



IV341 - June 2002

New hope on the left

15 June 2002, by **Philomena O'Malley**



The campaign is only just starting and it is too soon to make any serious predictions. However this situation confirms how important it would have been to be able to make an agreement between the LCR and LO in order not to divide the far left vote. The reasons for **LO's refusal** and the **LCR's reply** are contained in the accompanying letters. In this situation the LCR is making an enormous effort to present candidates in 412 constituencies, and is supporting candidates of local groupings of which it is part, in areas such as the Rhone (A Gauche Autrement - Another Left), Brittany (Tous ensemble a gauche - Together to the Left) or the Motive-e-s groups in the Paris region. This brings the total to almost 450 constituencies where we will be present, compared to only 130 in the last elections in 1997.

This effort has only been made possible by the strengthening of the LCR by the hundreds of people who have joined or declared themselves as supporters since the presidential

campaign, and enable us to be present in 90 of the 95 departements in metropolitan France as well as in Reunion (Indian Ocean).

The LCR has also made an effort to respect the law on parity (there must not be a variation of more than 2% in the percentage of women and men who are candidates, otherwise the political formation has to pay a fine). This is not the case for the others, the Union for the Presidential Majority around Chirac has only 20% women candidates, and the Socialist Party, which introduced the law, has only found 35%.

Olivier Besancenot is standing in the 18th arrondissement of Paris where he lives. His Socialist Party contestant is the former Minister of the Interior Daniel Vaillant, (and for the UMP their youngest candidate, Roxanne Decorte). The LCR campaign will focus above all on the questions of "security" and "law and order" of which the PS made much during the presidential campaign, thus playing into the hands of the right and far right. Olivier Besancenot, who is back at work as a postman, will be running his campaign like the other LCR

candidates with the aid of members and sympathisers of the LCR in this socially mixed but generally underprivileged area of Paris. Like the other LCR candidates he has no local offices, no full-timers and the meetings will be informal ones in cafes, a public meeting in a school and leafletting in the local street markets and underground stations.

And, also like the other candidates, his campaign will turn around the "Ten Action Proposals" (**see next page**) that summarise the proposals of the LCR for a radical change of society. Ten proposals that are a radical break with the policies of the former left or current rightwing government. The challenge for the "one hundred per cent left" candidates in this election is to convince the electors who voted for Besancenot on the 21st of April that they were right to do so, that to continue the fight for an alternative through the ballot boxes as well as in everyday struggles and demonstrations, is the way to create a new hope on the left, rather than voting for the worn out proposals of the SP or the CP as a bunker against the far right.

Ten proposals of the LCR-100% Left

15 June 2002, by **Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire**

1. A law forbidding collective redundancies because it is intolerable to allow bosses and shareholders the right to condemn entire regions to disaster. A job is a right, we must fight unemployment.
2. A law defending public services, creating the 3000 000 jobs necessary in the health service, education, transports. A stop to privatisations.
3. Immediate increase of 230 Euros per month in all wages, social benefits and pensions, end full wage equality between women and men. Elimination of VAT on basic necessities.
4. Respect for young people who suffer from casualisation and exploitation at work, from racism and discrimination. First-time job-seekers high-school and university students should have an independence allowance of 700 Euros per month. Cannabis should be legalised.
5. Full-time work for women should be guaranteed, accompanied by the creation of a free public service of nurseries and childcare.
6. A policy of real equal rights: decent housing for all, regularising all immigrants without papers, the right to vote for foreign residents.
7. Faced with acts of violence, the response cannot be "law and order". We must develop social services, policies of prevention and aid to victims and employ the number of teachers and youth workers necessary.
8. Guarantee full pension and retirement rights at 60. By reducing unemployment and creating jobs, there will be more people paying for pensions; Equality between the private and public sectors, 37.5 years of pensions contributions for all.
9. An ecological policy that breaks with the profit logic means laws to defend public health (ban on GM foods), protection of the population against industrial risks and a fight against pollution. There should be an immediate decision to withdraw from the nuclear industry.
10. A policy that refuses to implement all the anti-social decisions of Maastricht Europe and that fights for a social and democratic Europe, and for relations of justice and solidarity with the rest of the world.

LCR proposes electoral agreement, LO refuses

15 June 2002, by **Pierre-François Grond**



Olivier Besancenot

It shows the readiness of significant numbers of the working population and young people to show their

disapproval of the different components of the Jospin government from the left, while rejecting the right and the far right. It bestows major responsibilities on the LCR (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire - French section of the Fourth International) and LO (Lutte Ouvrière - the other major French far left organization).

During the campaign the LCR declared from the beginning that it was for the unity of the far left. Our opinion has not changed after the first round.

Nationally only LO and the LCR have the capacity to present a clear alternative in the political landscape. A multiplication of candidacies and competitive situations will be harmful for everyone.

Therefore last week we proposed to Lutte Ouvrière that we discuss an

agreement to divide up constituencies. This approach was confirmed by our central committee.

Such a sharing out of constituencies seems to be the most effective way in view of the very short time we have to work things through and the fact that the two organisations conducted separate campaigns.

This would mean a far left candidate in every mainland constituency on a 50-50 basis with a call for a reciprocal vote on the basis of a common declaration dealing with the main issues in the election.

The LCR has been involved for some years in some departments in local agreements like "Tous Ensemble À Gauche" (All together on the left) in Finistère (Brittany) or 'A Gauche Autrement' (On the Left Otherwise) in the Rhône. These groupings should

be included in this national approach and be written into the agreement.

In its own constituencies, the LCR will pursue its policy of openness toward those who identified with Olivier Besancenot's campaign.

For the second round of the elections, we think we cannot take the slightest risk of helping the election of National Front deputies. Where that risk exists, we call for a vote for the best-placed left candidate.

Following the LCR's proposal for an agreement to divide up seats in the forthcoming 2002 Parliamentary elections, we reprint from Rouge: Lutte Ouvrière's reply to this proposal, and the LCR's response:

Letter from Lutte Ouvrière about the Parliamentary elections: no agreement

15 June 2002, by Lutte Ouvrière

Chirac's triumphal plebiscite complements the politics of the government of the plural left in the worst possible manner.

While the results of the first round of the Presidential elections showed clearly that Le Pen would be very decisively beaten solely by the votes of the right, the whole of the left set to work pumping up the windbag Le Pen and, in the name of a fight against a claimed fascist threat, prostituted itself for free to Chirac.

This was a deliberate choice on the part of the left leaders in order to avoid any discussion about the causes of the loss of 2,488,534 votes for Jospin and 1,672,456 votes for Hue - ie, a total loss of 4,160,534 votes.

By brandishing the threat of Le Pen's election to the Presidency of the Republic, which it knew perfectly well

could not happen in today's context, in evoking a non-existent fascist danger, the left parties have sought, on the one hand, to conceal the reduction in their vote among the popular classes, and on the other have transformed their own retreat into an advance for Le Pen.

But their pressure was enough for you to surrender although you managed to avoid saying Chirac's name! You carried a resolution which took two or three readings in order to satisfy each of your tendencies. Through opportunism by adaptation to the milieu which surrounds you, you joined the holy alliance around Chirac.

Your hypocritical call for a demonstration on the evening of the 5th May in order to wash your hands of your vote during the day doesn't change anything.

Your contribution to Chirac's election was derisory. Independently of your appeal a large part of the far left's electorate would have undoubtedly given to the pressure to vote for Chirac.

But the fact is that in a situation which required telling the truth to the popular classes whether we are listened to or not, you chose to lie to them, at the behest of the Socialist, Communist, and Green Party leaders Hollande, Hue, and Mamere. You brought your minuscule support for a Chirac vote by presenting it, despite your denials, as a roadblock to Le Pen.

You will understand that in these conditions we will not respond to your proposals which would imply at least a certain political agreement. And we do not wish to endorse an attitude as opportunist as yours.

As for your allies, for the agreement is supposed to extend to others than yourselves, let's not even speak about them. You are not even sure of being able to convince them to participate in an agreement between the LCR and LO.

There is therefore no question of making out that our respective politics are neighbours while they are opposed.

While posing as activists for far left unity, against what you call Lutte

Ouvrière's "sectarianism" - a word you haven't stopped repeating during the campaign, which in the context created by the calumnies against us, struck a particular chord - your proposal was in any case hypocritical.

Indeed, in numerous places representatives - including central representative of your organisation - have already designated the LCR candidates for the legislative elections. In some cases candidates have been announced in every constituency in a department, while

you were talking to us about dividing up departments between us.

What credibility can we give a proposal for dividing up, when all the evidence shows that you have begun to choose?

Therefore each of us must defend their own politics and then the meaning of the votes will be clear!

With our revolutionary greetings.

Georges Kaldy and Francois Duburg"

Response of the LCR to LO: Our responsibilities

15 June 2002, by Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire

Again you respond to a proposal from the LCR for unity by refusing to entertain it. However, we are in a situation which should have made you perceive the necessity for far left unity.

Our two candidates Arlette Laguiller and Olivier Besancenot gathered around 10% of the vote. That gives us a major responsibility in order to respond to the hope this created. We could have been able to confirm and consolidate the April 21 vote by putting forward a single candidate in each constituency who supports the main points of a programme which breaks with past politics, in front of the youth and the wage earners.

The right will present united slates of candidates, the governmental left too. With your refusal only the far left will be standing in competition with each other.

The main pretext you give is our position on the May 5 vote. You reproach us for having participated in a "republican front" by calling for a vote for Chirac, but the reality is different.

We called for a fight against the far

right in struggle as well as at the ballot box. We called for a vote against Le Pen. We were present in all the demonstrations.

It is like trying us for witchcraft to confuse our position with that of a "republican front". It is an insult to imply that the LCR would be associated with a plebiscite for Chirac.

Young people and workers wanted to resist the far right danger. It was absurd to oppose this movement, as you did.

From April 21 onwards you minimised the danger of Le Pen; you did not immediately call for demonstrations as Olivier Besancenot did.

We think that even in a difficult situation the solution is always found in collective mobilisation. The proof of this was shown on May 1.

The workers shouldn't be taken for idiots: two million demonstrators on May 1 were not fighting against a "phantom of the operetta", as you wrote in Lutte Ouvrière, but against an ideology which is spreading into neighbourhoods and workplaces and which repels them, more than it does you. In the street no republican front

vice inhabited their consciousness.

We asked you a question about the Parliamentary elections which you have not answered: are you prepared to call for a vote, not for the right, but for a Communist, Socialist, or Green Party candidate against a fascist?

You also raised again the question of our "partners", i.e. those who find themselves within the framework of the "100% left" union against the right and the policies of the left in government. Is the very idea that others, who are not members of our organisations, but close to our ideas, should wish to participate in this union so insufferable? With the support of 10% of the electorate should LO and the LCR only discuss between themselves?

Then one must perhaps find the more boring explanation of your rejection in "Lutte Ouvrière" of 26th April where G. Kaldy writes that "in all the elections where there are no other stakes - as there could be for example in certain situations the possibility of electing Parliamentary representatives - the presence of several far left candidates....is not a disadvantage but a blessing.

Behind this lies a very specific conception of unity; you only conceive of it when it useful to gain elected positions. In no other case do you understand the necessity.

For our part we think that the political situation is so specific and so grave that the unity of the left of the left is urgent.

We will pursue this policy, at the time

of the Parliamentary elections and afterwards despite your current refusal.

We have never proposed to you a single party. We evidently have differences. But we do not have "opposed orientations" as you write (why not a "class break" between us while you're at it?).

Our two organisations have fought the politics of the plural left. We have

proposed to you to take steps forward together, in order to give back hope to millions of young people and wage earners who look to us. You have again lost an opportunity. Despite your sectarianism, we will not abandon our desire for unity.

Faternally,

The secretariat of the LCR Political Bureau"

Contradiction and struggle

15 June 2002, by **Peter Drucker**



Q How would you characterise Fortuyn?

A It's not easy to characterise him politically because he was very contradictory. The most right wing policies he put forward were undoubtedly to the right of any other party in the Netherlands: he was for the abolition of the Geneva Convention so that not one single more refugee would get into Holland, for example. But then just before he died he called for an amnesty for "illegal" immigrants already in the country.

He said that health and education were in a dreadful state - which they are - and then said that his solution was not to spend a single euro more but to sack a whole load of managers. He was in favour of the abolition of the monarchy - but then used events like the recent Royal Wedding. He called for the army and the air force to be abolished because he said that the strength of the Netherlands was as a naval power - but then he said he would vote to buy the latest super fighter plane...

As a person he was also contradictory. He started out as being quite left wing and ended up on the right. He was

ambitious - but he also came over as being rather lonely.

What is also clear is that while he had these ambivalences, this was not true of others at the top of his party - those who will now be left behind. If they form a coalition as they have done in Rotterdam with the Christian Democrats and the VVD (right wing secular party) following the recent municipal elections, we will end up with the most right-wing government we have had for more than 30 years.

Q Fortuyn was openly gay. How did this play?

A I suppose it was a neutralising factor. People said, well he can't be that bad if he's gay... He also used his sexuality in a cynical way - saying he couldn't be racist because he liked Moroccan men!

Immediately after Fortuyn's death, there was a discussion about whether the election should be postponed. Was the decision to go ahead controversial?

Yes it certainly was - particularly with the current head of the Socialist Party. [1] But once Fortuyn's party said they wanted to go ahead the government felt it had no alternative - they feared that there would be riots otherwise.

Despite the contradictions of both Fortuyn and those that have mourned his death, there can be no doubt that his murder has already resulted in a shift to the right. A far right party has been out leafleting in Rotterdam calling for a ban on the far left. People, especially in the environmental movement, but also in the anti-racist movement and on the left have had death threats.

Q There has been quite a lot of coverage of the mobilisations in the wake of his death. What has it been like living through it?

A I think it will take weeks, even months to fully untangle the different strands of the outpouring.

Part of it is a specifically Dutch phenomenon - these gatherings have been in the tradition of "marches against senseless violence". A number of times in recent years people, not famous people or politicians, just ordinary people, have been killed - usually on the streets late at night, sometimes after arguments.

Then there have been silent marches to protest - to say we don't want this sort of thing happening in our country. And some of this carried through into the Fortuyn situation.

On top of that it's been a cross between the aftermath of September

11 and the response to Princess Di's death. The mobilisations have been enormous, and very mixed politically and socially. I have seen and read about many people who came out who

said that they didn't support his ideas, that they wouldn't vote for his party, but that he didn't deserve to die. But then there were people like the guy

who said he had been going to vote for the Socialist Party, but now he was going to vote for Fortuyn's party. So there is no doubt that the right hope to capitalise on his death at the polls.

On the death of Pim Fortuyn

15 June 2002, by **SAP / Grenzeloos**



Pim Fortuyn

We have been hard at work in recent months opposing Fortuyn's ideas in words, in writing and on the streets. We strongly object to any insinuation that Fortuyn's - left-wing - opponents have contributed to creating an atmosphere that led to the murder. Fortuyn's programme and public statements made us, and many others, angry and determined to continue fighting for solidarity and against racism.

Efforts will be made to take advantage of his death, just as that occurred after the September 11 attacks. We have already seen the first examples.

The conservative daily De Telegraaf is trying to criminalize the left. TV Rijnmond asked several young Moroccans to react to Fortuyn's death for the sole purpose of expressing disgust at the fact that they were not upset enough.

Now more than ever in the coming days and months, we must fight in large numbers and with renewed energy for a social, multicultural Netherlands - before, during and after the elections. Fortuyn's 'martyrdom' could well lead to an even greater lurch to the right. We call all the more urgently on everyone to vote for one of the left-wing parties: the Socialist Party or the Green Left.

Since the municipal elections in March we have been very active in mobilizing

and organizing for the demonstration on May 11 in Rotterdam under the slogan, 'Not One Vote for Racism'. We support the decision of the organizing coalition Nederland Bekent Kleur to cancel this demonstration, because holding the demonstration as scheduled would be counterproductive and would not help build a broad movement against racism. The decision not to hold the demonstration does not mean that we are letting the far right, which had already announced a counter-demonstration, intimidate us. Nor does it mean that we think action for a multicultural society is no longer necessary. Now more than ever in the coming weeks and months we must continue fighting in large numbers and with renewed energy for a social, multicultural Netherlands.

Tony Southall

15 June 2002, by **Gordon Morgan, Terry Conway**

At the age of 16, in 1959, Tony became involved with the Young Socialists, and with CND and the Aldermaston 'ban the bomb' marches. He helped found Croydon Youth CND, and was added to the famous 'Committee of 100', following the arrest of 36 members including Bertrand Russell. In 1961/62 he became acting Secretary of the Committee of 100.

Tony was thus involved in the events

that led to a huge mushrooming of the anti-nuclear movement in Britain, and the fight against nuclear weapons remained close to his heart all his life.

In 1962, whilst still a student at Cambridge, Tony got involved with a Trotskyist group called The Week. This group, based in the East Midlands town of Nottingham, was later to become the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.

Tony's association with the Fourth International was to last for 40 years. His close friendship with Charlie van Gelderen, who was present at the founding conference of the Fourth International and who died last year, also began at this time.

In the mid '60s Tony was a founder member of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and a key organiser of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Tariq Ali, when he heard of Tony's death,

remembered the tremendous efficiency with which he made sure Tariq got to meetings or demonstrations whilst he was staying with him in Glasgow.

In the early '70s Tony and his family went to teach in Africa. He continued to work on the Africa Commission of the Fourth International, contributing to the struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

On returning to Glasgow, Tony resumed his work with CND and the

Labour Party. He founded Scottish Labour CND, and through tireless work ensured that the Scottish Labour Party remained committed to nuclear disarmament.

Despite developing MS and being confined to a wheelchair, he became Joint Secretary of Scottish CND, and his Glenapp Street house became a centre for CND and community activity. He continued to participate in the direct action demonstrations at Faslane nuclear base.

Eventually Tony left the Labour Party and a few years ago joined the Scottish Socialist Party.

Tony remained politically involved to the end. He insisted on getting a Palestinian flag for his hospital bed. He followed every political development and was keen to discuss with his many visitors. His death is a great loss to the Socialist movement in Scotland and internationally, and personally to his many friends and comrades.

A real missed opportunity

15 June 2002, by **Daniel Berger**



In fact, the struggle had only just begun. It had been shown that the engineers were still capable of struggling despite the enormous distrust for a union leadership which for some years has not just avoided struggle but also signed collective agreements below the rate of inflation.

The strike was organized on a rolling basis with one-day stoppages in different workplaces. The potential was already visible after four days of the strike (with 90,000 strikers having participated), not only in the big factories like Daimler-Chrysler (Mercedes), Porsche, Bosch and so on but also in a number of small and medium workplaces. In the big factories in particular, participation was almost total and the employers feared that this could develop into a more autonomous struggle with a dynamic that the trade union leadership could no longer control. This is what led to the opening of new negotiations on May 13.

What result?

The agreement signed on May 15 has not yet been accepted by the

respective decision-making bodies and has not yet been adopted in all the regions, but this will probably happen without great difficulty.

The agreement is in two parts. First, there is an initial reform of the salary scale tending to abolish the traditional distinction between 'employee' and 'worker'. The idea is to have (after some years) an equal wage for all these people who do the same or comparable work (although discrimination against women will not be tackled) In this equalization nobody should lose money, there will only be adjustments upwards.

A certain number of people (above all those right at the bottom of the salary scale but also workers doing the work of 'employees') will have a wage increase well above the average. However, the details are still to be negotiated and the results will be codified in a second contract (perhaps at the end of the year). These details will be very complicated and their application will also depend on the relationship of forces in the workplaces. To give an idea of what one can expect: nearly 4% of workers (above all women) will profit from the abolition of the lowest category and will have an increase of at least 7-9%. Apart from this 10-15% of people will benefit appreciably from the new

categories which will be established in the coming years.

A lot depends now on the activity of the IGM union - particularly in the workplaces and works councils - to ensure that these new categories are not lower for everybody who is hired subsequently (such a process has taken place in the chemical industry, where a comparable reform was decided on more than 10 years ago).

The decisive criterion: volume

At the centre of our critique nonetheless is the 'volume of increase of wages'. The union had demanded 6.5% and the leadership had said publicly that it would do better than the chemicals sector (3.3%). Now it has accepted an agreement over 22 months (March 1, 2002 to December 31, 2003) with 0% for March and April 2002, 120 Euros for May 2002, 4% for the 12 following months and 3.1% for the 7 months afterwards, which equals 3.46% (for the average 'employee-worker').

That volume is in two categories: 3.1% increase in general wage (June 1, 2002 to May 30, 2003) and 2.6% (July 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003) the

remainder (0.9% and 0.5%) being added to the second category to finance the 'equalization of wages'. In 2002 and 2003, the salary scale will increase by an average of 3.1%.

Even if the volume which will be used for 'equalization' is added the increase is only 3.46%, well below the 4% which had been declared the minimum by the bureaucracy. In the big factories in particular, the disappointment is palpable.

What consequences?

As a considerable number of workers will receive a relatively generous increase there will not be any

generalized revolt. The majority will accept the results but for most of them there will only be a 3.46% increase, below this famous rate of 4% which the bureaucracy had declared a minimum. What counts for the future of the union and the whole union movement in Germany is that at last the chance was there to fight, to make up for losses in real wages in recent years and to emerge from the general defensive. It was the best chance for at least 15 years, but the bureaucracy feared the struggle and defended the interests of German capital on the international markets as well as the desire of Chancellor Schroeder who appealed to the union not to 'imperil the German economy'.

The real struggle never took place as it would have been necessary to strike for at least two or three succeeding

days per workplace (or at least in the majority of workplaces). That would have been very easy, given the success of the early days. There was no evidence of a weakening of resolve anywhere. The test of strength was yet to come and the majority of workers expected and wanted revenge, wanted to profit from the occasion to act together.

The blame for the failure to take this enormous opportunity (through according more importance to the interests of German capital and Schroeder's electoral prospects than to class interests) reveals the criminal political rottenness of the union bureaucracy. There is then much to do for the small forces of the trade union left and revolutionary Marxists will play their full part.

"This isn't our globalisation, let's build another world"

15 June 2002, by **Olivier Besancenot**



Q What is the Fourth International youth camp?

A The camp is an extraordinary occasion of political conviviality which takes place every year in a different country each time. It's an occasion for several hundred young activists from all over Europe, and sometimes from further afield (Brazil, Mexico, Algeria...) to come together to exchange their experiences.

How do they fight against the fascist and populist parties in their countries? How can we build the anti-globalisation movement at the European level?

Each participant can fix their own programme of discussions, workshops, films, around the main themes of the week which are outlined in the

morning forums. These mark the stages of the discussion over the week but it is this openness of activity which makes the camp such a success; there is a sufficiently broad choice of activities and themes for everybody to find their own particular centres of interest.



Q What do you mean by political conviviality?

A I spoke of political conviviality because it is really an occasion when the most serious discussions take place in a relaxed and agreeable context. And then it's true that besides the political activities there the discos, the music... These are two inseparable elements of the camp: we won't make the revolution if we don't change our relationship to politics and our

methods of political activity. More and more recent experiences, in Europe and elsewhere have shown that it is possible to be very radical, even revolutionary, and have a festive and dynamic activity. Recently in France the struggles of young casualised workers in fastfood (McDo in particular) used forms of new forms of struggle and activity that made people want to participate.

Obviously, we're there for political discussions and activity, but also to do it differently.

Q Why an international camp?

A For many of the participants it is also their first contact with the youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth international, and their first opportunity to participate theoretical education and wide ranging discussions, or simply to discuss with other people and experience

internationalism as a living experience. It is one of the richest aspects of the camp: that there are young people from all the most important struggles and movements in Europe. This makes it possible to come out of your little national cocoon, to see that other people have the same problems and the same struggles, or to see that the problems are different from one country to another.

Q What's it like being in the camp?

A It's a space outside the everyday life of an activist, or even a bit outside everyday life at all. Of course, it's not socialism in one camp, but almost all the tasks are shared and self-manages: cleaning the toilet blocks and the site, running the bar, organising security, and the political activities. And we try to ban all forms of discrimination: racism, sexism, anti-gay and lesbianism. And during this week we try to put into practice egalitarian and open social relations: no paternalism, no machist competition, freedom in sexual relations... Of course, this isn't easy, and the camp is also for that: to try to learn to live in social relations free of everything imposed on us by a male chauvinist and capitalist society. But as nothing in this is "natural" or easy, we have to explain, to convince people and above all create specific spaces to discuss these oppressions and how to challenge them. So there is a women's space and a lesbian and gay space, and also a women's only party so that young women can see what it is like to have a good time without having to put up with guys trying to chat them up or their boyfriends being jealous.



Q What will be special about the camp in France this year?

A This year, for us in France, the camp will have a special role. With the presidential campaign and, after the first round, the anti-fascist demonstrations in which lots of young people were active, our two organisations, the JCR and the LCR, are attracting more and more people who want to get politically involved, or others who have been around for a long time and have now decided to join.

So we hope to have a lot of new people at the camp and it will be an opportunity to convince them that the fight for another society is not only at the level of one country or even one continent, but is an international fight! And to show them that on that point we have a certain experience: both as a political current which has always been internationalist and an international organisation which has for years has built itself over and above the borders, so that we today we are very much in our place in all the mobilisations against capitalist globalisation. For us the fact that questions are dealt with at the level of the whole planet is not simply encouraging because that shows that internationalism is coming back to life, and also a confirmation of what we have always said, the revolution will be a world revolution or it won't be a revolution!

Q So what exactly is the

programme of the camp this year?

A The main theme is the need, the urgency to build another world. Capitalist, imperialism, warmongering globalisation is obviously not the globalisation we want. So we are going to try to explain and understand all the different aspects of this globalisation in order to fight better on each particular front and also against the totality: economics, militarism and war, neo-colonialism, law and order policies, specific oppressions (of women, of lesbians and gays, or young people in particular), privatisations of public services, attacks on workers' rights, racism, the destruction of the environment... We're also going to take a particular look at the regions where there are dramatic situations, like in Palestine or in Africa.

But we also have to explain why it's necessary to organize, to learn from experience of different struggles and movements, to discuss plans and possibilities for a future society... We try to look at all the questions from an internationalist standpoint.

That's what we have always done but the need to do so is even stronger now with the new world situation and the recent struggles against institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

This is the first time for years that we have been in such favourable conditions, in Europe and internationally, for rebuilding and consolidating a movement which is on the offensive and capable of winning new generations of activists to the struggle to change the world.

Sub-continent on the brink

15 June 2002, by **Terry Conway**



Most worryingly Pakistan has carried

out several nuclear tests of Ghaznavi and Ghaury missiles in recent days. India says it is not worried by these, the first tests by Pakistan for three years, but Indian Defence Minister

George Fernandes coupled this statement with one that "war is now almost inevitable".

George Bush and his allies do not

want all out war between Pakistan and India. They want both these states and their reactionary governments on side in a war against Iraq. But this is not easy for them to achieve - any more than silencing the revolt of the Palestinian people will win support from the Arab states for the drive to attack Iraq.

Despite their opposition to an all-out war between Pakistan and India, the US and its allies have made no more than demagogic noises about the situation. In Britain for example, while there has been much noise about an arms embargo against India export licences continue to be granted for weapons that will clearly be used in the dispute over Kashmir.

The situation doesn't even make front-page headlines in many places outside the countries involved. Bush's talks with Russia have had far more prominence in the Western media than this calamity waiting to happen.

One problem with the so-called arms reduction agreement between the US and Russia is that it will not lead to the destruction of missiles or warheads - only limit their deployment. And even then we can be sceptical as to whether its provisions will be carried through. This treaty looks remarkably similar to the Start 2 treaty signed by Bush Senior in 1992 - and never implemented. At the same time, Bush gained the agreement of Russia to go ahead with the Star Wars project.

The conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir did not start on September 11: it began with the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 that created the states of Pakistan and India. The last Dogra (Hindu) ruler of Kashmir agreed that Kashmir should become part of India. The majority of Kashmiris are Muslims, but the elite was Hindu.

Ever since, rivalry between India and Pakistan has been fought out over the corpses of the Kashmiris - many of whom reject both states and want self-determination for Kashmir (see [IV 338](#)).

Pakistan and India have fought three fully-fledged wars over Kashmir since

1947 and a mini-war in 1999 at Kargil. Even outside times of war the carnage in Kashmir itself is horrific. Killings by the military are estimated at over 40,000 and more than 700 have died in custody. In addition between 1988 and 1998, militants killed 29,151 civilians and 5,101 security men.

The development of nuclear weapons by both Pakistan and India obviously increased tension. American intelligence sources predict that a full-scale nuclear conflict between the two would leave 12 million dead and 7 million seriously injured - the greatest loss of life the world has ever known.

The post -September 11 situation has raised tensions even further between Pakistan and India. The war drive of American imperialism has given license to state terrorism across the globe, from Colombia to the Philippines as well as obviously against the Palestinian people. In the sub-continent, sanctions that had been imposed on India and Pakistan after they embarked on their nuclear weapons programme were lifted to get them on side in the so-called "war on terrorism".

The Pakistani state and its military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf became important allies for George W Bush in the war in Afghanistan. Initially this seemed to strengthen the General's hand against those - including sections of the military and the intelligence services - who wanted to step up fighting in Kashmir even if this alienated the US.

But when it became clear that the supposed easy victory of American troops against Al-Qaida was not as complete as it first seemed, the more overt fundamentalists in Pakistani society were strengthened.

For the Hindu fundamentalist government of India, the dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, along with the horrendous anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujerat, are a useful diversion from, and riposte to, the poor election results earlier this year in a number of their heartland states.

Both governments and leading politicians within them play with chauvinist and war mongering

rhetoric on a daily basis. While Musharraf does not want to jeopardise his alliance with the all-powerful US, he fully supports the idea that the jihadis are freedom fighters. On the other hand while the Indian government also value their relationship with George Bush, they will also not give up their claim to Kashmir and not only because of its geo-political importance. Being on a war-footing against Pakistan is a very useful way for the Hindu chauvinists to maintain their domestic support.

It is unlikely that either side intends that there should be a nuclear conflict - they know the stakes are too high. However, it would be all too easy in this situation for things to get out of hand, and for a war to start without anyone actually intending that it should.

In the meantime the peace movement has been mobilising on both sides of the border to oppose the policies of both governments.

In Pakistan, political parties and organisations from civil society who oppose both the war drive and the concomitant crack down on civil liberties within Pakistan, have been coming together. The former chair person of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said at a rally in Lahore on May 27 that she would soon be "leading a large rally to lodge the people's protest and anger against the possible use of nuclear weapons". She asked the army to return to their barracks and the religious leaders to go back to the mosques and leave the nation to live in peace.

Meanwhile in India the peace movement issued the following statement:

The Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) is

deeply concerned at the campaign unleashed in India for a 'full-scale war' with Pakistan and the attempts at projecting a 'national consensus' in favour of such a war.

Resort to such a war to settle disputes between two nuclear-weapons states is a far from readily acceptable option. It is all the more so in view of the nuclear-weapon capability acquired by both India and Pakistan in the last

four years and the fact that neither has ruled out the use of nuclear weapons against the other. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by them has only been followed by the deterioration of both internal and external security in both countries. The government of no nuclear-weapon state can be given a carte blanche in this regard and authorised to take "any action" in the name of fighting terrorism.

While condemning strongly the latest terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, the CNDP appeals to all political leaders, policy-makers and legislators of India and Pakistan to ensure immediate pull-back of troops from their common border and to launch a dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues.

On Behalf of CNDP: Admiral R. Ramdas, J. Sri Raman and others.

A turbulent panorama

15 June 2002, by **Mauricio Lazala, Ricardo Ferrer**



Colombia has passed over into a stage of open war during a year in which the citizens elect their President and the Congress. But today's war is not necessarily the greatest of the problems facing the country: the main candidate for the Presidency has a dark past: Alvaro Uribe Velez has a reputation of participating in the dangerous games of the paramilitary groups.

In accordance with the bloody tradition of the Colombia's previous electoral campaign, the new President will be elected in the midst of gunfire. During the elections of 1990, the four candidates of the left were murdered, in public places. Now it is feared similar political violence will be repeated, but within the framework of a war that extends all across the country. In the current electoral campaign we already have a previously announced presidential candidate who has been kidnapped by the guerrillas. There are few leaders around who are known to be "clean" and there are few civil rights activists who have structured proposals to pull the country out of the crisis.

After three years and four months of peace negotiating about peace, the government has begun an open war against the Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Army of National Liberation (ELN), seriously intensifying this latest phase of almost five decades of armed conflict in this South American country. In this war-like atmosphere no voices can be heard promoting new negotiations. More authoritarian proposals are gaining political ground. For its part, the FARC-ELN makes it clear they will only negotiate with whoever the next government will be, and not with President Andres Pastrana. This implies that at least until August 7, Colombia will have a very intense war.

After the March 10, 2002 parliamentary elections, which were filled with irregularities, there was no a clear winner and the Colombian Congress ended up being more divided than ever. None of the parties of any of the presidential candidates have a majority in the Congress. The current dilemma is who is going to replace Pastrana. In the beautiful land of Colombia they only dream of the drums of war and few sing the hymns of peace.

Economic War

Already the impact of the war on the economy and the country's infrastructure is being felt. The Colombian guerrillas will continue adding to their war chests through

kidnappings, extortion, drug and arms trafficking and the imposition of "peace taxes". At the same time the FARC will put into effect the lessons learned during the recent wars in Central America: fighters from the FARC and the ELN have participated in the Nicaragua and El Salvador conflicts. In addition they have maintained their relations with the guerrillas in Honduras and Guatemala. As will be remembered, in El Salvador, the Frente Farabundo Marti systematically applied the formula of "economic" war and used it in negotiating an end to the conflict. On the other hand, the FARC and the ELN's ferocious enemies, the paramilitaries, "Self-Defence Group of Colombia" (AUC), have enriched themselves through similar methods.

The failure of the peace process and the beginning of open war, makes it predictable Colombia will surpass its own record of an average of 37,000 people assassinated a year, with two million people displaced by the conflict, and almost a million people forced into emigrating, thousands of people forced into political exile, thousands more injured and thousands more mentally ill.

But the least visible aspect of the war is the economic devastation. This latest form of the struggle includes frontal attacks on the country's infrastructure, especially transport

highways and the electricity distribution system, with direct attacks on the large business monopolies and multi-national businesses, causing losses of billions of pesos.

Territorial Struggle

The guerrillas control almost half of the country, and half of the mayors of small and medium sized towns negotiate with these new local authorities to obtain approval for their municipal programmes. At the same time there is increasing activity by the death squads who are financed by the private landholders, the large business monopolies and some of the multi-national petroleum corporations. In the beginning, the training of the paramilitaries and the assignment of their targets was carried out by the military, but this crazy scheme got out of control. The present day death squads conduct their own business of carrying out massacres "to order" to extend the territories of the drug traffickers and the great landowners. In the middle is the civilian population. Civil rights and trade union leaders are dying by the score.

In the past, the battles between the army and the guerrillas took place in the jungles and in rural areas. Today the war is much closer to the large cities. The struggle is being intensified for control of the highways and supply routes to strategic regions such as the Bogota-Medellin-Cali triangle. Recent evidence of this can be seen in the widespread growth of militia groups (urban guerrillas) in cities such as Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Cartagena and Barranquilla. This was tragically underlined on Saturday April 6, 2002 when two powerful bombs exploded in the south-east city of Villavicencion, leaving twelve civilians dead. On Monday April 8, two car bombs exploded near Bogota, killing two police officers and causing several other injuries.

In this contest, the jewel in the crown is the Province of Antioquia where already an armed confrontation is taking place in the Aburra Valley (which includes Medellin) with a

series of blockages on the highway that goes to the gulf of Uraba. Fighting is widespread in the valleys of the rivers Atrato, Cauca and Magdalena. Antioquia is one of the richest regions of Colombia and because of this all the guerrilla bands united in the struggle there are from outside the area. On the other hand, the candidate for the Presidency, Alvaro Uribe, the one with authoritarian proposals, belongs to this region and got his first support there.

International Implications

The conflict in Colombia has serious implications for its neighbours and might be extended to them. It should not be forgotten that Colombia has a strategic location on the continent, with coasts both on the Atlantic and the Pacific, with the mountains of the Andes and the Amazon jungle and, an immense maritime zone in the Caribbean. In this geo-political framework, the proximity of Colombia to Venezuela, which was recently shaken by serious political instability, and the closeness of Colombia to Central America, with its poorly resolved conflicts, merits special attention. The guerrillas of Central America were demobilized without the solving of the social problems of their countries. The social tensions there are still strong and with a little heat the fire of the battles there could be revived.

For its part, the United States has passed from a propaganda war to propaganda for war, within a framework of open intervention, (it may not be an accident that at this time the movie "Collateral Damage" is in circulation, a Hollywood production about the war in Colombia). After September 11, 2001, the United States added the FARC to its list of "terrorist" groups, but in reality, the confrontation between the guerrillas and the troops of the Colombian army, financed and trained by the United States, has been going on since the 1960s. The generous new package of United States military support that the Senate in Washington has now approved for Colombia, better known

as "Plan Colombia", is only the latest link in the chain of the United States' history of intervention in the country. While the policy of the United States to deal with the conflict is based on a military solution, the rest of Latin America and the European countries stake everything on social solutions for the country and a political way out of the crises.

Alvaro Uribe Velez

Alvaro Uribe Velez is the most likely candidate to win the Presidency on May 26, 2002. According to recent opinion polls in the newspaper *El Tiempo*, Uribe has the support of 59% of those intending to vote. But inevitably, Uribe will be faced with problems of governing and legitimacy. He carries a dark past, and until now, has been incapable of putting forward really viable proposals to deal with the current crisis. Early on, he attacked Pastrana's peace negotiations with the guerrillas and abandoned his own seat in the peace process, on the United Nations Organization (UNO) commission, which is made up of the more than ten countries who are friendly to the Colombian peace process. Moreover, consistent with his beliefs, Uribe Velez has stated that he supports United States' military intervention.

Colombia is in search of "clean" leaders for a civil society that is exhausted and is under pressure to choose a militaristic solution. The last years have been characterized by the absence of any trustworthy political leader. Into this panorama of uncertainty Alvaro Uribe Velez, a dissident in the Liberal Party, has made his appearance. He has had some success selling the idea that through the applying of a "strong hand", he can save the country from catastrophe. Alvaro Uribe stands for a war against the guerrillas but he offers no social options to his people.

His resume can have differently meanings, depending on who is doing the reading. In 1976 and 1977, Uribe was head of the Goods of Public Companies of Medellin and he led the land negotiations about the dam construction for the new Penol hydro-electric project and the moving of the

population to the new village of El Penol by Uribe's Corporation. Supposedly this experience allows him to present himself to the voters as a good administrator. But the inhabitants of El Penol and Guatape in the east of Antioquia, all tell the same story, about the deaths and the disappearances they suffered during the negotiations about the land which was scheduled to be submerged. The Penol hydroelectric project was imposed on the people, rather than negotiated, and during its construction with many suffered forced exile, tear gassings and land expropriations.

In another part of his resume, Alvaro Uribe states that for a period he was Director of the Civil Aeronautics. But while in that position, he did not exactly distinguish himself by controlling drug trafficking at Colombia's airports. On the other hand, between 1995 and 1997, as provincial governor of Antioquia, he gave his support to the paramilitaries organized in the Private Vigilance Co-operative, "CONVIVIR", an organization condemned by the international community and by Almudena Mazarrasa, the UN Human Rights Commissioner for Colombia.

Several years ago, Alvaro Uribe's father was assassinated by the guerrillas. This experience left its mark on Uribe and as he gained political power he systematically attacked everything that had the appearance of being a social movement, whether it be groups of workers making demands, days of protests or groups who defend human rights. For Alvaro Uribe, all of these smelled of the guerrillas. Such policies generated support for him among big business leaders who are sympathetic to cutting wages, lowering pensions. They don't care much about labour stability or the lack of trade union rights.

The bloodiest shadow that is cast over Uribe Valez's personal history results from the events of 1997. During that year, in Antioquia, in the area of the river Atrato, major massacres took place. These are well documented by

journalists and human rights activists. These massacres of civilians were committed in the area under the jurisdiction of the 17th Brigade, under the leadership of General Rito Alejo del Rio Rojas, who is presently under judicial investigation. During the time in which these abuses against the civilian population took place, Alvaro Uribe failed to intercede on their behalf and failed to take any legal proceedings against General Rojas.

The AUC death squads have a special attraction to the jungles of Atrato because they can plant coca there, install cocaine-processing laboratories and take the cocaine out of the country via Panama. From May 1997 until May 2000 the AUC took over the town of Vigia del Fuerte for its base of operations. From there, its men controlled the river Atrato to where it entered into the gulf of Uraba. For three years the local authorities shut their eyes to the sight of the dozens of bodies which floated down the river. Evidence accumulated against General Rojas, showing the Colombian army's co-operation with the death squads in the regions of Cordoba, Uraba and the river Atrato. In his investigative reports, sent from the area of the river Atrato, journalist Ricardo Ferrer, one of the authors of this article, has confirmed the existence of this co-operation which has since been denounced by international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

If General Rojas was the director of the massacres in Uraba and in the area of the river Atrato, the governor, Alvaro Uribe Valez, was the person who covered the crimes. They were impossible to ignore when the dead floated in the river Atrato every day, in full view of everyone: the death squads had given an order prohibiting the recovery of the bodies.



Spirits are very high among some people about the possibility of negotiating a ceasefire or reducing hostilities during the rounds of voting in May and June when the President will be elected. In 1948, the presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaiten, was assassinated because he raised the banner for social reforms. Since then, thousands of politicians have died, victims of violent political intolerance and a culture of violent political exclusion. As mentioned, the Presidential elections of 1990 took place amidst bomb explosions and the murder of four Presidential candidates. In the same decade, the killing of more than 4,500 militants of the Patriotic Union, eliminated support for voices of moderation and liquidated that political movement.

Among the items on the list of Colombia's 2002 agenda is the government's war against the FARC-ELN, the election of a President and a new Congress, and George Bush's time-table for the anti-terrorism war. Pending is the government's offensive against the paramilitaries, but it is extremely doubtful that this will happen. For those people who are not aligned with those who promote the war, the only option must be that of intervening in defence of the civilian population to prevent the dreadful consequences of the options that the authoritarians could bring to Colombia. Already we have seen such results in other countries in Latin America such as with Fujimori in Peru. In the case of Alvaro Uribe, we still have time to prevent Colombia living through four more bloody years.

All the groups in the conflict have participated in multiple massacres in Colombia. With the announcement about the creation of an international penal court, it is possible that some day all Colombians who participated in this genocide will be forced to appear in front of an international judge. In the meantime, the economy is becoming devastated and the country, sadly, continues to fill up with more widows and orphans.

2002 - Difficult Times

Preparing for Florence

15 June 2002, by **Pierre Rousset**

The Austrian capital had been chosen to facilitate the presence of participants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans; a choice that proved successful, with around 40 people participating from 12 countries in that region. Overall, the Vienna meeting can be considered as very representative. Among the biggest national delegations were those from France, Britain, Greece and Italy. On the other hand, northern Europe was not too heavily represented.

On the lines of Porto Alegre, the ESF will be an open collective space, a place for meetings, exchanges and convergences of activists. To provide a broader opening to participants who cannot represent an organization, membership will be individual. The ESF will take up the themes of Porto Alegre: resistance and alternatives to neo-liberal policies and the logic of war. Given the evolution of the situation in Europe, it is proposed to add a third theme: the fight against racism and xenophobia.

Another discussion concerned the modalities of the participation of political parties. Under the Charter of the WSF, parties do not constitute a component of the 'process' initiated in Porto Alegre. They are nonetheless involved around the WSF (notably via the Local Authorities Forum, organized by the mayor of Porto Alegre) and inside it (through the Parliamentary Forum). Moreover, in some European countries (like Britain) parties are involved in the coalitions planning for Florence, although this is not generally the case.

The Vienna meeting took some new decisions. The social movements are free to prepare for Florence in each country in whatever forms they wish. However, at the European level, the profile of the WSF should be put forward: as an initiative of the trade union and social movements, NGOs, associations and activist networks. In times of high visibility (central debates, press conferences), parties will not intervene in their own right,

but they can be present within the forum. A future meeting will discuss the eventual organization of a dialogue between social movements and political parties.

The Florence meeting is not only being prepared by the national coalitions. International networks are also involved, like the European coordination of the World Women's March. To avoid debates only involving people who feel themselves directly concerned, it is planned to introduce the theme of women's rights in a cross-disciplinary manner in a number of plenaries and workshops, such as those dealing with employment, financial institutions or the debt. Some more specific 'women's' debates are nonetheless planned, on themes like democracy and citizenship, violence and prostitution, trade union action and so on. Finally, phases of 'dialogue' are envisaged, notably between the feminist and anti-globalisation movements.

Them or Us

15 June 2002, by **Claudio Katz**



The recent governmental chaos has its origins in the deepening of the economic debacle, which entered a new phase with the so-called banking "holiday", the immediate closing down of companies and the expropriation of people's small saving accounts. If four years of depression has provoked the collapse of wages, the creation of masses of unemployed, currency devaluation and a re-appearance of

inflation, now begins the stage of the final failures that will see business assets distributed among the various factions of capitalists at the cost of more suffering and increasing misery to the population. How should we characterize the possible economic scenarios and the alternatives the "establishment" is working on in an effort to develop an acceptable plan to get itself out of this crisis? The discussion of these options is now a priority.

Solving the Problem of the 'Corralito' [2]

The government which promised to refund the deposits to their owners, "in its original money", tried to force the small savers to invest in government bonds which would have closed off definitively any possibility they would ever get their money back. The depositors received the same

bonds which they had earlier rejected during their judicial appeal of the government's action. Like the 'bonex', [3] which Economics Minister Remes promoted, their values were discounted so much they were only of use as wallpaper. Issued for terms of five to ten years by a bankrupt state, the owners of the bonds could only sell them on the market at a ridiculous price. The bond issue seemed to achieve a solution of the 'corralito' problem demanded by the bankers because freezing the deposits was not sufficient to protect the banks from the depletion of their funds that the courts' judicial decisions and daily withdrawals, had provoked. During the last four months, the government has continued financing, with funds from the Central Bank (re-discounted) the loss of deposits and has backed up the refusal by the financial entities to reconcile these withdrawals with their own funds, through the recuperation of dollars from the central banking houses or with the recovery of credits. Through this subsidy, over the last year, twenty billion dollars have faded away, and during the last four months, the loss is greater than another 1.8 billion dollars.

The handing over of this money to the banks will be remembered as one of the greatest swindles of the decade, because from the beginning of the year the government took care of the sales of businesses (Banko Galicia), bankruptcies (Scotia Bank), money laundering (General Business Bank) and Creditanstalt which was practically devoid of savers.

These subsidies were cut when the IMF demanded that the government protect the reserves, betting these funds would instead be used in a resumption of paying the international debt. With the introduction of the 'bonex' the state became guarantors for the bankers, taking over their commitments to the savers. It was as if the depositors had placed their funds in public entities. The initial subsidization of the difference between the peso deposits at 1.4 and the credits maintained at a parity of 1:1, was converted into a unlimited rescue of the private financial institutions. In exchange for the new bonds, the state held on to assets which were impossible to recover,

repeating for the umpteenth time the nationalization of a treasury loss. In similar rescues in Mexico and Ecuador, those state recovered nearly ten per cent of the credits received from the banks. The financiers not only cleaned off their balance sheets the obligations that they had to the savers but they also got rid of the devalued public bonds which were returned to the state as compensation for the new rescue.

Frightened by the extent of public reaction, the legislators did not dare approve the implementation of the 'bonex', but now they are discussing the equivalent project of a 'stop gap law', that will prevent the savers recovering their money until such times as the savers obtain a judicial ruling signed in their favour. This measure will serve to freeze the deposits and strengthens the 'corralito', affording the banks the time they need to patch together new mechanisms for confiscating savers' deposits.

Another aspect of this same process is the expropriation of the wealth of millions of small debtors, who from the beginning of August will have their taxes indexed according to the CER. [4] Until now they have not received any replies to their demands for a revocation or modification of this index to go along with the downward changes in the salary levels. At the same time as companies such as Repsol [5] or the telephone company, Telefonica, are quickly liquidating their liabilities with the dollars brought from abroad, on the horizon is a massive auction of peoples' possessions, such as houses, cars and small businesses, which will be a repeat what happened in the 1980s. With a level of inflation of 3% a month, if the present CER is not annulled a tax of 500 pesos will be expanded into 30,000 pesos by the year 2008.

To begin to help the small savers and debtors who have been swindled by the banks, it is necessary to nationalize these financial institutions, which should also include the properties of their directors and associated businesses, without indemnification. This nationalization must explicitly include the wealth of the bankers and not simply be limited

to readjusting credit. The country's financial system has ceased to exist and there are only two remaining alternatives for its reconstruction: to subsidize or expropriate the financiers.

The fall of Scotia Bank began the widespread escalation of bank closings, which was crowned by the loss of customers' deposits and the lack of recovery of credits. It is estimated that in only six months, between 30% to 50% of the 4,580 branch offices, which existed at the end of 2001, have disappeared, along with the dismissal of between 20,000 to 40,000 of the country's 100,000 banking employees. The 'Galicia' solution, of not carrying out closures, will be the exception, because the financiers know they are confronting a shrinking of the banking system, proportional to the general collapse of the economy. One section of the foreign banks is packing its suitcases and the other sector is staying, to take over, with their mutual co-operation or officially, the remaining banks (eventually fusing them by their privatisation into the Federal Bank). But meanwhile, they will demand the restoration of a system which is for them comparable to a financial paradise, that is to say, a system free of all government control.

In these conditions of financial collapse, the only alternative solution that would be favourable to the small savers and debtors, goes in the direction of expropriating the banks. The position of "believing in a new system based on a public and co-operative banking system with strict controls over foreign banks", such as under the proposed Plan Fenix, [6] does not explain, for example, how bank closings will be avoided. This Plan promotes the "regulation of credit... control of the use of the funds", such as better management, "of the levels of interest, policies for the financial reserves". But Plan Fenix does not explain who will pay for the construction of this new regime.

The time of grandiose promises has run out. There are now only two alternatives before us: the nationalization of the banks to rescue the bankers at the expense of the bulk of the population or the confiscation of

the assets of the financiers in order to defend jobs. Only the second alternative will make good the losses of the small savers, prevent the seizure of the belongings of the small debtors and reconstruct a credit system to facilitate the renewal of economic growth.

A True "Redistribution Shock"

If the government's present economic course persists, an additional 5.5 million Argentines will be forced to descend into the hell of poverty before the end of the year, raising to 20 million the total number who cannot meet their elementary needs of subsistence. The present level of misery in Argentina now surpasses the peak registered during the hyperinflation period of 1989. It especially affects youth and children. Half the new students in the secondary schools are abandoning the idea of college; in Tucuman, children in the classrooms faint from hunger and in La Matanza one of every four babies is born undernourished. Evidence now exists of a deterioration of the intelligence level of indigenous children because of a lack of nutrition. And in the public hospitals, many patients are losing weight because of a lack of food.

Still, after a devaluation - which saw the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) crash on a per person basis from 8,950 dollars to 2,493 dollars (lower than Peru or Panama) - in Argentina "not everyone is poor". Today, the gap between the rich and poor has reached the dizzying proportion of 30 times compared to the 12 times which existed in 1974. The rich potential of the country has not gotten less. Social injustice has become a scandal. While five million Argentines' basic food needs are not being met, the production of food products will reach a record 99 million tons, that is to say, a volume of food sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of the total population of the country, multiplied by a factor of ten, sufficient to feed 370 million people.

The increase of misery is a direct consequence of the reappearance of the inflation which followed the devaluation. During the first four months of this year, retail prices climbed 18%, an increase that surpasses the initial estimates of the percentage increase for the whole year.

High prices first effected imported goods, then export products and now services. In February and March the escalation of prices has been concentrated on the food items which make up 50% of the typical basket of goods consumed by the poor. In March and April, price increases were extended to clothing, equipment and the articles of consumption of the middle class. And as the cost of medicines increase in step with the rise in the price of the dollar, hospitals are doing without vaccines and antibiotics.

The increase in prices has transformed the systematic erosion of salaries into a virulent collapse. Devaluation of the peso has effectively decreased by 15% the level of working people's salaries, which at the end of 2001 was approximately 10% behind that of the preceding year and 25% below the level for the 1980s. Half of those on wages earn less than 400 pesos, at a time when the cost of the basic basket of goods is over 1,100 pesos.

Faced with this disaster, it is necessary to strengthen people's purchasing power with the help of an increase in wages. The government cynically states that such an increase "would increase inflation", when it is evident that the escalation of prices has erupted during a general fall in salaries as a consequence exclusively of the currency devaluation. It is perfectly practical to fix the minimum and universal salary level at 600 pesos and to raise pensions to a level of 450 pesos per person, because the business people and bankers who are making fortunes can absorb these increases. These improvements could be financially complemented with taxes on the great fortunes of the wealthy and the restoration of their contributions to funding social services.

A special charge must be placed on those who are the beneficiaries of the devaluation, through increases in the deductions they pay to the state, and through the taxation of businesses whose debts were liquidated. Moreover, the re-nationalization of the system of pension capital would bring in additional resources and would be able to bring an end to the business of excessive commissions going to the management, thereby avoiding the further dramatic demolishing of future assets which crashed along with the paper of the AFJP. [7]

Recovery of resources for wage increases must not come from new "lines of credit and discounting by the Central Bank", as some advisors of Duhalde, for example Mr. D. Carbonetto, proposes. This kind of financing has led to enrichment of the large groups of capitalists at the cost of a financial collapse without precedent in the country. This time, businesses must be forced to contribute, instead of receiving from the government the funds they require to raise salaries. Nevertheless, we should not have any illusions. A government which impoverishes its own workers will not, in general, improve people's income. Achieving such a conquest will lead to the redoubling of the struggle against the capitalists who until now have been accustomed to feathering their own nests with the reductions in labour costs and the flexible application of the labour laws.

The beginning of a 'redistribution shock' relies on this social battle and not on specific economic conditions, such as the extent of the unused capacity in the economy or the restriction of sales. And the protection of an improved wage in the face of inflation requires the popular control of prices and supplies. To gamble otherwise, on measures for example, which will be based on the expectation that big business will somehow 'recreate consumption' will only lead to new frustrations, because the capitalists are more worried about their immediate profits than the eventual improvement of purchasing power. Improving the standard of living of the majority of the population demands effective action and not the propping up of profits.

As important as the granting of general wage increases, is the immediate implementation of 450 pesos monthly payment under a system of unemployment insurance, for each of the three million who are unemployed. The government ridicules this need by announcing a subsidy which would only begin to be applied after two months of being unemployed. The government's proposed subsidy is projected to cover only half of the unemployed, giving each of them an absurdly low amount of 150 pesos, which will be made even smaller by inflation. Before the end of the year, if the present rate of price increases continues, four times the number of poor will be created than those presently covered by such a subsidy. The programme favoured by the government, moreover, leads to a lowering of salaries and the reduction of the base wage, because under it, businesses are allowed to contract with employees to only pay them the social contribution or the differences with the levels of the contractual wage agreements. The objective of the government's proposed subsidy is to increase exploitation and to this end, Chiche Duhalde has declared that with an insurance payment of 450 pesos "we would be creating slackers because today low salaries govern the wage market". The possibility of changing this amount to a base wage does not even occur to this lady.

It is an affront to working people who have been struggling on this issue over recent years to rely upon such an insurance scheme, finding in it 'positive aspects' or favouring the participation of government organs to manipulate its distribution. Also inadmissible is the proposal of fixing it at between 180 and 225 pesos, which the nationalist advisor to the President, Mr D Carbonetto, is now applauding.

Moreover, the government's insurance scheme is a only a promise, because its financing remains a mystery. No large corporation have indicated a willingness to contribute to the creation of a 'social fund' to support the scheme, nor will there be international loans available, and the money collected through an increase in the governments income, now has another destiny.

The Rupture with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

To satisfy the demands of the IMF, whose spokespeople declare that "Argentina must suffer" and "confront the reality of an indispensable adjustment", all the economic policies of Duhalde are under the direct control of Economics Minister, Remes. Virey Singh writes the libretto, the functionaries of the financial institutions repeat it, the legislators vote for it and the government implements. And so much of this obsequiousness serves to only underline how hard they work for the sole purpose of avoiding 'a default of the institutions'. At no time has receiving fresh funds been discussed by the government. Simply, a loan is negotiated that the IMF makes to itself so that it can continue its work of auditing the government's finances.

The men of the IMF demand that 350,000 public employees be fired and order major budgetary adjustments by the provinces, that already in the last five years have ratified five financial packages renouncing their own funds and are applying another cut of 60% to their annual expenditures. The creditors also demand the elimination of the provincial bonds, which now represent half of the mass of money circulating in the country. The annulling of this paper signifies that the provincial governments has now stopped payment of their workers' salaries and decrees the definitive paralysis of Argentina's internal economy.

The IMF is also demanding an increasing of the national government's current fiscal surplus, ignoring the fact that the overall deficit of the public accounts has remained constant over the last decade at a level of 32% of the GDP, similar to that prevailing in the majority of the developed countries. The IMF does not takes not notice of the fact that the source of the recent financial crash lies not in increased expenditures by the government, but

in the damage caused by the reduction of its income. This fall oscillates between 20% to 40% and is a direct consequence of the impact of the recession on tax collection. The effect of the financial adjustment on the economy has been extreme and has sharpened the depression and increased the rate of fall of taxes from incomes.

The new fiscal adjustment has been a condition for beginning a new round of negotiations between the government and its creditors. Even though the government's debt bond is now quoted at 20% of its nominal value, the bond holders are unwilling to accept, without a price, the government's abandonment of its liabilities to them. They are prepared to begin proceedings in New York to obtain court judgements for the recovery of their money. Their demands will be unlimited, because the total government debt for the past year is equivalent to half the GDP, and after the currency devaluation the debt has now been converted into a liability that surpasses this amount.

The only way to break these shackles is to immediately break off all negotiations with the IMF and repudiate all the fraudulent liabilities. Even economists who until now always postulated the impossibility or inconvenience of suspending these negotiations, now recognize the uselessness of the sacrifices needed to meet the needs of these creditors. Now some economists say that it does not make sense "to ask for loans on bended knee... in a strategy of submission to the IMF" and they propose to negotiate with the creditors "only after setting in motion a plan for Argentina's independent economic recovery" (Plan Fenix). But they only arrived at this conclusion when the economic collapse has become total, and not even in these circumstances are they proposing a definite break with the bankers who are demanding a strategy of economic construction. Rather, they imagine a kind of transitory cooling off period in these discussions with the creditors, which at some point in the future, from a more advantageous position, they expect the government will resume negotiations. Thus, they are thinking, "they must not break with

the IMF" (M del Pont), nor "must they celebrate the default" (Lo Vuolo).

But this course of action has a history of failure. It was attempted at the beginning of the Alfonsín government in Argentina, in Peru with Alan García, and in Brazil at the beginning of the 1990s. Invariably, after entreaties to the creditors asking for forgiveness, this process concludes with a return to the negotiating table. The belief that this same social class which governs the country "will this time refuse to compromise with the creditors" has little basis in fact, such as expecting a more tolerant attitude now from the IMF than it had in the past.

The international bankers are demanding a heavy punishment, and the Argentinean ruling class, as always, will bow their heads in submission, especially if the mutiny in the population grows. The ruling class is not disposed to take advantage of the improving international conditions to confront the creditors, who have caused the fall of neo-liberalism in Argentina. And least of all will the ruling class appeal for a social mobilization or international solidarity to confront the IMF.

The proposal of 'facing up to a policy of economic reactivity', forgetting 'the marginal external savings' and the 'unnecessary IMF' (C Lozano), poses meanwhile the question of how to use the funds which would be recycled internally, while the negotiations are supposedly suspended. The commercial surplus of 12 billion dollars that is expected this year is, for example, sufficient to finance the index-linked insurance scheme of payments of 450 pesos for each of the unemployed. But those who now promote the government's distancing from the IMF, have never accepted the need to pay for the 'shock of redistribution' with the commercial surplus that would arise from not paying the debt. And now they do not clearly explain if this possibly available money is destined for the unemployed, or will go to financing the large business groups.

No To Renegotiation Or the Rescuing the Privatisers

In the period immediately after the currency devaluation, those businesses which emerged out of the privatisation process, maintained a low profile, searching for ways to overcome their economic difficulties by increasing the prices of their products, and/or allowing a deterioration of services. The degradation caused by this is obvious to everyone today. Throughout the country, there are frequent power failures, telephone connections are very poor and there are delays in services to the public, along with a cancellation of capital investment. In particular, a lack of maintenance has led to a tripling of fatal accidents on the railway system. As these privatised companies negotiate with the government to obtain security for their currency exchange activities, restrictions to prevent the liberalization of competition and rate subsidies and tax reductions, they are beginning a generalized escalation of the 'seasonal layoffs'. To help impose this policy, they have created a 'foreign businesses committee' to shamelessly pressure the government on their behalf.

After a decade of impressive profits, the economic crisis has also arrived at the door of these privatised businesses. During the 'period of Menem', they enjoyed profits that were five to six times greater than those for many other businesses throughout the country and by taking advantage of the currency convertibility policy they turned their gains into dollars which were sent abroad. It never occurs to these privatised companies to deal with their present difficulties by repatriating those profits.

These previously public companies are in crisis because of the slowness of their impoverished customers in making payments. For example, 40% of Aguas Argentina's customers are in arrears. In the last months, 800,000

telephones have been disconnected, 20,000 cell phones were returned and thousands of payments for cable TV had to be annulled. In pesos, these tariffs are impossibly high for Argentineans and although they are a bargain in terms of dollars, the tariffs are not providing sufficient income to keep these companies profitable. In the past, they took on heavy foreign exchange debt loads at the same time they distributed massive dividends to their shareholders.

The privileges granted by the government to the privatised companies are a hindrance to any economic rejuvenation that would be favourable to the peoples' interest. Only the re-nationalization of these companies, without any kind of indemnification, will permit the restructuring of these enterprises in terms of national economic priorities, lowering of tariffs and the securing of investment, an initiative which differs from another two alternatives, much debated at the present time, the 'nationalization' of the financial losses and the re-negotiation of their contracts with the authorities.

The first alternative is now in place with the return of the Azurix water company to the province of Buenos Aires. Its dealerships transferred their business to the provincial government when the business stopped being profitable. The same thing could happen to Aerolineas (which the Marsans group took over during the privatisation process, and failed to rehabilitate), to the postal services (which Francisco Macri holds onto without paying royalties for the concessions he was given) and to the railways (that Techint wants to return to the public sector).

Few voices, on the other hand, are heard favouring the re-nationalization of YPF-Repsol, which profits from a flourishing business of plundering previously discovered natural resource deposits. At the present rate of exploitation of this natural resource, a future generalized shortage is ensured of these combustibles. Some economists talk of re-nationalizing the YPF-Repsol, but they think that the compensation required to pay these appropriators would aggravate the government's severe fiscal losses; thus

they happily proclaim: "Are we going to indebt ourselves to recover YPF?" (D Carbonetto).

The second alternative of re-negotiating the contracts, is defended by those who think that "now is not the time for re-nationalization" because the 'political context' is unfavourable (D Aspiazu). The massive repudiation by the population of Argentina's privatisation frauds does not seem to register with the people who propose re-negotiations, nor do they these people take into account that the delay of implementing re-nationalization deepens the obsolescence of these companies and accelerates the stripping of their assets (such as, for example, what happened in Argentina during the nationalizations in the middle of the twentieth century).

The irregularities committed by the privatised companies, and their super profits, alone justifies their re-nationalization without indemnification, because these businesses have broken everyone of their contracts and have carried out proven frauds. But such a juridical rational lacks usefulness in any re-negotiation with them, because the privatised companies do not take responsibility for their past sins, nor are they disposed to relinquishing their captive markets.

Control or a Monopoly of Foreign Trade?

The spectacular speculative currency exchange of the last four months illustrates the negative consequence of a devaluation process that is not accompanied by government imposed exchange controls and the imposing of a monopoly over foreign trade. The dollar shot from 1.4 to 3.0 pesos because the exporters extracted three billion dollars from the financial system through currency speculation and the liquidating their foreign exchange holdings, at the best price. The management of this activity is controlled by no more than twenty businesses who also resort to the smuggling of goods and trickery

through their invoice systems. With the obvious complicity of government functionaries, Cargill, Dreyfus, Bunge, Repsol, Gregorios Perez Companc and Techint participated in currency speculation, simply by disregarding the legal dates that were set by the government for the liquidation of these companies' foreign exchange holdings.

Some economists, who were enthusiastic promoters of the government's devaluation policy and who at the time were members of Duhalde's cabinet, and who demanded the liquidation of the country's large debts, now think that a better management of the government's resources achieved through increase in its income will be sufficient to cause the government's financial resources to increase counteracting the exchange manoeuvres and avoiding the inflationary impact of a climbing dollar (M. del Pont). It would have been nice of them, however, to have shown the feasibility of such measures during their time in government, instead of now proposing them as an idea for the future.

But, meanwhile, they forget there exists a more elementary method to counteract currency exchange manipulation, that is, to first of all carry out sanctions against those businesses who are speculating and then proceed with their expropriation if they persist in their illegal practises. The surplus achieved through increases in income might moderate the inflationary effect of the devaluation, but will not solve the problem of the scarcity of export products that accompanied the devaluation of the peso. To achieve this, direct, democratic control of prices and control of the channels of distribution is needed, along with the opening of the companies' books to allow all of society to know the truth about the their costs, their prices and profits.



Many economists who welcomed the peso devaluation as a promissory or inevitable event, now also state that government's "management of the

devaluation was irresponsible", because a 'complementary plan' was not included. But this is only hypothetical talk: "if such a such happens...then something else will happen". In the reality of what took place, the currency devaluation produced what they were all looking for: a confiscation of people's incomes to benefit the capitalists.

Basing themselves on the same experience of the last months, the supporters of the idea of "jump-starting the economy first and negotiating with the IMF afterwards" propose "to discipline the exporters...and do something to prevent the flight" of foreign exchange (M. del Pont). But this control will never be effective without the state monopoly of foreign commerce, because the exporting companies' currency traders are expert manipulators of the behaviour of the dollar. Only state management under the direct supervision of the people's organizations will ensure that the foreign exchange generated by the workers will be utilized to reactivate production.

The current financial crisis is also inducing a shut down of the economy as a consequence of the collapse of imports, which fell 60% in the first four months of this year. External purchases by the country probably will come in at a third of the average of recent years, converting into a post-devaluation reality, the slogan "to live with what is ours". This restriction justifies additionally the state management of foreign commerce because it assures the rational acquisition of imports, avoiding the lavish squandering of money.

Architects of Re-industrialization

The current industrial breakdown propels the country towards an endless ruination. The latest estimations indicate that in 2002, after four years of depression, the gross domestic product will fall between 10% and 15%. The slump of the first three months has propelled us to a 1970's level of production. The most optimistic forecast anticipates it will

take two years to recover and reach the same volume of production which existed in 1998.

That is why we must begin with a plan for re-industrialization based on a programme of public works, construction of dwellings, hospitals and schools, along with the broadening of accessible lines of credit for the small producers of Argentina's interior. Those who benefit from this plan must be the unemployed, the workers, the small commercial enterprises and co-operative farmers, but never the big businesses. For decades, those capitalists received state sinecures to set up inefficient businesses to exploit the workers and enrich themselves through financial fraud such as in the erecting of car assembly plants under the government's policy of 'promoting industry'.

The incapacity or lack of interest of the national businesses in developing the productive profile of the country is an unquestionable fact. During the dollar convertibility period they sold off their businesses and transferred their net worth outside the country. From the beginning of the depression they have accelerated the process of dismantling industry, leaving millions without work. The national bourgeoisie knows much better its way around the government office in charge of liquidating debts than in taking any activity to generating new undertakings. That is why a plan of re-industrialization under their leadership, or with their participation, will not take us anywhere. Even the customs protection measure for local industry, that are indispensable to defend small businesses, cannot be used to shore up those groups who provoked the de-industrialization of the last three decades.

The workers are the only ones who can craft a viable plan of economic construction. Because of their struggle to prevent firings, their struggle to re-open businesses and to reorganize their hours of work, they have had important experiences which lead them towards direct management. The examples of the Brukman textile plant and Zanon Ceramics are the best known of a broad list of businesses abandoned by their owners and taken

over by the workers. In general, when workers have shown they can manage the plants quite normally, the big business people wake up and begin to instigate judicial orders to oust them. These experiences also illustrate how an industrial rationalization in the direction of producing essential goods could be implemented, if the municipalities, provinces and the national state, established economic priorities whereby they would focus the purchases of their supplies on the businesses which are managed by workers.

Workers' management is the best reply to questions about the immediate growth again of business activity. It would protect jobs and it gives us a view of a future industrial plan for the economy. This state segment could be the high point of the re-industrialization process, especially if it succeeds in developing forms of popular participation and direct control of management by part or the whole of the work force.

Scenarios, Alternatives and Gambles

Until now, the devaluation has impoverished the workers without unleashing a spiral of hyperinflation. There were a limited increase in prices before the devaluation of the peso, that exceeded all the recent precedents of the financial breakdowns in Russia, Mexico, Brazil and South East Asia. In Argentina, the relationship that will finally prevail between the devaluation of the currency and inflation, will show which sectors of the ruling class benefit or suffer harm as a result of this change. Duhalde has attempted to balance off against each other, all the various groups who make up Argentina's 'establishment', but this conciliation has now come to an end. The demands of the sector that until now has been the most privileged - the creditors and the IMF - will prevent any special deal taking place.

The adjustments that the IMF is demanding are so ferocious that it raises to centre stage not only the fate

of the workers and the unemployed but also the fate of the great factions of local capitalists. Through the daily supervision of reports to the public, through dictating orders to government functionaries and establishing the week's agenda in press conferences, Virey Singh has played all his cards in favour of the banks and foreign companies and against the interests of the local business groups. He demanded a halt to exports and a halt to taxes on the currency exchange, together with the elimination of levels of competition and changes to the laws regarding bankruptcy and economic subversion.

With some difficulty, the redistribution of the ownership of many enterprises is underway, but only because of the economic slump. Also, a phase has begun in the crises that could see the economy bypass hyperinflation and which include a period of special kinds of fixed currency exchange ratios.

The gravity of the crisis also has also led to unthinkable proposals for a way out of the debacle, such as by implementing the 'colonizing' proposal of R.Dornbursch, of putting a team from the IMF in control of the Economics Ministry. This alternative is not a whim but forms part of a strategic project of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas and is aimed at securing the American appropriation of Argentinean or European, especially Spanish, assets.

This threat explains the growing echo among ruling circles for proposals to suspend negotiations with the IMF to try out some way to independently revive the economy and at the same time limit a new wave of foreign control. But this defensive programme - synthesized in the 'Plan Fenix' - does not outline any method to surmount the three causes of the crisis in Argentina: the failure of the neo-liberal model, the peripheral nature of the national economy in relationship to that of the developed countries, and the specific character of its national capitalist class.

The only way to act positively and simultaneously on these three fronts is through a system of planning, based on democratic management and the collective ownership of the principal

levers of the economy. These measures would permit the removal of the tyranny of profits, blind competition, market irrationality and allow the rational management of the

key sectors of the productive process. Socialism is the reply to a degradation that is without precedent and is now endured by Argentines. The hour has arrived to make a choice: either

the bankers or the people, either the large corporations or the workers, either misery or well-being. And this alternative is boiled down to a simple choice: them or us.

From alternation to the need for an alternative

15 June 2002, by **Badara Ndiaye**



This model of development and management of the country was accompanied by a growing inequality between and inside towns and regions, strengthening centrifugal forces of which the most significant is the guerrilla struggle led by the Mouvement des Forces de Casamance (MFDC) in the Casamance region.

Faced with this situation strategies of social resistance have developed along with opposition to the policies implemented by the PS in the framework of structural adjustment.

Crisis of the PS

Throughout the 40 years of PS rule, the opposition denounced its fraudulent elections, monopolizing of the media and brutal repression of trade unions.

Through campaigns of consciousness raising and information at both national and international levels the opposition won space for expression embodied in the electoral code, as well as the right to hold public meetings without restriction.

These points of support have been used to profoundly undermine the political and moral authority of a PS sapped by often deadly internecine wars, in a context of confusion between the management of the state and that of the PS.

All this was reflected inside the PS, from base to summit, leading to the defection of leaders at all levels to other parties and the creation of new ones; the Alliance des forces de progrès (AFP) led by a former PS Prime Minister who became prime minister during the transition, the Union pour le renouveau démocratique (URD) led by Diouf's former Interior Minister, the Parti pour le progrès et la citoyenneté (PPC) created by the mayor of the town of Rufisque and so on.

Other problems include conflicts with Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau which threaten to destabilize the West African sub region (massacres, harassment at borders and so on).

On the eve of the elections of March 2000, the PS was undermined by upheavals, with its first secretary, Ousmane Tanor Dieng, joining the opposition and a breakdown of communication between Abdou Diouf (president of the Republic and the PS) and the Senegalese people.

Social crises

The CNTS (Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Senegal) is the union federation organizing the numerical majority of workers and is linked to the PS through ideology and 'responsible participation', guaranteeing its leaders emoluments and impunity against any attempt to challenge the social bases of the regime. The existence of a combative federation led by Mademba Sock, the

Union nationale des syndicats autonomes du Senegal (UNSAS), has been a powerful instrument in social resistance in strategic sectors like health, electricity, post and telecommunications, education and social security.

The UNSAS has contributed to a rejection of 'responsible participation' in the union movement, weakening a key pillar of the PS. Other union federations (CSA, UDTs, CGTDS and so on) have also contributed to this process of independent recomposition and a break with 'responsible participation'. The struggles of the local federations of the CNTS have also contributed to the process.

The response of the PS was articulated around an institutional and social opening by cooption inside the Social and Economic Council of all the combative union organizations including the UNSAS. Also there were proposals of participation in enlarge presidential majority governments as well as repression (arrest of UNSAS leaders, dismissals for union activity, challenges to the right to work and so on).

Youth

Young people in the schools and popular neighbourhoods, characterized by Abdou Diouf as 'unhealthy youth' during the urban insurrections of 1988, have progressively grown aware of the necessity of participation in mass struggles, political battles and

electoral campaigns.

Since 1988, youth has distinguished itself from the PS though struggles in schools and universities and in neighbourhoods and villages, struggles against unemployment and in defence of civil liberties, while condemning the attitude of the electoralist parties and political compromises dangerous for the country (participation in enlarged majority governments and so on).

The response of Diouf and the PS was: the creation of the National Council of Youth (CNJS) whose relations with the political youth have been conflictual; the holding of youth parliaments without results or perspectives; and the definition and implementation of policies of insecure work as recommended by the World Bank without social guarantees or real waged incomes. Meanwhile, the government undertook reforms that have accelerated the crisis in the universities and schools.

The peripheral regions

In the execution of its policies the PS has given a weak priority to the peripheral regions of Senegal, which for some years have experienced difficulties because of infrastructural deficiencies (roads, hospitals, training centres and so on.), difficulties in access to radio and television, new information and communication technologies and so on. This situation has led to frustration and mass protests in the northern, eastern and southern prefectures.

The high point is the situation in Casamance where for 20 years there have been problems linked to the land question and structural adjustment policies which have modified the whole local economy and restructured age old relations between local peoples, with a new redistribution of forces benefiting people from other parts of the country.

Another decisive subjective factor is that the people of Casamance rightly had the feeling of being marginalized by the regime. Separated by Gambia

from the rest of Senegal, Casamance possesses enormous agricultural potential that has not been exploited for the benefit of its people.

Finally, sub regional geopolitics has a direct effect on the dynamic of struggle of the Mouvement démocratique des forces de Casamance (MFDC). General Ansoumana Mané

holds the real power in Guinea Bissau and protects Salif Sadio, a factional leader in the MFDC, whose forces fought against Nino Vieyra, Guinea-Bissau's head of state between 1998 and 1999. Gambia also shelters members of the MFDC. Such a situation has created instability in the south of the country and in relations with our neighbours.

The response in Casamance has been the division of the zone into two regions - Ziguinchor and Kolda - and their militarisation with the aim of repressing the MFDC. A general was made military governor. However, the MFDC remains a significant social force despite its internal divisions. Hence the state has combined repression with the establishment of mediation commissions. Direct negotiations (the Cacheu accords in Guinea-Bissau in 1991, Banjul negotiations 1994-1998 and so on) failed because there was a plurality of interlocutors facing the MFDC and the MFDC itself was divided into several tendencies. While the MFDC spoke of independence for Casamance, the regime completely rejected the idea of partition and stressed the indivisibility of Senegal. The conflict has continued, with death and destruction, showing the total inability of the PS to lead a peace process.

The social question

The army participated in different interventions integrated with UN missions and in the framework of Diouf's bellicose policy for which promised bonuses were not paid. For the first time in Senegal's history, a part of the army emerged from the barracks and occupied the street in protest. The military hierarchy was shaken, as was Diouf.

The resistance unfolded against a background of the corruption of the regime's leaders, poverty, unemployment and growing social difficulties, leading to the electoral defeat of the PS in the elections of March 19, 2000.

Defeat of the PS

For 20 years, all opposition tendencies had participated in presidential, legislative and local elections without ever beating the PS. This situation was explained by the division between the political parties; the people, in various demonstrations, demanded a common front to defeat the PS.

What facilitated the unity of the parties was firstly the key role played by And-Jef/PADS which contributed to the creation of the Coalition Alternance 2000 (CA 2000). The forces of the opposition (nationalist and left) had taken their distance from the PDS, which often seemed close to the PS when the people sought the overthrow of the latter (participation in a round table in 1988 when the urban insurrections led by the Popular Resistance Committees threatened Diouf, participation in enlarged majority governments and so on).

High in political credibility because of its intransigence towards the PS and its refusal to participate in any form of government, the PADS created an electoral alliance to defeat the PS around a programme of transition.

Another equally important factor was the creation of the Front pour la Transparence des Élections (FRTE) uniting all the opposition parties for transparency in the elections and resistance to fraud by the PS.

Finally, another political framework grouping other opposition forces was created around former PS prime minister, Moustapha Niasse, and it participated actively in the opposition forces.

This alliance of the main left forces (And-Jef/PADS, Ligue démocratique /Mouvement pour le Parti du travail and Parti pour l'indépendance et le travail) and the liberals of the PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais)

inside CA 2000 was justified by the political and social situation and the objectives expressed through the programme of CA 2000.

During colonization Senegal was one of the most powerful centres of political and trade union resistance in Africa, as was shown by the violent demonstrations against General De Gaulle's visit to Dakar in 1958 during the referendum on independence, as well as the strikes of the Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire (UGETAN) which led to the first Labour Code, whose gains are now being dismantled by the World Bank. After independence, the Union progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS) became the PS and set itself to dismantling all these gains in a perspective of submission to French imperialist domination. In Senegalese mass consciousness, an experience of victory was needed so that these gains were not definitively lost.

Moreover, the programme of the 2000 was an appeal to a real democratic revolution through its main objectives: setting up a transitional government; dismantling the PS party-state to create an enlarged and consolidated space of liberties favourable to more radical political action; the struggle against corruption; dissolution of the National Assembly; adoption of a new constitution favourable to democracy; abandonment of political, economic and social choices made by the PS in favour of meeting the basic needs of the people; revision of the accords linking us with France.

This democratic programme concentrating the demands of the people justified the tactical choice of alliance with the liberals, all the more so in that the project of a left front/pole launched by the PADS did not find a favourable echo. On this basis and in these conditions candidate Wade of the PDS won at the second round with the support of the majority of opposition parties (60% of the vote against 40% for the PS) and set up a 'government of transition'.

The left and the

'government of transition'

The programme of transition posited emergency measures concerning institutional reforms, the auditing of state companies managed by the old PS team, the broadening of civil liberties and so on.

The left could have refused to participate in the government but it would have been incomprehensible for the people that, after having fought for 40 years and paid a heavy human price for Diouf's defeat, for broadened freedoms, against corruption, for the reparation of injustices, the left did not participate at the institutional level in finishing off the struggle which had begun on the electoral terrain.

For And-JEF/PADS, participation in the transitional government should mean the pursuit of the fight both at social and institutional levels for political hegemony over the urban and rural masses. Thus the government should not be a space of consensus around different axes of those defined in the programme of transition and its dynamic. And participation should not mean reining in the trade union movement and the other social instruments of combat. It should mean also autonomy in the formulation and expression of the parties in the government.

This vision justified and explained the presence of the left in the transitional government. The masses did not vote for Wade but against Diouf - it was a protest against the PS regime. The new relationship of forces should be built resting on the support of the state apparatus. The involvement of the left at the governmental level was conceived as a means of accumulation of forces with a view to a more systematic political and social structuring.

Lost illusions of alternation

The new President took office on the basis of the old constitution, which

made Diouf a quasi-monarch. Until January 7, 2001 this constitution, which said that the president of the republic defined the politics of the nation, was in force. But Wade did not immediately dissolve the National Assembly with a PS majority and he named as transitional prime minister Moustapha Niasse, of the Alliance des Forces et progrès (AFP), a party which represented 18% of the electorate and which did not participate in CA 2000.

The transition did not mean the end of social struggles; indeed they took on a certain breadth. But the transition also meant repression in Casamance. Two journalists were arrested for 'damaging peace efforts'. Amath Dansokho, general secretary of the PIT, was expelled from the government for demanding that commitments made in the context of the transition be respected.

In the opinion of this writer, And-Jef/PADS should have quit the government after the death in still unclear circumstances of the student Balla Gaye, a member of AJ/PADS, following a big student struggle against structural adjustment in education. Its ministers should have resigned given the failure of the government to fulfil commitments made by CA 2000.

Finally, the left has no place in a neo-liberal government. Nothing can justify this disastrous political position. 'Governmental entryism' leads to a political institutionalisation which is distant from the concerns of the people to the profit of a 'political class', leading to political combinations without principles or dignity. This has sown doubt in the minds of several radical activists in the PADS who, disorientated, have left the party.

Wade's Republic?

The increasingly obvious danger is that a neo-liberal party-state - the Republic of Wade - replaces the PS party-state. Already membership of the ruling party seems to be a precondition for acceding to certain responsibilities. Such a transformation cannot happen under a finished form without a double movement: a social

democratisation of the main left political forces (particularly And-Jef/PADS) and a taming of the trade union movement. The second will be much more difficult, or at least involves risks the liberals are not currently ready to run.

The first is underway in an unfinished form. The process of social democratisation of some left political forces (including And-Jef/PADS) currently underway has deep social roots. Inside PADS, the debate on joining the Socialist International, which took place at the congress of February 1998, was revealing; the rejection of this project demonstrated the existence inside the party of a radical current that leads mass struggles. The ability of this current to lead the combat against the party's adaptation to neo-liberal demands will determine the political profile of And-Jef/PADS: social democratic or revolutionary radical.

For the democratic future of Senegal and struggles in the west African sub region, the completion of the social democratisation of the PADS would mean a grave setback and the end of the immense hopes raised on the African continent by this unification of the forces of the radical left, initially undertaken in 1991.

The constitutional referendum of January 7, 2001, instead of being a convocation around a vision of rupture, became a veritable plebiscite on Wade and the liberals. The alliance between the main political forces in the regime and other forces of the opposition led to a 'yes' vote of more than 95%.

On first sight, the new Constitution contained advances, banning degrading practices like the excision of women and forced marriage. Also women's right to own land was constitutionally recognized (article 15). But the new constitution reproduced the quasi-monarchist presidentialism of its forerunner.

More seriously still, the restrictions on the right to strike seriously threaten civil liberties and the trade union movement. Article 25 recognizes the right to strike, but says this right can 'in no way impinge on the freedom to

work or put the enterprise in danger'. This article is full of dangers and is a concession to the employers and the international financial institutions who increasingly demand the dismantling of social gains.

The measures adopted reflect an enormous concentration of powers in the hands of the President and the strategic levers for the restoration of the party-state.

A conflictual process of restoration

Because it presupposes the subjection of political forces capable of providing a counterweight to its hegemonic drive, as well as the domestication of the union movement, the restoration of the party-state is a process that can only be conflictual. Thus, after the eviction of the PIT from the government, the neo-liberals pursued their offensive in forcing the resignation of Moustapha Niasse (AFP) from the post of prime minister.

The process of restoration has also a dimension of institutional reform. The regime has systematically oriented towards building a quasi-absolute grip on all the main levers of the state and the central and local civil service.

After winning (with 49% of the votes) the April 2001 parliamentary elections (which saw a setback for AJ/PADS, which had 2 deputies elected against 4 in 1996), the PDS attacked the CNTS trade union federation with a view to gaining a social base. The CNTS Congress was postponed twice because of attempts by the oil industry section (supported by the PDS) to take over the union. Their defeat was a strong signal of resistance to the process of restoration underway and the existence of a potential to resist the neo-liberal drift.

This was shown again when the regime adopted a VAT rate of 18% conforming to the criteria of convergence of West African Monetary Economic Union. A front of all the union federations forced the government to increase wages by

5-10%. Admittedly wage earners are only 5% of the population and it would have been more just to lower taxes on the prices of basic necessities (rice, oil, sugar, water, electricity and so on). However, in a context of structural adjustment, it was a sizeable victory.

Two years after alternation

The World Bank and the IMF have demanded the privatisation of SENELEC national electricity company. Begun by the PS regime, privatisation has for the moment foundered with the breakdown of negotiations with the buyers.

At the behest of the World Bank the marketing of peanuts, the main activity in rural areas, was privatised. Private operators abandoned the official sales outlets for secondary markets where the sale price was 65 FCFA per kilo against 120 FCFA at the official rate. This has led to a dramatic situation with numerous zones experiencing slump, growing poverty in rural areas and a multiplication of peasant protests. This situation also risks the destabilization of the agricultural industries that play an important role in the redistribution of agricultural incomes.

In the education sector there is open conflict. Instead of publicly trained and recruited teachers the government has followed a policy of employing temporary workers, part-timers and volunteers in violation of the Labour Code and the international conventions of the ILO - this has led to teachers and students launching nationwide strikes for better conditions of work and study.

In a social context where unemployment grows incessantly the trade union movement is in a very specific historical phase. The split of the CNTS into two bodies (CNTS and CNTS-FC, the latter led by neo-liberals) has led to real tension with the union centre being set on fire by elements supposedly led by the CNTS-FC tendency.

The other tendency, led by the PS,

practices unity in action with the CSA and steers towards social confrontation. Employers say that 40% of jobs have been lost in 20 years, in other words precisely over the period of structural adjustment. Already different sectors have entered in struggle and confronted the police. The prime minister has accused the workers of 'disturbing the public order' (action has been taken by caretakers, municipal workers, school and college students, teachers, transport sector, post, banks and financial establishments and so on). It is a front against the government's draft social charter, a means of institutionalising the unions and inserting them in the bodies of 'responsible participation'. It is also the beginning of the end of the honeymoon period for the Wade government.

Elections, May 12, 2002

To consolidate its power, the PDS must win a majority in the elections of May 12, 2002. The government has

dissolved the local collectivities set up by Diouf, which were overwhelmingly under PS control and played no positive social role. However, they have been replaced by 'special delegations' whose composition has been contested because in some areas neo-liberal activists have been nominated by the regime. Then the PDS opposed the creation of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), which was a common demand of the opposition before March 2000. Throughout all this, the PDS was riven by often very violent internal wars, including on the university campuses.

The situation it is entering is in contradiction with the project of building a stable mass social base. Le PDS faces a complex situation: the 21 parties which are members of or who support the government have come together in a unitary framework called CAP 21 to form a common list against the opposition bloc, united inside the CPC (Coordination des partis de l'opposition) which will also present a common list.

The AJ/PADS and the LD/MPT (another left party in the government)

have just held a joint press conference to denounce the fact that the PDS wants to grab all the strategic positions on the electoral lists, with a background of threats to quit the government. If some hardline sectors of the PDS would welcome this, to make room for their neo-liberal political clientele, others are ready to make concessions to give the government a real social stability. While the electoral weight of these two parties is weaker than that of the PDS or the AFP or even the PS, they are strong in the autonomous trade union movement whose combativity threatens the restoration - while the PDS has no significant political presence in the union movement. Already rank and file activists of the AJ/PADS and LD/MPT have decided to contest the elections in their areas on their own lists, without the PDS. It is unclear whether pressure from the top will make them back off, but what is certain is that the May 12 elections will affect the configuration of the government, the political alliances, the attitude of the unions, the relation of forces between the governing parties and the recomposition of political forces.

Being a woman in Senegal

15 June 2002, by **Bamby Sumarée**



A In my country, they suffer very much from illiteracy, the super exploitation of their labour power in the workplace and deep-rooted cultural prejudices. They represent 52% of the total population of the country but are excluded from the formal system of employment where they represent less than 10%. On the other hand, they are in a majority in the informal sector (small traders, retail sales in the market and so on) with average daily incomes of around 20 FF. Admittedly, there are women who are involved in wholesale trade,

but they are far from numerous. They are also in insecure employment in the food and fishing industry or they are temporary workers without social protection or safeguards against the employers.

Q Does that mean there are feminist movements that fight against this situation? And how do the parties of left like the PADS tackle the question?

A In the early 1970s, there were in Senegal radical feminists who blazed a trail for today's struggles, like Marie Angélique Savané. Today feminism is connected much more with respect for the dignity of women, with social,

political and economic emancipation, while being rooted in women's positive cultural values. The battle for dignity is a stake for society. Thus, women express themselves through organizations, associations and groupings to reinforce solidarity between themselves and with men. It should be said that the discourse is not directly that of a break with capitalism, but in the long term, the requirement of an equalization of chances between men and women will come up against certain structures with a dynamic of radical opposition to social and cultural rigidities. Women also assert their femininity and their right to better health because the death rate is 510 per 100,000 in

childbirth. Lastly, it is significant to mention the role played by the NGOs and certain projects for the elimination of illiteracy in national languages. As for And-Jef/PADS, it is openly feminist and advocates parity in equality. As a proof, And-Jef/PADS had a woman as campaign director for the parliamentary elections of April 2001.

Q Does that mean that the political parties accord a significant place to women?

A No. Both the PS and the other parties relegate women to the rank of voting fodder. Even if a woman is now Prime Minister for the first time in our history... It should however be noted that in the parties, women occupy positions like that of or deal with social questions or cultural activities. These are subordinate positions, then. Much remains to be done, especially in terms of political education.

Q Are women unionised?

A In their overwhelming majority, they are in the informal sector and in very insecure employment. This economic structure decreases the possibilities of unionisation, but in the food industry and teaching there has been mass unionisation. Other sectors have seen a strong participation of women both at the level of leadership and in the life of the unions: health, posts and telecommunications. Even if no

woman leads a confederation of workers, the question of gender has become a concern thanks to the NGOs and women's associations and the women in the trade unions. There is progress but a lot more effort is needed.

Q Is there violence against women?

A Yes, a lot. I am a member of an association, the Committee Against Violence Against Women who work to end these practices. They exist in households, workplaces and services in the towns and in the countryside. It can be noted that violence increases with poverty, layoffs of workers and above all the frustration of the people. Female genital mutilation also exists but is forbidden by the new constitution of January 2001 and has been fought by the NGOs, women's associations and so on. There are also women's groups which fight all forms of violence through campaigns of consciousness raising and education.

Q Your party, And-Jef/PADS, voted for the new constitution. Did it improve women's rights?

A As regards women's rights in particular, there are positive decisions: previously, the women who account for 70% of agricultural production did not have the right to own land. In practice, there are some ethnic groups where women could

own fields and land. But this progress is relative because it is goes against tradition in several areas. Even if forced marriage is prohibited by the constitution, the existence of a presidential regime which concentrates power is likely to reduce all these gains, because progress as regards women's rights is real only with the deepening of democracy, liberty and an independent citizenship.

Q How did Senegalese women experience the World Social Forum?

A It should be stressed that the women of our country have begun to develop a spirit which is open to the world. More than 25,000 women met in the centre of the country (in Kaffrine) to prepare for the World March in New York. They realized that the world was in reality a small village and that they shared similar problems with the other women of the world. It was a moment of internationalist solidarity as in Porto Alegre. I was not there, but the women of Senegal and Africa were there and told us about everything that happened, particularly the alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation. Porto Alegre is no longer far from us. In a few months or a few years, we will need 50, 100, or 200 Porto Alegres across the whole world for another globalisation where the dignity of women is completely respected.

Intensified contradictions and people's resistance

15 June 2002, by **Zhang Kai**



After a positive note on the economy, Zhu Rongji reluctantly admitted that 'there exist some problems in the economy and social life that urgently require resolution. They are mainly:

peasants' income growth was slow; in some areas where grain was the main crop and in areas suffering from serious natural calamities, peasant income had reduced; in some places there was serious delay in wage payment; there were difficulties for some factory production and workers' livelihood; there was more pressure of

unemployment; economic structural problems were still unresolved; ecological problems were still quite marked; regional protectionism flourished despite prohibitions; market economic order was wanting rectification; in some sectors or departments, formalism and bureaucratism were serious,

extravagance was acute, and some corrupt phenomena were rather marked; in some units, unlawful appropriation of funds and non-abiding of laws were quite general; serious accidents were frequent, and in some places law and order was not good.'

While Zhu tried to tune down the severity of the problems by qualifying them as happening only in 'some' areas, there were amendments by the Congress delegates, such as deleting the word 'some' from 'some corrupt phenomena were rather marked', to highlight the severity of the problems. As confirmed by XiaoYang who made the Legal Report, in 2001, a total of 20,120 persons were convicted of corruption or bribery, an increase of 44.35% over the previous year.

On the question of the impact of China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Zhu Rongji's reply to an American journalist at a press conference was: 'the soya beans imported to China from the USA is already equivalent to China's total output - 15 million tons. When we wanted to adopt a policy that many countries in the world are implementing, which is to control GM agricultural products, your leaders from the USA came to talk to us about soya beans and said this would affect the USA's export of 1 billion US dollars, you must be more prudent. But you announce you will impose an added 8-30%tariff on China's exported steel products, which will make it impossible for China to export 350 million US dollars' worth of steel to USA.' [8]

Li Changping, a former township party secretary, wrote about the burden on peasants through listing the expenditures of townships and how peasants are expropriated to bear the burden. He estimated that the total amount of annual expenditure for townships were: 80 billion yuan of interest for a debt of 600 billion yuan, 80 billion yuan on salary for teachers, 50 billion yuan on books and facilities, 200 billion yuan on salary for a total of 39 million cadres at the county, township and village levels, 300 billion yuan on expenditure of various departments and bureaus at county, township and village levels. This in all

was already 710 billion yuan. Li estimated that peasants had to bear 70-80% of the expenditures below the county levels, which would be about 400 billion yuan, whereas Zhu Rongji's estimate was a mere 50 billion yuan. [9]

Du Zaixin, the party secretary of Jianli County, Hubei Province, under which was Li Changping's township, said that of the 540 million yuan of debt of townships and villages of that county, the majority was peasants' debt. For example, in Dumu Township, 300 peasant families each had a debt between 12,000 and 15,000 yuan.

The government has not proposed any effective means for tackling these problems. Lu Ming, former Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture, said at the Political Consultative Committee meeting that the state's input into development of agricultural technology and science was very low; it was 6 billion yuan in 1999, a mere 0.4% of the total agricultural output value. [10]



Urban employment has been an acute problem in the last few years, and with China's accession to the WTO, Chinese industries will be facing more serious competition. The official figure of registered unemployment in China was 3.6%, as was reported to the People's Congress by Zeng Peiyan. This means unemployment is at 12 million, including 5 million workers from state-owned factories that have 'temporarily stepped down from their position' and 6.8 million of registered unemployed. In addition, there are 40 million labourers (from the rural redundant labour force of 150 million peasants) that move to the cities to look for jobs. Wen Hui Bao quoted from specialists that the estimated unemployment rate is well above 10%. [11] Some other scholars in China (such as Hu Angang) estimate that the actual unemployment rate is around 20%.

In Liaoning Province in the northeast, once a heavy industrial region, large numbers of factories have gone bankrupt. Half of the labour force has

gone into unemployment. Official figures last year said that half a million people 'stepped down' from their position or had retired or left their job, which amounted to 10% in the whole country. For workers who have 'stepped down' from their position, which means they still have links with the factories, they are supposed to receive a stipend of one to several hundred yuan a month. [12] However, delay in payment is prevalent.

According to a report in the Beijing Evening News, statistics from factories where there are trade unions yield the following figure: in 2000, delayed payment or non-payment of salaries throughout the country amounted to 36.69 billion yuan. In the last two years, labour dispute court cases in Beijing have drastically increased. There were 7,480 in 2000, an increase of 42.9% from the previous year. In January to September 2001, the increase was 60% compared to the same period in 2000. [13] Xiao Yang said that the figure for closed labour dispute cases for 2001 in the whole country was 100,440, an increase of 33% over the previous year.

Reports on worker protests are numerous. The following are reports of worker actions in March 2002 alone. In Daqing, 70,000 workers from an original workforce of 290,000 workers have 'stepped down'; starting from March 11, 50,000 stepped-down workers started a demonstration demanding medical and retirement benefits, and the protest had lasted three weeks. In Liaoning City, from March 11, workers began besieging the government house and sometimes over 30,000 workers from 20 state-owned factories joined the protest. In Heilongjiang Province, stepped-down miners from Fushun City took to the street in mid March, and among their demands were not only payment of salaries, resumption of the right to work, but also accusations of bureaucrats' corruption, cheap sale of public property, and embezzlement of funds. Around March 11, several thousand tractor workers in Urumqi in Xinjiang Province also took to the street and protested against sale of state property and land.

In such massive waves of worker actions and protests, a new sign is the formation of workers' organizations. According to field reports by reporters of Hong Kong's Ming Pao, independent workers' organizations are in formation. Daqing workers formed the 'Ad Hoc Trade Union Committee of Transferred Staff of Daqing Oil Management Bureau', and elected worker representatives. In Liaoyang, an ad hoc organization of 'All Bankrupt and Unemployed Workers of Liaoning Steelworks' was formed, and Yao Fuxin and other worker representatives were elected to negotiate with the government. In

the name of their organization, the workers issued open letters, and representatives elected from different factories fostered links. They demanded that the People's Congress endorse the clause on the 'organizing of independent trade unions' under the International Covenant of Human Rights, so that workers have the right to form independent trade unions and have collective bargaining power. They also demanded punishment of corrupt officials. The government responded by making arrests of worker leaders in some places and pacifying workers in others. They

were particularly vigilant against cross-provincial or cross-sectoral worker linkages. [14]

The current problems reflect the turmoil and unrest in Chinese society after two decades of China's reform policy of opening up to capitalism. They are intensified by China's accession to the WTO. The rise of worker struggles is a collective response to the deterioration of quality of life and acceleration of social injustice.

This article is taken from October Review, Vol 29, Issue 1, March 2002.

Jedwabne is everywhere

15 June 2002, by Stefan Zgliczynski

JT Gross is a historian who emigrated in 1968 as a student oppositionist and only came back to Poland after 1989. In his book he describes the pogrom that took place on July 10, 1941 in a village in eastern Poland, Jedwabne, a little after the occupation of the region by the Nazi army (Jedwabne ended up on the Soviet side of the dividing line in Poland after the Hitler-Stalin pact up until June 22, 1941, when the Nazis attacked the USSR).

This pogrom, which led to the death of 1,600 Jews, was presented in Poland after the Second World War as the deed of the Nazis and some Polish back-up troops, of which several had been punished. A monument to the memory of the victims even says that it was a Hitlerian crime, making no mention of the responsibilities of the local Polish population. What Gross reveals is the absence of Nazi forces in the village on that day (whereas they had taken part in a hunt for Jews in another nearby village some days before, leading to the flight of the Jewish population precisely to Jedwabne) and he describes in a detailed fashion the bestiality of the crime - Jews of all ages who survived the first roundup were assembled in a barn and burnt alive — and the

spontaneous participation of the local Polish population in the genocide. We publish here an article by a Polish radical left activist on the debate aroused by the Gross book.

The Jedwabne affair obliges Poles to make a sorrowful search of their consciences. I hope that it will not lead to a strengthening of anti-Semitic sentiments in our country' - said Aleksander Kwasniewski [15] some months ago when interviewed by the Israeli daily newspaper Yediot Aharanot. Surprising words, for Jews or those who do not live in Poland and do not read the Polish press. Because it was not Jews who killed Poles in Jedwabne, but the other way round. I do not believe the readers of Yediot Aharanot would have been able to understand Kwasniewski. And if they did understand it, so much the worse for us Poles.

*

On July 10 (2001) I was buying some cherries from the market near my home. An afternoon in the capital. In Jedwabne the ceremonies for the sixtieth anniversary of the pogrom had ended. Among the buyers and sellers,

only one theme of conversation.

"I see the Yids are having their celebration," says a middle aged man in front of me buying potatoes.

"Yeah, yeah", says the woman who helps the trader to wrap the vegetables.

"Don't be a Jew! Add some weight", another man says to the trader, who is weighing the tomatoes on the scales.

The trader becomes irate, spits between his teeth, 'the Jew is scum!' and without saying any more serves the vegetables.

"Yeah, yeah", repeats the woman.

The men nod their heads.

*

I did not invent this story. Each of us has witnessed similar things many times. Not before the war, when our country was home to three million Polish citizens of Jewish nationality. Now. In the country where the greatest crime of modern Europe, the Holocaust, took place. In the country where to be Jewish during the war

meant death, whereas after the war it still meant trouble and repression.

*

Nobody can tell me that Poland is not an anti-Semitic country; such assurances sound false, even in the mouths of those who saved Jews during the war. Given the never-ending desecration of Jewish cemeteries and the attacks against synagogues, the offices of Jewish associations and newspapers, people who dare to go on the streets wearing a skullcap. Given the stars of David on gallows scrawled on walls so frequently. Given the innumerable publications whose character can only be compared to the Hitlerian rags. Given the racist language of anti-Semitic insults and insinuations that one can hear on the radio and television, in the pulpits and parliamentary galleries. Given the racist and anti-Semitic murders.

I consider that anti-Semitism is the greatest shame of the Third Republic. A shame that will be washed away by neither the excuses of the president, nor the equivocations of the bishops. A shame that has become our stigma and sign de recognition, our heritage and - virtually - the definer of our identity. For, at the end of the day, what can Poles most surely find agreement on, whether around a vodka in Zabrze, at a party at an aunt's in Krakow, or at congresses from Polonia to Valparaiso? Moreover, what else excites in us the most sacred rage, if not the accusation of anti-Semitism?

*

I know something about it. Because, as the author of some reports on the Polish far right which have been published in the West by organizations involved in the analysis of racism and anti-Semitism here, I have been attacked as a 'traitor' and 'sellout'. And what is most interesting, not only by the scribblers of the far right press but also by deputies - representatives of Poland in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

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Incredulity, anger, hysteria: one can summarize thus the reaction of the Polish media to Jan T. Gross's book 'Neighbors' [16] which describes in detailed fashion how on July 10, 1941 1,600 Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne were burnt alive by their Polish neighbours. These reactions confirm the sad truth that the cases of killings of Jews by Poles during the last war and just after its end remain a taboo subject in Poland. The false image of Poland as a country 'without butchers' and 'without Quislings', which has always been the victim of conspiracies, treason and aggression from the neighbouring countries and foreign minorities, in a word the Messianic vision of Poland suffering for the sins of the world, cultivated by the rightwing press and the supposedly 'national' newspapers, has broadly infected the milieus which up until now had resisted this schema.

Certainly, the least surprising commentaries were those in the rightwing and 'national' press, and the most surprising the article published by Trybuna. [17] But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

*

For Leszek Bubel, who edits high circulation publications which are anti-Semitic in the extreme, like the bimonthly Tylko Polska ('Only Poland') and Kwartalnik Narodowy ('National Quarterly'), the Jedwabne affair is from beginning to end no more than a Jewish provocation having as its goal to definitively dishonour Poland in the eyes of the world, as a country of anti-Semites and eaters of Jews. "On numerous occasions," writes Bubel, "in the course of these recent years the representatives of the highest bodies of the state have presented apologies for crimes, persecutions and pogroms that Poles never committed". [18]

One of these authors qualifies the information concerning the crime at Jedwabne as "material full of lies and deformations" which "in a surprising manner are in synch with the new Jewish claims concerning the

recuperation of so-called goods and of compensation(!) for mythical Polish 'crimes'. [19]" For Bubel and his authors this is all another Jewish anti-Polish provocation, for the Poles took no part in the massacre of 60 years ago. [20]

Mysl Polska ('Polish Thought') and Nasza Polska ('Our Poland') employ a similar style to describe Jedwabne. The editorial board of the latter, in their 'open letter to Leon Kieres - president of the Institute of National Memory' (called here the 'Institute of National Forgetting') - reports that 'the inhabitants of Jedwabne, who remember the period of Soviet and German occupation in their town, have unanimously affirmed that the murder of the Jewish population was the deed of the Germans, and this board demanded that the Institute clarifies instead "the pogrom of the Polish population of the village of Koniuchy in 1944" [carried out by 'Jewish communist partisans'] and "the aspect of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet occupier". [21]

The editors protest firmly against the apologies made to the Jews for the crime of Jedwabne in the name of the Poles by president Kwasniewski, saying that it is rather Jews who should apologize to Poles for the crimes of Communism for which they supposedly bear responsibility. [22]

The Catholic weekly Niedziela ('Sunday'), edited by the metropolitan Curia of Czestochowa, published a piece by Jerzy Robert Nowak, entitled '100 lies of JT Gross'. while in the same newspaper the defence of the good name of the inhabitants of Jedwabne was also undertaken by the collaborator of 'Radio Maryja' [23] and president of the Commission of Culture of the Senate, senator Krystyna Czuba. [24]

In Glos, [25] edited by Antoni Macierewicz, a lecturer at the Catholic University of Lublin, Ryszard Bender, qualified Gross's theses as 'phantasmagoria' and 'lies'. The newspaper develops a vision of a Judeo-Communist conspiracy which, under the pretext of the 'Jedwabne affair', has as its goal to compromise Poland and the Polish in the eyes of the world and whose essence is 'the

systematic aspiration to a durable submission and exploitation of Poland'. [26]



Anti-Bolshevik and anti-semitic poster of Trotsky used by the White Russian army in 1919. Nasz Dziennik ('Our Daily') on March 3-4, 2000 published over three and a half columns an interview with Marek Jan Chodakiewicz ('Jedwabne is only a beginning') who laments the fact that Poland's past is written "by the same team who wrote under the leadership of Moscow and which is ready today to write under the diktat of Brussels or anyone who will find them a foreign account". What Chodakiewicz, author of the book *The Jews and the Poles 1918-1955*. Coexistence-Extermination-Communism, did not say is completed by Malgorzata Rutkowska, who conducts the interview. Here we find the "completely unfounded accusations of the Warsaw insurgents killing Jews in the famous article by Michal Cichy published some years ago by *Gazeta Wyborcza*", here we find the affirmation that "Cichy and Gross use the same excessively dishonest methodology; manipulation of sources, half-truths and lies", and that "what is at stake is not so much the truth as 'the revalorization' of History so as to render the Poles responsible for the Holocaust."

Finally Rutkowska accuses Gross "of having isolated the events of Jedwabne from the historic context", that is "of the involvement of Jews inside the security apparatus and regime 'from the first soviets' in Jedwabne" and says, in the name of all Poles obviously, that so far as Jedwabne is concerned "we have no intention of beating our breasts over crimes that were not ours".

An article by Bogumil Lozinski and Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz. "Nobody asked the neighbours", which appeared in *Zycie* ('Life') of March 3-4, 2001, makes the same points. The authors claim that the crime at Jedwabne was carried out by the Germans with the help of local 'hooligans and bandits' who had been

'compelled' to participate. "If it could happen that a Pole could set upon a Jew", says RP Kemblinski "it is above all because they considered the Jews as Soviet collaborators, some revenging themselves for the suffering of those close to them". However, "according to the Jedwabnians these were isolated cases", conclude these authors.

The views of Professor RP Waldemar Chrostowski, former co-president of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews (he resigned in February 1998 to protest against "the escalation of Jewish demands"), presented in the interview 'What prevents dialogue?' carried out by Pawel Paliwoda, [27] are of the same hue. The professor begins with a total critique of Gross's book, which is compared to the "product of a sick imagination", the book *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosinski (interestingly the journalist from Trybuna, Jakub Kopec, makes the same comparison, as we will see). [28] "This book begins with wild anti-Polish and anti-Catholic ravings." He continues in a familiar anti-Semitic style, attempting to 'understand' the anti-Jewish sentiments among some Poles (that is the killers): Jewish collaboration with the NKVD, [29] the silence of rich American Jews during the Holocaust and so on. It is then natural that he considers the idea of apologising to the Jews for Jedwabne as 'unhealthy' and 'humiliating' for the Poles. The main problem in Polish-Jewish relations resides, in his view, in the fact that Jews, unlike Poles, "do not wish to take account of a period of their recent history".

The alleged collaboration of Jews with the Soviet repressive apparatus directed against the members of the Polish resistance, which should - according to the authors of the newspapers cited - explain 'and some' the anti-Jewish behaviour of the Poles in the course of the Holocaust, is taken up and developed by Tomasz Strzembosz. Both in the interview given to *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, [30] and the copious article entitled 'The collaboration passed over in silence' published by *Rzeczpospolita*, [31] Strzembosz not only rejects Gross's thesis, according to which the perpetrators of the massacre in Jedwabne were Poles, but argues that

Polish enmity towards the Jews in eastern Poland was comprehensible and had a patriotic basis; the Jews 'had betrayed' by collaborating, 'weapons in hand' with the occupier, in this case the USSR.

In another article, [32] Strzembosz deals with the film by Agnieszka Arnold Neighbours, in which the witnesses reveal revolting details on the murder 60 years ago. Strzembosz assures us with authority; it is "an obvious manipulation".

An article by Jakub Kopec 'Holocaust in Jedwabne' subtitled: 'Jan Tomasz Gross's book deceives effectively', published on February 23, 2001 by Trybuna, demands a 'scientific' analysis of Gross's book. [33] To reject entirely Gross's thesis on the 1,600 Jews burned in a barn it is enough, says Kopec, simply to "read a text on the construction of barns in Jedwabne and its environs. Taking account of the marshy character of the lands situated between the Biebrza and Narew rivers... the barns should not be big." And further: "A scientist from Opole [Dariusz Ratajczak, collaborator of Bubel, who in a book which he has edited himself questioned the existence of the gas chambers at Auschwitz - SZ], who has challenged the Holocaust in general, has calculated, that at most 100 were burnt in the barn. And although the number of victims is of little importance for the moral judgment of the crime, we - enlightened men and struck by the ignominy of the collective murder at Jedwabne - we would make the hypothesis that in the barn five times more victims would have been burnt alive. There are still 1,000 missing".

Gazeta Wyborcza, [34] which has devoted proportionally the most space to the discussion on Gross's book, would seem purely academic if not incomprehensibly subtle for the readers and editors of the above mentioned titles. The authors of *Gazeta Wyborcza* - with the exception of the surprising statement by Ryszard Bugaj [35] as if drawn into the open by the bulletins of Bubel, claim that "supporters of the thesis of an anti-Semitic Poland serves also to justify material demands on Poland" and do not ask "if this really happened?" or

"how did this happen?" I cannot understand how eminent intellectuals like Adam Michnik or Jacek Zakowski, [36] can feel 'harassed' by the crime of Jedwabne and 'sick' at the appearance of Gross's book or fall back on an anti-Semitic argument: "several witnesses concerning Jedwabne indicate that an Aryan shop could not maintain itself there before the war because retail trade was entirely in the hands of Jewish traders. The economic struggle, including between artisans, could bring forth strong emotions. Thus in the reality and the criminal folly of the period such sentiments could find their place"; "Soviet totalitarianism had contributed to the creation of a new list of offences" and the anti-Semitic accusations of the Jews of Jedwabne "were founded on personal experiences". [37] Zakowski himself begrudges the Jews for their passivity

before death, because they went tranquilly "like sheep" to the abattoir.

Such formulations are not astonishing in the right wing press, which in its great majority has anti-Semitism as its basis; nor, to a still greater extent in some Catholic far right press, where it is the rule. But in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a daily reputed for its courage to treat of the so-called difficult themes, which de-idealise the history of Poland and the Poles? In a newspaper which more than any other is sensitive to intolerance, racism and xenophobia?

This stems in my opinion from the attempt to rationalize something, which cannot be rationalized, to explain the inexplicable and understand what cannot be understood. Should we try? Take care. We still have some other undiscovered skeletons in the cupboard of our

recent history. Allow me to mention only the case of the liquidation of detachments of Jewish and Soviet partisans by the NSZ and AK formations, [38] the deportations and massacres of the German and Ukrainian populations after the war, the camp for Germans at Łambinowice, the 'Vistula' action. [39] I imagine that the discussion around one of these themes (and I am sure that sooner or later it will take place) will resemble that on Jedwabne. And what I fear is that again people will try to explain the crime or refuse to admit it. Indifferent, like those who pass every day in the streets of our towns without looking at the gallows bearing stars of David scrawled on the walls.

This article appeared in number 13 of the review of the radical left, *Lewa Noga* ('With the left foot'), October 2001.

World Cup Campaign for Trade Union Rights in Korea

15 June 2002, by Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

KCTU and Korean workers extend warm welcome to all the football teams and all football lovers coming to Korea for the 2002 Korea-Japan FIFA World Cup.

KCTU, however, feels it is important to remind ourselves that not being among the 32 is in no way a sign of failure or shortcoming, and that everyone involved - from the players on the field, spectators on the stands, and people following the matches in their own countries - should not forget the spirit of solidarity in the heat of competition.

It is sad, however, that many Korean workers will not be able to share in the excitement and festivities of the World Cup in a wholehearted manner. This is especially true of the trade unionists held in prison. KCTU

president Dan Byung-ho, sentenced to two years' imprisonment for leading the activities of the KCTU, is one member of the Korean World Cup Organising Committee who will not be able to attend any of the matches or ceremonies. (The officers of the Organising Committee called on the KCTU to request the KCTU to remain silent, and refrain from taking industrial action in the days before and during the World Cup. They returned instead with KCTU's reminder that the Committee should have made some efforts to bring about the release of one of the Committee's members, and a request to raise awareness about the child labour issue in the football business.)

The international trade union movement has not overlooked the mismatch of trade union rights

violation in Korea and the World Cup being co-hosted by Korea.

Hans Engelberts, the General Secretary of the Public Services International, who came to Korea to congratulate the inauguration of the Korean Government Employees Union, only to witness thousands of riot police storm the auditorium where the inaugural congress was being held and hundreds of delegates arrested, wrote to the FIFA [the international footballing body responsible for organizing the World Cup - ed.], 'If it is not possible for freedom of association to exist in Korea, then it should not be possible for FIFA to conduct the World Cup there.'

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Metalworkers Federation, and the

Public Services International are initiating special campaigns on the occasion of the World Cup being co-hosted by Korea to demand the release of imprisoned Korean trade unionists, the recognition of the Korean Government Employees Union, and an end to the repression of trade unions.

KCTU is appealing to all trade union movements to take up the campaigns being organised by the global union organisations. ICFTU, under the leadership of the new general secretary Guy Ryder, is initiating a Global Unions awareness raising campaign on the imprisonment of trade unionists in Korea. The IMF and PSI are joining in calling for an international day of action on June 27 to protest the Korean Government's continued attacks on trade union rights. PSI will, in cooperation with the ICFTU, organise a special workshop on trade union rights violation in Korea in Geneva during the International Labour Conference.

KCTU is calling especially on the trade union movements in the countries whose national football teams make up the 32 finalists taking part in the World Cup matches in Korea and Japan to send letters of protest to the Korean government, organise parliamentarians to write appeals to the Korean government, and to approach their national football teams to show their concern.

The SIGTUR (Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights) network is currently engaged in an ongoing solidarity campaign with Korean workers' struggles.

On April 16, the National May Day Committee in Indonesia organised a demonstration in front of the Korean embassy in Jakarta to call for the release of KCTU president Dan Byung-ho. In Pakistan, All Pakistan Trade Union Federation, held a similar protest rally of more than 150 workers on April 17 in front of the Korean embassy. More than 100 workers carried out colourful and forceful action on April 24 in front of the Korean embassy in Bangkok in a demonstration organised by CLIST. In these demonstrations, the workers of the South declared a full support for the Korean power workers struggle against privatisation.

KCTU hopes that June 27 can be adopted as an international day of action against the Korean Government's persistent trade union rights violation. The various separate and joint initiatives could make June 27 even more successful than the landmark January 22 international day of action when workers and unions in 34 countries took action.

The planned actions will have great impact in Korea.

The recent ILO Committee on Freedom of Association decision to call for the release all trade unionist

imprisoned as a result of trade union activities and to 'recognise, as soon as possible, the right to establish and join trade union organization for all public servants' and the recent OECD decision to extend the Korean Labour Law Monitoring for further three years have jolted the Korean government.

On May 19, the Korean Government included 7 (out of 41 then held in prison at the time) trade unionists in the wider amnesty on the occasion of Buddha's Birthday. While the release has not meant a total change in the government's attitude, as can be seen be the arrest of more trade unionists after it, it is material evidence of the impact of international pressure.

In Korea, KCTU has begun a post card campaign on the child labour issue. KCTU, the Korean Government Employees Union, and a number of civil society organisations will hand out post cards calling on the FIFA to comply with its agreement with the ICFTU and its own code of conduct to guarantee and demonstrate that no child labour is used and trade union rights are respected in the entire process of football production. KCTU-produced post card also calls on the FIFA to use its international prestige, in collaboration with trade unions and various child labour action groups, in the effort to end all forms of child labour. KCTU's teachers union will hold special classes on child labour during the World Cup period.

Empire and Revolution

15 June 2002, by **Charlie Post**



'Empire's appeal has a number of sources. First, its authors are not your average left-wing academics. While Hardt teaches in the Literature Program at the prestigious Duke University in North Carolina, Toni

Negri is an inmate at Rebibbia Prison, Rome - imprisoned for the 'crime' of being the 'intellectual inspiration' for the Red Brigades in the late 1970s. Negri has long been associated with the 'autonomist' current of the Italian revolutionary left, which had significant influence among militant industrial workers in the 1970s, and continues to inspire segments of anti-

capitalist youth in Italy today.

Seattle - the first major US demonstration against capitalist globalisationThe second source of the appeal of Empire - both in the academy and in the anti-capitalist and global justice movements - is its engagement with 'post-modernism. On the one hand, Hardt and Negri

embrace the post-modernists' substantive claim that capitalism has been fundamentally transformed in the past half century. [40] In *Empire*, they argue what has become 'common sense' about global capitalism among both academic post-modernists and many global justice and anti-capitalist activists. *Empire* is a smooth (evenly developed) network without a center, in which social production has become flexible in the use of workers and technology to meet ever changing consumer demand, non-material (decline in manufacturing, rise of information and services), and highly mobile geographically. The nation-state and inter-capitalist competition and rivalry are in decline in this new imperial world order.

On the other hand, Hardt and Negri reject the political localism and pessimism of post-modernist identity politics. For the post-modernists, the multiplication of contingent local identities and localized 'place based' movements and politics 'in which the boundaries of place (conceived either as identity or territory) are posted against the undifferentiated and homogeneous space of global networks' (p 44) are the main, if not sole, form of resistance to global capitalism today. Hardt and Negri argue that such a simple counter-position of local and global easily slides into "a kind of primordialism that fixes and romanticizes social relations and identities" (p 44). Such notions ignore the reality that "what appear as local identities are not autonomous or self-determining but actually feed into the support and development of the capitalist imperial machine. The enemy, rather, is a specific regime of global relations that we call *Empire*" (pp 45-46).

Hardt and Negri move from this theoretical critique, to a quite substantive and often insightful critique of various forms of 'subaltern nationalism' that post-modernists promote. They argue that post-modernism's fetish of the local and particular could quite easily elide into a political apologia for *Empire* (pp 105-115, 132-160). Their own argument is, in brief, that global capitalism has been transformed in the past half century, from an imperialist system (unequal economic

development, sharp conflict among the dominant 'imperialist' powers organized in nation-states, centrality of industrial workers to social transformation) to a new form - '*Empire*.' Specifically, Hardt and Negri claim that the mobility of trans-national corporate investment has produced a 'smooth' (evenly developed) world economy based on 'immaterial' production. In this new global economy dominated by the trans-national corporation and global institutions - the World Bank, IMF and the like - the nation-state and inter-capitalist competition have declined in importance. Finally, the global working class, as defined by its place in social production, has been displaced by the 'multitude' as the major agency of social transformation.

While Hardt and Negri's critique of the politics of post-modernism is both insightful and salutary, their embrace of its substantive analysis reduces *Empire* to yet another example of what Kim Moody called 'globaloney'. [41] Put simply, the analysis Hardt and Negri present in *Empire* of the contemporary capitalist world economy is unrealistic - it does not correspond to the realities of capitalist production and accumulation today.

At the centre of Hardt and Negri's notion of 'empire' is that they call the 'postmodernisation, or the informationalisation of production.' In this schema, the transition from 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' involves an historic shift from an 'economic paradigm' where "industry and the manufacture of durable goods occupied the privileged position" to one where "providing services and manipulating information are at the heart of economic production". [42]

(p. 280) Freed from the spatial constraints associated with industrial production, the production of services and information allows for rapid and easy geographic mobility of capital and the creation of a 'smooth' - relatively evenly developed - global economic space.

The reality of the capitalist world economy is quite different. It is true that the percentage of workers employed in industry - the production

of material goods and services - has declined continuously for over a century. As Harry Braverman argued in his classic *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, [43] this is the inevitable result of capitalism's continuous mechanization of production, and the resultant reduction in the percentage of workers needed to produce goods. However, the number of industrial workers, in most industrialized societies, has remained stable or grown slightly. Even more important, the proportion of total output industrial workers produce has increased over the past fifty years. [44]

The growth of service and 'information' production is unrelated to industry. Most investment and employment in the 'service sector' is not in the provision of personal services (restaurants, hair and nail salons, etc), but in 'business services' - legal and financial operations that facilitate industrial production. Similarly, most of the growth of the 'information sector' over the past 20 years has taken the form of the application of computer technology to industrial production (regulating inventories, controlling complex machinery, etc). While information flows easily around the world, the hardware that is the backbone of the new telecommunications network is among the world's most immobile investments. Capitalist competition has led to vast over-capacity in fibre-optic networks and electronic switching equipment in the past few years, none of which can be easily relocated or even abandoned by its owners.

Given the continued dominance of industrial investment, even the largest trans-national corporations are not 'foot-loose and fancy free' - moving from place to place in search of the lowest labour costs. The global capitalist economy is not a 'smooth' - evenly developed - space. The vast majority of global production and consumption still takes place within the boundaries of the advanced capitalist nation states. Consider the following statistics: [45]

- The 'third world' produces approximately 20% of global output (mostly clothing, shoes, and common

consumer goods - not complex consumer appliances, industrial machinery and technology). 80% of global manufacturing output is still produced in the US, Western Europe and Japan.

- Foreign direct investment constitutes only 5% of total world investment - 95% of total capitalist investment takes place in the boundaries of the industrialized countries. Of the 5% of total global investment that is foreign direct investment, 72% flows from one industrialized country to another. Only 2% of total global investment flows from the 'north' to the 'south' of the world economy.

- 75% of foreign direct investment, especially the investment in Africa, Asia and Latin America, takes the form of buying existing plant and equipment - the form of mergers and acquisitions of existing privately owned companies, or the purchase of recently privatised public enterprises (telecommunications, oil, etc) Only 25% of foreign direct investment takes the form of building new plants overseas.

A more realistic way to understand contemporary capitalist globalisation is through the lens of the internationalisation of 'lean production'. [46] In the face of falling profits and sharpened international competition beginning in the mid 1960s, capitalists have reorganized production to cut costs by eliminating 'waste' - excess materials, activities and workers. Lean Production has many familiar features: speed-up, deskilling, multi-tasking, increased use of 'flexible' (part-time, temporary) workers, greater managerial control in setting hours and tasks, and the contracting out of work previously done by unionised employees.

The key is understanding that the transform-ation of the capitalist world economy since the early 1980s, is the contracting out of work previously done by unionised or relatively well-paid workers. Labour-intensive operations - those that rely on low-wage labour to be profitable - have been the most common work 'outsourced.' In the automobile industry this has meant outsourcing parts production. In the electronics industry it has taken the form of

contracting out the manufacture of printed circuit boards, computer chips and other components. In the clothing and shoe industries, more and more of the cutting and stitching has been outsourced, leaving the 'final manufacturers' to do finishing work and packaging. In financial services, low-wage data processing has been outsourced, while higher paid employees continue to advise and service corporate clients.



Most of the work outsourced has gone to non-unionised workers in areas of labour-surplus and depressed wages in the industrialized countries (southern US, southern and eastern Europe). However, much of the trans-national corporations' foreign direct investment in Africa, Asia and Latin America has been in buying existing or building new plants for labour-intensive, low-wage production. Most of what we refer to as 'globalisation' in the last twenty years is the growth of international production chains organized by the trans-national corporations. As the trans-nationals reorganized work in the 'north' along the lines of 'lean production', they moved low-wage, labour-intensive work to the 'south.' These parts and components are then 're-exported' within the transnational corporation for final assembly in the 'north.'

The result of the internationalisation of lean production over the past two decades has not been a 'smooth' or 'decentred global network' or 'empire' that Hardt and Negri claim. Quite the opposite, the centres of accumulation and social power remain in the centres of advanced capitalism in Western Europe, the US and Japan. Global uneven and combined development - the growing gap in incomes, production and the like - between this global 'north' and the global 'south' has only grown wider. Some regions of the former 'third world' have become centres of labour-intensive assembly and parts production (the 'Newly Industrialized Countries' of Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan), becoming extensions of capitalist accumulation cantered in the 'north.' However, vast expanses of

the globe (sub-Saharan Africa) remain at best sites of raw material extraction, or at worst huge labour reserves, marked by extreme poverty and capitalist-created famine and natural disasters.

Hardt and Negri's claims that the nation-state and inter-imperialist rivalry have declined in importance with the rise of 'empire' and various institutions of 'global governance' (World Bank, IMF, WTO, G7, EU, NATO, etc) lack theoretical and even empirical plausibility. The 'declining effectiveness' of the nation-state can be traced clearly through the evolution of a whole series of global juridico-economic bodies, such as GATT, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the IMF. The globalisation of production and circulation, supported by this supranational juridical scaffolding, supersedes the effectiveness of national juridical structures (p 337).

Clearly, this 'supranational juridical scaffolding' has been crucial in changing the political environment for capitalist accumulation over the past two decades. Clearly, 'neo-liberalism' - the dismantling of the rules that restrict corporations at home and abroad - would be impossible without these 'global juridico-economic bodies.'

However, the growing importance of these trans-national organizations does not mean that, in the words of Hardt and Negri 'state functions and constitutional elements have effectively been displaced to other levels and domains' (p. 307). On the contrary, the ability of these global political bodies to operate effectively requires, in many ways, the strengthening of the national-capitalist state.

Kim Moody presents a compelling alternative analysis. The trans-national corporations (TNCs) have neither the desire nor ability to create a world state. They have opted instead for a system of multilateral agreements and institutions that they hope will provide coherence and order the world market. Through their 'home' governments, the TNCs have attempted to negotiate forms of regulation through the GATT, the new

WTO, and the various regional and multilateral trade agreements. They have also transformed some of the old Bretton Woods institutions, notably the World Bank and IMF. [47]

To ensure the unhindered operations of the trans-nationals and protect private business property, these global political institutions require national capitalist states capable of denationalising industries, abolishing social welfare programs and labour regulations, generally deregulating their capital, labour and commodities markets, and containing challenges from below. Put simply, rather than representing a simple shift of political powers 'upward' from the nation-state to the 'global juridico-economic bodies', the development of the WTO, EU, and the like actually enhance the role of the nation-state.

Hardt and Negri's go further along this path. They claim that 'Empire' "is a decentred and deterritorialising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its expanding frontiers" (p xii) in which "what used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under the one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist" (p 9).

There is, clearly, no denying that there has been a marked ideological shift in the justification of imperialist military adventures since the collapse of the bureaucratic 'Communist' regimes in the East. Defence of 'human rights' and the 'war on terrorism' have replaced 'anti-communism' or 'national interest' in the defence of US and NATO wars from Serbia to Afghanistan. However, just as the emergence of trans-national organizations has not spelled the decline of the nation-state, so a new ideological justification for imperialist aggression has not marked the end of inter-imperialist conflict.

Clearly, the US capitalist class and its state assume a political and military position that is unique among the advanced capitalist powers. No other imperial power can and does project

its political and military power in any way comparable to the US. However, renewed and strengthened US political and military (and economic) hegemony in the capitalist world does not spell the end of inter-capitalist, inter-imperialist rivalry: it merely changes its form.



Examples of sharp conflicts amongst the advanced capitalist powers abound in recent weeks. The fissures within the imperialist coalition that backed the US-UK 'war on terrorism' in Afghanistan, appeared almost as soon as the Taliban were overthrown. Most of the EU, with the exception of the Blair government (which faces dissent within the ranks of the ruling Labour Party), sharply oppose unilateral US military action to bring about a 'regime change' in Iraq. There are also sharp divisions over how to handle the crisis in the Middle East, with the bulk of the European ruling classes sharply critical of the Bush administration's refusal to rein in the Zionists in the interest of restoring a pro-imperialist 'stability' in Palestine-Israel.

Conflicts between the major imperialist powers are not limited to political and military issues in the 'war on terrorism.' There are ongoing and important divisions over global economic policy. While there is consensus among the ruling classes of the advanced capitalist world about 'neo-liberalism' and 'free trade', tensions remain. The furore over the US imposition of tariffs on foreign steel is only the most visible example. The WTO, EU, IMF, G7, NATO and almost all of the 'global juridico-economic bodies' are, in the words of Alex Callinicos, 'shaped by the conflicts that divide these powers, setting in particular the US against Japan and the EU (itself a far from homogeneous entity).' [48]

Continued inter-imperialist rivalry and conflict flows from the profoundly un-'smooth' - uneven and combined - character of the world capitalist economy. The internationalisation of lean production has taken the form of regional production chains. Trans-

national corporations headquartered in the US, western Europe or Japan, outsource parts and assembly work to local 'peripheries' - Mexico and parts of Latin America for the US, southern and eastern Europe for the western Europeans, and east Asia for Japan. Most of the finished products are sold in the 'core' of the world economy. Thus the regional trading-production blocs in North America, Europe and east Asia are competing for each others' markets for finished goods in the 'north', and constantly attempting to gain access to each others' production chains in the 'south'.

Finally, the relationship between capital and labour is fundamentally redefined in Hardt and Negri's 'decentred' and 'smooth' imperial world, where "power is distributed in networks, through mobile and articulated mechanisms of control" (p 384) and "immaterial labour and cooperation become the dominant productive force".

Production becomes indistinguishable from reproduction; productive forces merge with relations of production; constant capital tends to be constituted and represented within variable capital, in the brains, bodies and cooperation of productive subjects. Social subjects are at the same time producers and products of this unitary machine. In this new historical formation, it is thus no longer possible to identify a sign, a subject, a value, or a practice that is 'outside' (p 385).

In this world, all those who are subject to the vicissitudes of capitalist production and reproduction - whether they labour collectively in workplaces under the command of capital, or are excluded from social production through unemployment, forced migration and the like - are equally part of a new revolutionary subject. According to Hardt and Negri "the multitude has internalised the lack of place and fixed time; it is mobile and flexible, and it conceives the future only as a totality of possibilities that branch out in every direction" (p 380). Almost any act of 'negativity' - the refusal to work, migration from one part of the world to another, confrontations with the police, strike action - are equally powerful forms of

resistance, because "the construction of Empire, and the globalisation of economic and cultural relationships, means that the virtual centre of Empire can be attacked from any point" (p 59).

The notion of the 'multitude' confronting the 'Empire', at all points and through all 'acts of refusal', rests on the questionable claims that production has been 'informationalised' and social production has become 'decentred' and 'smoothly' diffused across the globe. As we have seen, the reality is quite different: industrial production remains dominant within capitalism, and the centres of industrial production remain geographically concentrated in the advanced capitalist 'north' and select parts of the 'south.' Not surprisingly, the potential and actual power of industrial working class activity has diminished in the past thirty years.

Clearly twenty years of political defeats and economic restructuring at the hands of capital, undermine the confidence and ability of workers to take action at the point of production and in the streets. However, in the past decade we have begun to see a turn-around in the class struggle, that again demonstrates the power of organized workers in strategic sectors of the economy. Beginning with the public sector strikes in France - spearheaded by the transport, postal and telecommunications workers - we have seen a new rise of industrial

action across western Europe, and to a lesser extent in the US (the UPS strike in 1997 being the most important example).

This new wave of struggle against the effects of lean production and neo-liberalism has spilled over into political struggles - mass political strikes against privatisation, and new alliances between sectors of the European labour movement and anti-capitalist youth in the global justice movement. This alliance of 'teamsters and turtles' is much more fragile in the US, where the pro-war and pro-Democratic party union officialdom has constantly distanced themselves from the global justice movement. However, the power and impact of the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1999 flowed from the unity, in the streets, of young global justice activists and militant teamsters (mostly UPS workers), longshore and steelworkers.

Hardt and Negri's notion of the 'multitude' is not only an unrealistic representation of the relationship between labour and capital today: it has a long and problematic political history. Negri first argued that a new 'revolutionary subject' had displaced the 'collective worker' in the large factories of northern Italy in the late 1970s, as growing unemployment and employer victimization of worker militants crushed the wave of industrial militancy that began in 1968-69. Negri and the 'autonomist'

current in the Italian revolutionary left argued that the 'social worker' - all those oppressed by capitalism, whether employed or unemployed - had become the new force for social revolution. In fact, Negri and his cothinkers privileged the unemployed - those who 'refused work'. These ideas provided solace to a political current whose support among employed workers in the large factories had disappeared by the late 1970s, reducing them to a base among students and unemployed youth. However, these notions also justified acts of political desperation: most notably, 'autonomist' youth mounting ideological and physical attacks on organized and employed workers for their unwillingness to 'refuse work'. [49]

Today, none of the currents influenced by Negri and autonomism, like the Tute Bianche in Italy, engage in physical attacks on organized workers. While the Tute Bianche have engaged in solely non-violent forms of direct action, they often take action against the police without regard to the real relationship of forces in society. In practice, they often substitute their own courageous, non-violent action for mass action by working people. Negri and Hardt's theories do not simply justify such practices, but actively discourage the hard strategic thinking, about building alliances between anti-capitalist youth and rank and file workers, that is crucial to the long-term success of the new struggle for global justice.