactly where to

search, remove, and destroy. Workers could not find a computer that contained the design for making moulds or another computer's hard disc or the documents held in a safe of the factory's secretariat.

By early afternoon, movement lawyers had gained the release of all the prisoners. Said the nine-year old girl: "I wasn't afraid, only angry."

A worker spokeswoman, Celia, told a press conference: "We demand expropriation of the company, with machinery and everything. Not with machinery simply in trusteeship. We must be guaranteed a minimum salary because the clothing we make is expensive and sales can go down [Brukman workers formerly had produced a dozen leading world labels, including Cristian Dior and Ralph Lauren]. That's why we also demand a subsidy of 150,000 pesos to produce things more accessible to the public...."

"Isn't that leftist?" someone asked. "If to be leftist is to want a decent salary for genuine work, to keep one's source of work and maintain that source for many more who come after us, then more than half of Argentina is leftist." When asked if this was how she always spoke, Celia replied no, that prior to the takeover of Brukman, her normal way of speaking had been things like "What am I going to cook?" [2]

Women like those at Brukman have played a central role in the struggle to create 'a new Argentina,' both before and after the 'Argentinazo' (the popular uprising of December 19 and 20, 2001 that quickly got rid of four successive presidents). Since 1995, women have been in the front lines of the still expanding piquetero movement - organizations representing newly laid-off workers and millions of unemployed people from urban "villas de miseria" (slums) - known for their daring roadblocks. Without the piqueteros, there would have been no Argentinazo.

Women from the neighbourhoods of Argentina's working and middle classes have been very active in the 'popular assemblies' that continue implementing measures of material

aid for the unemployed and worker-controlled enterprises, including hospitals and clinics experiencing staff cutbacks or facing shutdown. With 25 percent of the workforce unemployed and more layoffs threatened, the popular assemblies play a major role in the daily life of entire neighbourhoods, setting up community kitchens, day care facilities, health clinics, cultural centres, community organic gardens, and barter markets. They represent a notable continuation of human solidarity across class lines that first appeared during the Argentinazo when enraged elements of the middle classes who had seen their bank accounts frozen and devalued joined the six-year-old series of marches of the piqueteros shouting "Piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola" ("Unemployed and pot-banger, the fight is one and the same").

The widely respected Madres de Plaza de Mayo (and the abuelas, or grandmothers), who blocked the mounted police during the Argentinazo, also have played a major role. Their fearlessness is contagious. Ever since the torture and disappearance of an estimated 30,000 men, women, and children during the US-backed "dirty war" of the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, they have kept human rights issues in the forefront of all social struggles.

In addition, women's caucuses and commissions have sprung up in diverse social sectors. The three-day 17th National Meeting of Women held in Salta in August 2002 brought together women in struggle from all walks of life, including Brukman workers who declared:

"We women are the ones with a double workday...we receive lower wages for the same work that men do, we endure sexual harassment...we have less access to education. We are the ones who die from clandestine abortions or during pregnancy or child-birth because of inadequate health care, the ones most affected by malnutrition and AIDS. Since December [2001], however, something has changed in our country and in spite of our situation we have shown that we have the power and the courage to come out fighting

decisively. With the same decisiveness we want to take on the task of coordinating the different sectors in struggle." [3]

Several other developments struck me during my two-week visit to Argentina, including:

- A continuation of the gradual economic genocide generated by 27 years of neo-liberalism's privatizations, IMF-sponsored "austerity programs," dollarization, and corruption.

Elaboration: The nation's average wage has fallen from first to last place in Latin America. Of 38 million Argentines, 60 percent live below the poverty line; 10 million are destitute. More than a third of all households are headed by women. In a country where giant agribusinesses export tons of foodstuffs, one of every five children suffers malnutrition, from which a hundred die each month. To the feminization of poverty we must add the infantilization of poverty. Meanwhile, during the first eleven months of 2002 Argentina used up 4.5 billion dollars of the nation's scarce foreign reserves to pay off the illegitimate foreign debt. It recently had to default on an \$805 million loan instalment owed the World Bank, saying it could resume payment only when the IMF restored its credit line suspended in 2001.

- An extreme debilitation of the political system with its clientist labour-union structures, in part because the IMF-imposed privatization of state enterprises, government corruption, non-payment of taxes, and payments on the foreign debt have left the government with little money for social programs.

Elaboration: There is a marked falling out among the thieves, that is, the bourgeoisie, the politicians, and the labour bureaucrats. Even within bourgeois sectors - financial, industrial, commercial, agrarian - there occurs fierce infighting. A 'nationalist bourgeoisie' does not exist. Major Argentine capitalists and their technocrats in government have long since rushed to embrace foreign capital, converting the nation into the IMF's 'model student' - until the

economic collapse of 2001-2002. The resultant economic crisis and fractionalization of the PJ, UCR, Frepaso, and other political organizations has contributed to the acceleration of public discontent with all political parties except some leftist ones. [4]

Meanwhile, the major labour confederations have divided time and again. Their leaders regularly mouth pro-worker rhetoric and even organize protest strikes and rallies. At the same time, however, most of them collaborate with the bourgeoisie and IMF in the rejection of workers' demands and the extension of privatization and austerity measures, adding to rank-and-file worker resentment. . President Eduardo Duhalde's social relief program for the unemployed consists of a paltry 150 pesos a month (40 euros or dollars). It reaches less than half the unemployed - and only after much of it has been siphoned off in the corrupt PJ patronage chain involved in its delivery.

- An expansion in the piquetero movements and their uniting with neighbourhood assemblies and other labour struggles (especially those among teachers, miners, health, food, and transport workers, and workers running seized factories).

Elaboration: With support from some of the left-wing parties, there have emerged regional alliances uniting piqueteros with segments of the working and middle classes into 'coordinadoras,' such as the Coordinating Committee of Alto Valle (Neuquén and Río Negro, sparked by the Zánón workers). These coordinadoras help supersede the bureaucratized trade-union structures held in such disrepute. The coordinadora in Alto Valle is anti-IMF, anti-capitalist, opposed to bourgeois elections, and for non-payment of the foreign debt. It looks toward a general strike or national workers' assembly "to impose a way out that is favourable to workers and the people." [5]

- A general agreement on the need to maintain the democratic and pluralistic character of the social movements and alliances, seen as

necessary for building a powerful unified struggle.

Elaboration: To be sure, there often emerge two (or more) distinct approaches within any given sector or organization, but neither seems willing to break completely with the other. For example, the factory takeover movement has a reformist co-op wing that does not call for immediate rejection of capitalist ownership. This co-op wing has strength inside the MNER (National Movement of Recuperated Enterprises) and is backed by the Catholic Church's Pastoral Social, various PJ members, and one of three major labour-union groups, the CTA (Federation of Argentine Workers).

On the other hand, a growing number of occupied workplaces advocate direct workers' control, with proposed state or municipal expropriation to guarantee it. This camp includes not only workers like those at Brukman, Zánón, and the re-nationalized coal mines at Río Turbio, but also many of the self-organized factories presently using co-op forms. The workers' control wing has the active support of leftist parties and organizations, including the EDI (Economists of the Left active in helping workers plan production for social consumption), the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and a recent substantial CTA split-off group called Sindicalist Current (CS).

The co-op wing, defined broadly, still has a majority influence among the hundreds of worker-organized enterprises, but it is seen by the workers' control wing as trapped in self-exploitation and destined to drown in a capitalist sea. Yet the two wings maintain a dynamic dialogue.

- A certain political and ideological fragmentation almost inevitable in the early phases of so many different popular movements.

Elaboration: This has led people to ask how the massive unity behind the negative slogan of "Get rid of all of them [politicians], let not a single one remain!" can be transformed into a positive program for replacing bourgeois state power with a genuine working people's administration. Throughout the land, people debate

alternatives to capitalism, as well as what tactics to use, innovate, or discard. For example, I attended a sub-regional Buenos Aires assembly of delegates from assemblies and organizations planning direct actions for the first anniversary of the Argentinazo. An intense debate occurred on a resolution to declare publicly there would be no violence by demonstrators. The overwhelming majority of delegates opted against the proposal on the grounds that it was not only a concession to the 'violence-baiting' lies of the mass media but an insult to all those who had died at the hands of state-sponsored violence in the struggles of the past 40 years.

- The multi-generational character of grass-roots social movements and important role of young people, even children, in their maintenance, defence, and expansion.

Elaboration: Initially, the only consistent youth presence in the popular resistance movements was among the unemployed. In recent months, students and young teachers at all levels of schooling have become much more active. In various neighbourhoods youths are participating in literacy campaigns and collective gardens (mainly organic) and eateries.

During my visit in November a group of sociology students were occupying the rector's office at the University of Buenos Aires. Their demands were: autonomy for the sociology career program; budget increases; more classroom space; an end to political persecution; and scholarships for the needy. Political and cultural meetings I attended normally involved three generations of Argentines, each of which was listening and learning from the others, reflecting a genuine solidarity.

On November 8, three hundred children from Misiones province on the border with Paraguay and Brazil, organized by the CTA-affiliated Movement of Children of the People, arrived in Buenos Aires after a lengthy 'March for Life and Against Hunger.' Accompanying them were members of HIJOS (children of the disappeared) and other groups.

- A rise in anti-capitalist sentiment behind the unifying slogan of "Get rid of all of them, let not a single one remain."

Elaboration: The slogan increasingly means throw out not only the politicians but also the corrupt labour bureaucrats and capitalism as well. Most Argentines may still think of themselves as 'Peronists' (a habit born of 60 years of political history glorifying Juan and Evita Perón) but they readily see through the kleptocracy of the PJ/UCR/Frepaso system of corporatist clientism. They distrust the endless false promises of 'jobs' and 'improvements in the economy.' As one Argentine quipped to me, "Guard your wallet, in case you meet a politician or a trade-union bureaucrat."

- The number of hard-core committed activists, always a minority, seems to be holding steady, if not increasing, while demands are becoming more inclusive and revolutionary.

Elaboration: One day after two piqueteros were killed on June 26, 2002, there was a huge outpouring of street demonstrations. In August, a mobilization of labour and popular forces drew 80,000 in Buenos Aires alone. That same month, at a little-publicized four-day Argentina Social Forum, 10,000 persons showed up to call for defeating US imperialism's attempt to annex or re-colonize Latin America through the proposed FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) and US military control. The United States has been constructing several military bases all over Latin America. It has poured huge sums of money, armaments, and personnel into Plan Colombia, Plan Puebla-Panamá, Plan Dignidad in Bolivia, Operation Cabañas 2001 in Argentina, the Regional Andean Initiative, and similar operations that constitute FTAA's military arm.

In early September, at the worker-controlled Brukman factory, the Second National Meeting of Occupied Factories and Companies in Struggle drew 2000 delegates from workplaces, neighbourhood assemblies, piquetero organizations, and student, teacher, and professional groups. They set up a National Strike Fund to aid all

workers in struggle. Under the banner "Si nos tocan a una, nos tocan a todos" ("An injury to one is an injury to all"), they passed resolutions of unity with neighbourhood assemblies and piquetero movements across the country.

As in the First National Meeting held at Brukman in April with less than half the number of delegates, they called for breaking the labour unions' truces with the government and replacing the unions' leadership with people who would fight for public works programs and the indexation of wages and retirement plans in line with the costs of minimal everyday needs. They called for equal pay for equal work; decriminalization of abortion; full reproductive and sexual rights; and provision of free contraceptives in hospitals and clinics. They also defended the rights of people with disabilities and of immigrant workers. The militant, anti-capitalist REDI (Disability Rights Network) has been active at many public rallies. For decades Argentine employers have been hiring and firing hundreds of thousands of Paraguayans and Bolivians with no respect for their human rights.

Finally, on December 20, the first anniversary of the Argentinazo, up to 100,000 people streamed into Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo to honour fallen comrades and call for the removal of President Duhalde. Many had walked many miles as part of the National Piquetero March that brought together such groups as the Movimiento Barrios de Pie (barefoot neighbourhoods movement), el Bloque Piquetero Nacional, el Movimiento Independiente de Jubilados y Desocupados (pensioners and unemployed), Polo Obrero (piquetero arm of the Trotskyist Partido Obrero), and the Coordinadora Anábal Verón (unemployed workers). Other organizations dispersed their actions around Buenos Aires' many neighbourhoods and the nation's cities and towns in order to make police repression more difficult. Consequently, untold numbers marched and protested throughout the nation.

- An elimination of the culture of fear that had been created during the

years of the military dictatorship's dirty war (1976-1983) and persisted until the year leading up to the Argentinazo.

Elaboration: It is obvious that the Argentinazo, despite a savage repression taking the lives of 33 people, has radically changed everything. People in the streets, neighbourhoods, and workplaces have generated broad dynamic movements for creating 'a new Argentina,' one freed from the culture of fear, whether of the forces of repression or, in the case of the middle classes, of the unemployed (despite rising crime rates). For example, when authorities ordered trains carrying cartoneros (impoverished, self-organized cardboard collectors and recyclers claiming the right to go through city refuse) not to stop in one 'classy' Buenos Aires neighbourhood, the residents there blocked the tracks until the order was revoked.

Actually, the elites seem more afraid than the masses. Politicians still risk personal harassment when they appear at restaurants. Known torturers and unpopular politicians or their appointees continue to face escraches (loud mass protests) in front of their homes. Noisy escraches also haunt banks, stock markets, and utility companies after each new currency devaluation or IMF-imposed hike in utility prices.



Some police and soldiers are bold enough to say they intend to refuse any orders to repress popular protests. More than 500 police in Buenos Aires, following the example set by the police union of Curaçao (Brazil), are trying to form a union based on the premise that police must not obey orders to repress social, political, religious, or human rights activities. The police recently laid down their arms rather than obey an order to remove 200 tons of wool from the Lavalán de Avellaneda factory, occupied by workers with whom they verbally declared their solidarity. Nonetheless, these multiple movements have faced intensified state harassment and repression, as

Argentina's bourgeoisie scrambles to set up and win national elections in April 2003 in hopes of putting back together again the fallen edifice of a capitalism dominated by national monopolies allied with US and European imperialism's big banks and corporations.

This raises questions about the fragility of elections and what the Argentine military and imperialism will do, especially the dominant US imperialism. Voting is obligatory in Argentina, and the majority of votes cast in the last election, two months before the Argentinazo, were either leftist (25%) or blank, swear words, or nullified. Since then, new elections have been announced, cancelled, and postponed.

Leading the polls among presidential candidates is 'none of the above.' Three candidates vie for second place: two Peronists of the PJ and the very religious Catholic Elisa Carrió of the virtually divided centrist and 'socialist' Assembly for a Republic of Equals (ARI). All three run on populist platforms opposed to corruption but in favour of private property, the market, and 'free competition,' in other words, 'capitalism,' a word little in favour these days. Former Trotskyist and ex-political prisoner Luis Zamora of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist AL (Self-Determination and Freedom) once led the polls but has now declared he will not run, using a Zapatista-style argument that 'taking power' is not what he or his organization is about.

Many activists are calling for a boycott of elections. Some favour voting for one of the many Trotskyist, Communist, and anarchist-oriented leftist and socialist parties or groups, or even ARI's Carrió. If a first round of elections is actually held, a second round between the two candidates obtaining the most votes will follow ('none of the above' or nullified votes may win both rounds).

The unpopular Armed Forces remain well armed to intervene, as they have done so often in the past. Yet most members of Argentina's military and police are aware of how difficult it would be to control hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets,

among whom are some of their own relatives who have fallen into the ranks of the poor or unemployed. Meanwhile, police and paramilitary goon-squads - mercenaries hired by the bosses and union bureaucrats - carry out Argentina's stepped-up repression. Also, death squads like the notorious 'Triple A' have reappeared.

In November, Carlos Menem, who as president in the 1990s had pardoned and freed the leaders of the dirty war, called for a state of siege and assignment of public security duties to the military. [6] President Duhalde loudly criticized Menem for this - then raised the possibility of reforming the Internal Security Law that prohibits the military from intervening in internal affairs.

The US military is present and ever more threatening, in not just Argentina but all Latin America. 'United States Space Command Vision for 2020,' released to the press in June 2002, discusses plans to intervene in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panamá and Peru, that is, 'failed States' whose 'viability' would depend on US 'aid.' This is a doctrine readily applicable to Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and other countries. In 2002, Green Beret instructors and elite US army units specializing in freeing hostages arrived in Buenos Aires to train special groups of Argentina's Federal Police. To the northwest, in Salta, Green Berets operate with no authorization from the Argentine Congress. On the island of Tolhuin in Tierra del Fuego a US military base is being set up to conduct "nuclear studies with peaceful goals."

The remote 'tri-border area' of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, where a small Arab population resides, is crawling with CIA personnel and US military in the hypocritical 'war on terrorism,' an echo of the 'war on drugs' used in Plan Colombia to militarize a situation and use the army instead of the police to put down popular movements. Actually, this asserts imperialist pressure on the progressive movements in all three countries, plus Uruguay, Bolivia, and Peru, where leftist movements and/or presidential candidates have been gaining strength

and blocking the IMF's and US Treasury Department's remaining privatization plans. Congressmen in Washington speak of a Latin American 'axis of evil': Presidents Castro (Cuba), Chávez (Venezuela), Lula da Silva (Brazil), and Gutiérrez (Ecuador), even though the last three have assured the IMF and Washington they will honor economic commitments made by the prior presidents (all neo-liberals). [7]



Argentina is a perfect example of how imperialism's neo-liberal economic programs have dismantled or debilitated the nation state, drying up the spaces for so-called 'progressivism' or 'nationalism.' The failure of the De la Rúa center-left Alliance, 1999-2001, reflected that. In Argentina, as in the rest of Latin America, traditional class structures are nowhere to be found. The working classes are fractured by different levels of unionization and wages (lower each year), rising unemployment, and the flexibilization and precariousness of work. Most of the middle classes are racing toward the poverty line or already have fallen below it. Peasants are often

proletarians, immigrant labour is widespread, slavery is being reintroduced, sex trade in women and children is booming, and most people, facing poverty, unemployment, or unavailability of jobs, work long days and nights in the 'informal economy.'

This helps explain the alliances between the unemployed and the working and middle classes that have sprung up in Argentina. Chaotic and uneven, they are opening the doors to potentially revolutionary changes unimaginable in the 1990s. They still lack detailed, cohesive programs, although an articulate minority of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist activists are, when not arguing with one another, trying to come up with them. However, most employed and unionized workers are not fully involved in the popular movements yet, and the Duhalde government's limited social welfare program does rein in some of the unemployed.

One might say that the old Argentina is falling while the new one has barely begun to walk - but in a manner that clearly shows the failures of capitalism and does pose the great challenges ahead. Argentine activists are busily planting the seeds of what can grow into an original participatory socialism - or be crushed under the iron heel of

military fascism or US economic and military intervention. What is taking place is nothing less than the fight for a second revolution for independence about which so many Argentines and Latin Americans speak today, 'the second revolution for economic independence' (the first revolution having been for political independence in the 19th century). [8] Class polarization is intensifying and self-organization is spreading, but there are not yet enough cohesive coalitions with a common vision capable of organizing all the popular forces newly committed to the fight for a different economy and society.

Besides a military coup or direct US annexation or occupation, there are only two likely possibilities in Argentina's future. On the one hand, an economic genocide may continue, managed by a corrupted kleptocratic capitalism and a state beholden to imperialism practicing increased repression. On the other hand, more factory occupations, nationwide strikes, protests, and national assemblies may take place, leading to a participatory democratic socialism based on expropriation of capitalist enterprises to be managed and controlled by working people themselves.

A great movement is born

3 February 2003, by **Praful Bidwai**



Globalisation at its finest: slave boys rescued from a Bihar village and a life of 21-hour work days, imprisoned in a single room, tortured if they slept

Even for a city of contrasts (consider Nizamshahi or information technology vs abject poverty or child labour), what Hyderabad witnessed this past week was unparalleled: on the one hand, a 'global partnership' summit of

the Confederation of Indian Industry caucusing in a five-star hotel; and on the other, the Asian Social Forum, with 15,000 activists from all over the continent celebrating the spirit of solidarity in the Nizam College grounds.

The first event was dominated by a select group of dark-suited business potentates, foreign officials and Indian ministers from L.K. Advani downwards. The second was a riot of colours and a melange: of grassroots campaigners on livelihood issues and human rights, environmentalists and

feminists, trade unionists and seed-conserving peasants, people's science-movement and healthcare activists, peaceniks and anti-displacement campaigners, writers and social scientists, radical theatre-people and filmmakers.

The first group came from leading corporations in India and the West, known for their successful brands and fat profit-lines; the second from the North-east, Asia and Afghanistan, Palestine and Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, as well as India. It comprised people known for their

work against foreign military bases and occupation, for freedom from debt, for the right to food and free speech, for human security.

It is a telling commentary that when 400 volunteers from the second group peacefully picketed the venue of the first, they were arrested by the police of India's most business and IT-savvy chief minister.

The ASF began with a plenary addressed by firebrand activist Medha Patkar and ended with one presided over by former President K.R. Narayanan. Between the two were eight major conferences, 160 seminars, 164 workshops, scores of cultural events - and countless processions, demonstrations and tableaux. This sums up the awesome range and scope of the ASF and its rainbow-coalition character better than anything else.

The common theme running through these was grassroots democracy, the fight against exclusion, the imperatives of equality, global justice, human emancipation and people-(not profit)-centred development. In one line, the message was: the anti-globalization movement is here, and for real!

The ASF is part of the great global justice movement that began at Seattle in 1999, and took an organized expression through the World Social Forum's meetings in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with the slogan, "another world is possible!"

The global justice movement is one of the most spectacular mass mobilizations of our times. The WSF is a powerful forum of interaction between social activists and the liberal-progressive intelligentsia. The movement has shaken the leaders of global capital and its managerial

institutions (the World Bank, IMF, G-8, OECD, etc).

But the ASF's own roots lie in the Asian soil, in the numerous movements which have grown over the past quarter-century or more in the continent - for survival with dignity, for peace, gender equality, decentralization, for direct democracy, Dalit rights, for ecologically sound development and social liberation. These movements have reshaped societies from South Korea to Nepal, geopolitics from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits and development policies from Japan to the Philippines.

India occupies a special place here. As the great historian E.P. Thompson would say, India has witnessed an avalanche of people's movements and civil society initiatives like few other countries have. India is also the site of especially lively, organic, two-way interaction between popular movements and the radical intelligentsia.

However, there was a disproportionate number of Indians at this 'Asian' event: only 780 of the 14,426 registered participants came from abroad. One reason for this is that New Delhi cussedly delayed granting visas to hundreds of delegates. The worst example of this was the systematic deletion (by Advani himself) of well-known Pakistani activists' names from the almost-approved list, including Asma Jehangir, Pervez Hoodbhoy, I.A. Rahman and A.H. Nayyar. Ironically, they happen to be among the staunchest and best-known critics of Islamabad's hawkish policies - a point that couldn't have been missed by New Delhi's own hawks!

A valid criticism of the ASF programme is that it was far too India-(or India-Pakistan)-centric. Another is that the ASF workshops were so

physically dispersed (which Indian city can accommodate 15,000 people in multiple conference centres located close to one another?) as to lack connectedness and a centre of gravity. Yet, the ASF was a tremendous learning process.

It is hard to summarize the rich diversity of its deliberations - stretching from the sharing of experiences of different struggles against neo-liberal economics and privatization of natural resources, and for the defence of livelihoods, to drawing up alternative perspectives and programmes.

The ASF uniquely offered four platforms: the first-ever large-scale interaction between India's established mass organizations and its 'New Social Movements', a dialogue between them and movements from the rest of Asia, a forum to evolve common analysis and strategy, and a high-energy cultural intercourse that took on the appearance of a gigantic mela, a week-long festival celebrating some of the greatest causes of our times.

The ASF was a landmark event, an exhilarating beginning. It needs to be followed up - both through further dissemination of its core-ideas to grassroots levels, and laterally, through replication elsewhere, even as the Porto Alegre process maintains its own integrity and distinct identity. One sign of a great social movement is the variety of messages and appeals it contains, and the many organizational forms it can assume. Going by that criterion, the movement against unequal globalization, and for a just world, has a great future - not least in Asia.

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In search of lost stability

Rejection of the political class



Erbakan, on a wing and a prayer

Ecevit did however add that his party could have won if the elections had taken place at the scheduled time, in 2004, thus demonstrating that he had understood nothing of what had happened! The political blindness shown by one of the veteran traditional leaders is in itself a patent proof of the complete bankruptcy of the Turkish political class. Indeed, what other explanation could there be for a party that won the elections in 1999 with 22% gaining 1.2% this time, losing more than 6 million voters in the space of three years, while its second coalition partner fell from 18% to 8.7% and the third from 13% to 5%, the three of them together losing nearly 12 million voters in total?

Certainly, this tripartite coalition comprising a populist and nationalist 'left' (the DSP), the nationalist far right (MHP) and a liberal 'pro-European' right, was in power during the great economic crisis of February 2001, which led to a fall of 30% in Turkey's GDP. Also, by clinging desperately to power, the aged and practically senile Ecevit had contributed to his own downfall, provoking a split in his party last spring, losing half his parliamentary group; its two associates in power continued to squabble over governmental posts; the government itself had lost all coherence; the 'austerity' programme dictated by the IMF had put a knife to its throat and so on. Who, then, could be astonished at a political collapse of this kind?

True, but how then can we explain that the two main opposition parties, the SP of Erbakan (the old traditional Islamist leader) and the DYP of Ciller (rightwing conservative, rural and with criminal connections), who

gained respectively 15% and 12% of the votes in 1999, had also lost nearly 5 million voters in total, with only 2.5% and 9.5% at these elections? How can we explain also that the 'Young Party' (GP), a pseudo-party created from all kinds of fragments two months before the elections by Cem Uzan, the head of a media and telecommunications empire (in short a sort of 'Turkish Berlusconi'), was able to win more than 7% of the votes for an electoral list made up uniquely of managers and employees of his companies (on the basis of a demagogic populist-nationalist discourse).

'Total rejection' of the traditional parties

Without lingering on this phenomenon of 'total rejection' of the outgoing political class it would be totally illusory to try to understand and comment on the success of the AKP' led by Tayyip Erdogan. [9] All abstract analyses on the 'nature of this party' and all speculation on its 'real intentions' are beside the point if not placed in the context of a reflection on this political process.

In the first place, it would be useful to recall the chronic crisis and the instability of the Turkish political system since the end of the 1980s (which had been dominated by the ANAP of Turgut Özal). The following decade was marked by rivalries and quarrels among the leaders of the traditional parties, divided into four rival groupings: the ANAP and the DYP on the right, the CHP and DSP on the left. The progressive erosion of these parties, which mutually paralyzed each other, allowed the rise in power of the traditional Islamist movement around Erbakan, and subsequently the nationalist far right of the MHP.

In the 15 last years, all these parties have succeeded each other in power

in a game of musical chairs, forming rickety, heterogeneous, clientist, populist and corrupt coalitions. All this has led to an increasingly obvious breakdown of the political world, characterized by: supplementary splits; a total loss of credibility of leaders and parties; a growing depoliticisation; an increasing role for the bureaucracy (notably the military) in the management of the country; shameful chaos, waste and pillage; with all of this engendering a morose pessimism inside all the social classes and layers (including the bourgeoisie), but also a deep frustration and an anger directed against the state apparatus (in particular after the 1999 earthquake) and against politicians, with a culminating point in the economic crisis of 2001.

A simple glance at the results of the last five elections shows this evolution: five different parties have won these elections with a different party in second place on very occasion. 1987: the ANAP came first with 36% and the CHP second with 25%; 1991: 27% for the DYP and 24% for the ANAP; 1995: 21% for the RP and 19% each for the DYP and the ANAP; 1999: 22% and 18% for the winning DSP/MHP ticket; 2002: 34% for the AKP and 19% for the CHP. Behind this apparent lack of coherence in voting behaviour there is an implacable logic: to 'punish' the parties in power and replace them by every possible and imaginable alternative.

New elements

While following this same logic of 'punishment/substitution', the elections of November 3, 2002 nonetheless marked a signal change in at least four decisive areas, which could indicate a radical turn over the next decade:

- Until now the classic equilibrium of 30-35% in total for the left and 65-70% for the right seemed to be maintained, giving the impression that the old

schemas and political fidelities had basically not changed very much. Today the total vote for all the left parties is barely 23%. In other words, the CHP of Baykal gained only half the 6.3 million voters lost by Ecevit's DSP. That could reflect deep social changes over the last 20 years.

- Until 2002, the score of the two biggest parties fell constantly in relation to the scores of the winners of the preceding election, indicating a vote of defiance and reaction, rather than of confidence in the new parties. Today, if the score of the CHP can be analyzed in this framework (despite an increase of 11%, it did less well than the DSP in 1999), the same is not true for Erdogan's AKP, which obtained the highest score of any party since 1987, a result which broadly exceeds the absolute record vote for the political family from which it originates. This, then, was a vote of 'confidence and hope' if not yet unstinting support.

- Since 1987, no party has been able to win an absolute majority and govern alone. That is not the case with the AKP, which is close to the two thirds majority which would allow it to change the Constitution (assuming the support of four of the nine independent deputies, all of whom are on the right) It is a genuine 'revolution' in the Turkish political world, which explains the cries of joy from the bourgeoisie and the media, who are delighted at the chance of returning to the stability lost since the death of Ā-zal.

- For the first time, more than half the electorate is not represented in Parliament: because of the threshold of 10% of the national vote needed to enter Parliament, only the AKP and the CHP have deputies, with 54% of the votes between them (plus 1% for the independent bodies). Hence 45% of the voters are officially excluded from the parliamentary game. However, if one takes account of the record rate of abstention (21%) and the 2% of spoiled ballots, the 17 million voters of the AKP and the CHP only represent 41% of the 41.4 million registered voters.

Currently the AKP is enjoying a 'state of grace' and has an astonishing quasi-unanimous support from public

opinion and the media. Even the CHP is behaving in a conciliatory fashion (apart from a very small minority of secular Kemalists). However, the situation could very rapidly change with the least economic or political crisis, or the least 'Islamist' turn on the part of the AKP. In other words, its strength today, its complete hegemony in Parliament in a country desperate for political stability and reform, could tomorrow become its main weakness and lead to a total questioning of its democratic legitimacy.

The AKP before a historic opportunity

Taking account of all these elements, the AKP now has a historic opportunity to take a central role in Turkish political life.

Founded three years ago as a split from the classic Islamist party, this party now presents itself as a 'democratic-conservative' party, 'modern' and attuned to globalised capitalism, but with Muslim conservative references. In sum, the founders of the AKP wish to create a kind of 'Muslim democratic' party in Turkey, like the Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe. If it is obvious that this kind of analogy has limits, it is equally clear that objectively the AKP can in no way be defined as a classic Islamist party, still less as fundamentalist.

It is a party with a strong base in the conservative Muslim middle bourgeoisie of central Anatolia, which was previously the classic clientele of the Islamist movement, but which now wishes to widen its horizon. With the current support of the secular big bourgeoisie of Istanbul, the AKP is well placed to reunify the various layers of the Turkish bourgeoisie, divided since the late 1960s. Thanks to its opening to Europe and its current ideological flexibility, the AKP seems also to attract support beyond the conservative intelligentsia, with some liberal intellectuals breaking from the paternalist and authoritarian conservatism of Kemalism.



The AKP also presents itself as the 'party of the poor and disinherited', a party that will finally deliver 'justice', a party that is honest, trustworthy and not corrupt. It has won very broad popular support, from the deprived in the big cities like Istanbul, layers of the poor Anatolian peasantry, and some of the Kurds in the east of the country. In short, a mass cross-class party is being born, with all the advantages (massive strength) and fragilities (internal tensions) that involves.

The AKP is based on a network of political cadres who have been activists together for nearly 35 years and who have the same political references: Erdogan, Gül and their friends are nearly all of the same generation (in their fifties) and began to work together in the late 1960s in the youth organizations of the Islamist party of Erbakan. They have gone through the same experiences, sharing the same ephemeral successes and the same defeats, but they have also a common experience of management at the level of the main local governments of the country (like Istanbul, a huge town of 10 million inhabitants), and in national government (during the Erbakan-Ciller coalition from 1995 to 1997).

Their break with the old Islamic guard of Erbakan is not a simple quarrel between generations: it is linked to this experience of power. Erdogan and his friends have fully drawn the lessons of the defeat of their historic leader and his coalition government in the face of the army and public opinion in 1995-1997. Moreover, the AKP is no longer limited to a nucleus of former moderate Islamic modernizers; the party has won a series of important cadres from the traditional right.

Its rapid, recent and massive success makes it a heterogeneous party that is still being constructed. It enjoys significant margins of manoeuvre, or in any case more than its predecessors of the last decade: its main political rivals, the parties and leaders of the traditional right, have entered into

deep crisis, discredited, divided and for now excluded from the political game, while the left is also undergoing a huge crisis, whose catastrophic scope it does not yet seem to have recognized.

The bankruptcy of the left

It is indeed significant that neither the social democratic left nor the far left were capable of capitalizing on the huge popular discontent to emerge as an alternative both to the nationalist forces in power and to the AKP. The 19% score of the CHP should not create any illusions. The rightist leadership of this party has always been more concerned to reassure the bourgeoisie than to be the spokesperson of social demands. If it confines itself to this role in the coming period, attacking the AKP only on formal questions of secularism and continuing to appear as an appendix of the enlightened bureaucracy and the military, it has no chance of benefiting from the weaknesses of the government and it is the nationalist far right which could become the alternative to the AKP in the eyes of the popular masses.

As for the far left, it has succumbed once more to its old sectarian demons. The balance sheet drawn by comrade Ufuk Uras, president of the *Ä*-DP, of the defeat of its party is severe, but lucid and justified (see article). Paralyzed for three years by internal disputes among authoritarian apparatchiks, demoralized by its divisions and debates cut off from reality, the *Ä*-DP has finally broken up into several sectarian fragments, losing its credibility and its capacity of attraction, disappointing the hopes raised by its initial pluralist project. A fundamental renewal is then necessary. However, most of the leaders of the multiple groups of the far left do not even seem conscious of the gravity of the situation, preferring to lord it over their tiny grouping, nourished by their legends of 'Marxist patriarchs' and 'old fighters'

In these conditions of a political vacuum on the right and the left, if the AKP succeeded even a little in

improving the situation it could continue to progress at the next elections, gaining both to its right and to its left. In other words, even without working miracles, it would be enough for it to not make too many big mistakes, not to disappoint immediately like all its predecessors. It could establish itself as the main mass party of the Turkish right, like the DP [10] of the 1950s and the AP [11] of the 1960s (both won more than 50% of the vote) or again the ANAP of the 1980s (45% of the vote).

The debris of neo-liberalism

The country has lived through such an economic catastrophe, barely a year and a half ago, that the least improvement would appear as a 'miracle' and would be welcomed by the most deprived. Moreover, with the bitter medicine of the IMF having already been dispensed by the outgoing government, it is not at all ruled out that, compared to the outgoing 'ultra neo-liberals', the AKP government is seen as the most 'social' of the last 20 years.

Bureaucratic chaos, corruption and waste have wrought enormous havoc with the public finances; the disorganization of the state apparatus has reached an unimaginable level of chronic inefficiency; civil servants have been demoralized by the partisan and unstable coalitions that have succeeded each other. The least appointment involved arduous bargaining between the coalition parties. Businesses were often obliged to triple their budgets for bribery, for it was sometimes necessary to 'oil' the bureaucratic wheels of three distinct ministries or administrations, each dependent on a different party. A simple improvement in 'administrative efficiency' could then appear as a real revolution and might enable significant budgetary economies to be made.

Can the AKP do all this? The months to come will decide. In any case, its leaders seem conscious of the problem (and the possibilities that it offers them). Will they have the capacity and the political intelligence? It is

interesting to quote here the words of the new 'retrograde Islamist' Prime Minister Abdullah Gül, in the daily 'Hürriyet' (November 25, 2002): 'I have been stupefied to see the state things were in when I took office. Even the office of our party is more modern than the office of the prime minister.. I have just installed the very first computer there...' It is true that Ecevit, his 'secular, modernist and progressive' predecessor, would type all his mail and speeches on his old typewriter.

The bourgeoisie's programme of modernization

The new government has moreover announced a vast project of democratic and anti-bureaucratic reforms as well as economic and social restructurings, with the aim of adapting Turkey to the norms of the EU. This project of global restructuring is precisely the kind of programme of modernization the big bourgeoisie has been demanding for a long time and the AKP will have all necessary support from the employers in implementing it.

For sure, a 'better administrative management' is not enough to seriously deal with all the social and economic problems besetting a country of Turkey's size. Recent history shows that Turkey cannot count too much on European aid to overcome the difficulties of the process of adaptation to EU membership. It is clear that the EU will do still less for Turkey than for the former central and eastern European countries: and not only for reasons of 'economic size', world conjuncture and imperialist will, but also through deep anti-Turkish racism and anti-Muslim sentiment on the part of the European political class (Vedrine, Schmidt and Delors as much as Giscard and Kohl). Not to speak of the hostility or indifference (in the best of the cases) of public opinion, indeed of the European left intelligentsia, which has little sympathy for the fate of a country which 'oppresses the Kurds/massacres the Armenians/is a military dictatorship/or quasi-

fundamentalist' and which is moreover so complex, different and difficult to understand. And yet the Turkish bourgeoisie continues to bet everything on European integration. It is true that it does not really have much choice in the current state of the world and its geographic region, given that 2/3 of Turkey's trade is with the EU.

Through all these reforms, the Turkish bourgeoisie hopes to be able to attract investment from international capital: note that the presence of foreign capital in the Turkish economy is astonishingly weak for an industrialized country of this size. It is undoubtedly the archaism of the Turkish state, the relative weakness of its infrastructure, the protectionism which was in force up to the late 1980s and the political instability of the 1990s which are the initial causes of this, and the big Turkish employers now want to change this situation through a reform programme. They believe they are now strong enough to compete with European capital and they need a reliable political personnel that enjoys popular legitimacy and has an electoral base that is sufficiently broad. The AKP is the candidate for this role and the bourgeoisie has decided to go through the experiment.

It is not then surprising that, despite its image or its 'Islamist' past, the AKP has prioritized the problem of European integration, promising notably to resolve finally the question of Cyprus in the framework of the proposals of the UN and to resolve some key problems of 'democratization' and of 'demilitarization'. The crushing electoral defeat of left and right nationalism (DSP + MHP) creates a suitable climate for reforms, but it is still too soon to see how far the AKP will go.

An Islamism adapted to the market?

The AKP is also changing its tune on the thorny question of secularism. Erdogan was using spine chillingly uncompromising Islamist language not so long ago, and there is a 'reactionary' dimension to Turkish Islamism, which found it hard to stomach the republican victory at the beginning of the last century. In addition, in case of defeat in its policy of reforms or a new economic crisis, the AKP could well be tempted to play the Islamic card.

However, one might expect the AKP leadership in the short term to avoid flagrant errors or outrageous provocations in the area of secularism. It underpins the success of its overall project. Nor should one expect a short-term tension between the government and the army - the guarantor of Kemalist principles and secularism. Even if the army distrusts Erdogan and will do not sacrifice its direct political influence and its advantages as a privileged and 'enlightened' bureaucratic caste, it is now too linked to the big bourgeoisie to openly oppose its projects (OYAK, the holding which manages the army's pension funds, is today one of the most powerful capitalist groups in the country!). Nor does it wish to give the impression of not respecting the verdict of the ballot box.

Moreover, secularism in Turkey is a Jacobin secularism in the French style, and it is primarily this 'over rigid' model that the AKP claims to question, not the principle of secularism itself.

Its eventual aim would be to convince the army and big bourgeoisie to establish a 'German' or 'English' secularism; a regime that is very conservative on the moral plane, where a greater place is given to religion in the public arena.

This the true threat today is not a 'fundamentalist danger' in the short term, but rather that the AKP attains a durable grip on power as a pole of bourgeois and pro-imperialist stability. The problem is that in the current state of play it is far from certain that socialism can really become a short-term alternative to this project of bourgeois stabilization and European integration. A catastrophic collapse and economic regression, the rise of an openly fascist or fundamentalist mass movement, or again the emergence of a fairly ferocious military dictatorship and a chaotic civil war seem more serious candidates for this role.

All the more reason for the urgent construction of credible left pole of attraction, genuinely democratic and anchored in real life, more concerned with alternative projects than an abstract discourse dating from a past era. As comrade Ufuk Uras stresses: "The left is in a phase of transition. Either it will renew itself or it will become petrified. It should be said that the fault is essentially ours and not that of the people. Finally, it is a good thing to see that the lessons learnt by heart by the left have proved bankrupt. To those who wish anew to recite those lessons, I wish good luck. However, today, the most revolutionary task is to tear up these lessons learnt by heart and place oneself at the heart of life itself. If the left has entered into a coma, it is not those who put it in that condition who will bring it out again. It is necessary to give way to youth."

Some progress for Kurdish nationalists

3 February 2003, by Yeter Dursun

However, this remains far from the 10% necessary to be represented in Parliament and well below the hopes of the Kurdish nationalist leaders, who claimed they would score more than 10% and even 'come to power', as HADEP president Murat Bozlak imprudently claimed. DEHAP's impact was limited outside the traditional Kurdish nationalist fiefdoms in the south-east. They certainly had some excellent results in the cities where the nationalists have held municipal power since 1999: notable results included a vote of 56% in Diyarbakir, 47% in Batman, 46% in Sirnak, 45% in Hakkari and 40% in Van. The results were less satisfying in the more conservative Kurdish towns like Urfa (19%) or Bingol (22%), where DEHAP was beaten by the AKP. In Gaziantep, the main industrial city of the region, it came third with 8%, far behind the AKP (40%) and the CHP (19%). In some Mediterranean towns like Adana and Mersin, where there is a very strong and recent Kurdish immigration, DEHAP scored around 9%, higher than its national average. In the industrial areas in the west of the country where there is a historically a strong Kurdish presence and a recent immigration, it had a very low score, for example only 4% in Izmir and Kocaeli. In Istanbul, where 'at least' a quarter of the population (10 million inhabitants) are of Kurdish origin (and which is thus the town with the largest Kurdish population), DEHAP scored 287,000 votes (4%), far from the million votes predicted by its leadership; its vote increased by only 0.6% in relation to 1999. In Ankara, the capital, DEHAP just scraped 2%. Everywhere else, its vote was insignificant (less than 2%).

Yet the political context seemed a priori more favourable than ever: the end of the conflicts in the Kurdish region for the past three years; a climate of reduced tension and liberalization on the main themes of the Kurdish question (suppression of the death penalty, first steps towards the authorization of teaching in the Kurdish language, the broadcast of television programmes in Kurdish, and so on); access to the media (including television); no significant repression of the DEHAP campaign (as the leaders themselves recognized and as

demonstrated by the electoral meetings of several hundred thousand people in Istanbul and Diyarbakir); the support of the municipalities in the Kurdish region (controlled for 3 years by HADEP); rejection of the policies of the government; a massive protest vote against the traditional parties across Turkey and so on.

But it is precisely on the political level that the chronic weaknesses of the leadership of the Kurdish national movement are most evident; in particular in the area of political strategy and electoral alliances. The HADEP leadership initially sought an alliance which would enable them to cross the 10% threshold and guarantee the biggest possible number of deputies, without too much concern for the precise politics of its eventual partner: social-democrats of right or left, liberal right and even hard-line Islamist.

Yet if the objective was to be represented in Parliament at any price, nothing stopped HADEP from presenting a series of independent candidates in its regional bastions, with a very strong chance of electing a couple of dozen thanks to its crushing hegemony in some towns (the nine independent right wing deputies were elected in towns in the Kurdish region). However, HADEP suddenly changed course radically, almost giving the impression that it no longer saw its presence in Parliament as being so opportune in the current national and international political conjuncture. Before the elections HADEP had initiated a process of fusion with the SHP (one of the main factions of Turkish social democracy, which had recently left the CHP), with a view of no longer appearing as an 'ethnic' and 'regional' party. Then, renouncing this project, it sought an electoral alliance with the CHP, then the ANAP and then with the traditional Islamists of Erbakan's SP. The negotiations for a common list with the Islamists broke down because of a dispute over how the number of seats would be shared out. DEHAP then came out in favour of a 'left bloc' with the SHP and the Ā-DP. There again negotiations broke down at the last minute. So the HADEP/Emep/SDP

bloc was stitched together through a completely opaque and politically incoherent process: while Murat Bozlak said he favoured a US intervention in Iraq and Turkey's entry in the EU his far left collaborators castigated the 'imperialist war' and opposed EU entry!

In an article published in the daily paper 'Radikal' (November 24, 2002) and presented by its author as a 'inside view', Faik Bulut, a well-known researcher and writer of Kurdish origin, regrets that the DEHAP 'is confined to a simple assertion of Kurdish identity, without developing the least concrete project of solution and without making itself the spokesperson of the social and economic demands of the population'; with a regionalist emphasis, even in the big towns in the west of the country.

Bulut indicates that an internal debate is underway inside the Kurdish movement, with a stress on the necessity of renouncing 'ethnic discourse and simplistic nationalism, which do not lead anywhere'. The aim is to create a 'new programme and new cadres for transformation into a party for the whole of Turkey' so as to be able to 'approach all the chronic problems of the country including the Kurdish question, uniquely on the basis of concrete projects'. Recalling that HADEP is the socio-political product of a low intensity war, which lasted for 15 years inside the country, Bulut argues that it is time for a transformation. Stressing that 'internal training and recruitment take place solely on the basis of allegiance to the nucleus of the central leadership', Bulut also denounces the chronic lack of internal democracy, the mistrust of intellectuals, the outrageous manipulations, the lack of political coherence, the 'underhand interventions of certain hidden forces', as well as a certain undertone of blackmail to the violence which predominates in the Kurdish movement; 'it is clear that a radical change of mentality and strategy is needed... If we wish to create our own paradise, for all, we must speak to the living and not to the dead, with the language of the living and not that of the dead'.

Resignation

3 February 2003, by **Ufak Uras**

We have seen that a politics cut off from social reality is condemned to putrefy. We have to understand that a political revival will only come through the rise of the political dynamism of the social organizations. We are faced with the task of building a left alternative, a left axis, and a left pole of attraction. It is pointless to say, "the people have not understood us". The people are still confronted in the elections with a choice between the plague and cholera, they chosen what seems to them to be the lesser evil... Today, the pre-1980 generations and the political identities dating from this period have ceased to be the motor

forces of the politics. The formulae of umbrella parties rallying everyone have henceforth no meaning. It is now necessary to defend with determination a politics, which is resolutely in favour of liberties.

The left is in a phase of transition. Either it will renew itself or it will become petrified. It should be said that the fault is essentially ours and not that of the people. Finally, it is a good thing to see that the lessons learnt by heart by the left have proved bankrupt. To those who wish anew to recite those lessons, I wish good luck. But today, the most revolutionary task

is to tear up these lessons learnt by heart and place oneself at the heart of life itself. If the left has entered into a coma, it is not those who put it in that condition who will bring it out again. It is necessary to give way to youth. It is necessary also to renew the *Å-DP* fundamentally... For this reason I have decided to fold my umbrella and go into retirement."

Ufuk Uras, president of the Å-DP (Party of Liberty and Solidarity) announced his resignation from his post in this article, which appeared in the daily 'Cumhuriyet' on November 16, 2002.

Necdet Sara

3 February 2003

In 1986, he played a key role in the publication of 'İlk Adım' the first legal socialist magazine of this period. In 1988, he became the editor of 'Yeniyol' (the organ of the Turkish section of the FI). He also took an active part in the electoral campaigns

of the far left in 1987 and 1989.

Although he ceased to be a formal member of the section in 1992, following a political disagreement, Necdet never abandoned his

convictions or his activism: he pursued them under other forms and in other frameworks, particularly as a journalist who was known and respected for the quality of his professional work, whether in print or on television.

"Neither imitation nor copy"

3 February 2003, by **Michael Löwy**



In an article published in 1928, José Carlos Mariátegui, the true founder of Latin American Marxism, wrote: "Of

course, we do not want socialism in Latin America to be an imitation or a copy. It must be a heroic creation. We must inspire Indo-American socialism with our own reality, our own language. That is a mission worthy of a new generation." [12] His warning

went unheard. In that same year the Latin American communist movement fell under the influence of the Stalinist paradigm, which for close to a half century imposed on it an imitation and copy of the ideology of the Soviet bureaucracy and its so-called 'actually

existing socialism'.

We do not know whether Che was acquainted with Mariátegui's article. He may have read it, for his companion Hilda Gadea loaned him Mariátegui's writings in the years preceding the Cuban revolution. Whatever the case, much of his political thought and practice, especially in the 1960s, can be said to have been aimed at emerging from the impasse to which the servile imitation of the Soviet model had led in Eastern Europe. His ideas on the construction of socialism are an attempt at 'heroic creation' of something new, the search - interrupted and incomplete - for a distinct model of socialism, radically

opposed in many respects to the 'actually existing' bureaucratic caricature.

From 1959 to 1967, Che's thought evolved considerably. He distanced himself ever further from his initial illusions concerning Soviet or Soviet-style socialism, that is, from the Stalinist version of Marxism. In a 1965 letter to a Cuban friend, he harshly criticized the 'ideological tailism' that was manifested in Cuba by the publication of Soviet manuals for instruction in Marxism. These manuals, 'Soviet bricks' to use his expression, "have the disadvantage of not letting you think: the Party has already done it for you and you have

to digest it." [13] Still more explicit, especially in his post-1963 writings, is his rejection of the 'imitation and copy' and his search for an alternative model, his attempt to formulate another path toward socialism, one that is more radical, more egalitarian, more fraternal, more human and more consistent with the communist ethic.

Che's death in October 1967 interrupted a process of independent political maturation and intellectual development. His work is not a closed system, a polished system of thought with an answer to everything. On many questions, such as planning, the struggle against bureaucracy and so on, his thinking remains incomplete. [