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The wind from the southeast

10 March 2001, by **Sergio Rodríguez Lascano**



Subcomandante Marcos leaves
Mexico City

On February 24, 2000 the delegation of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), composed of 19 comandantes, four sub-comandantes and sub-comandante Marcos set off on the "march for indigenous dignity" - the most significant social mobilization in the modern history of our country. Tens of thousands of Mexicans lined the roads, the squares and the streets to welcome and salute the Zapatistas, symbols of rebellion in a country whose history is full of acts of rebellion.

The Zapatistas have engaged in a dialogue with the other indigenous peoples of Mexico, with the workers and peasants, and above all, with the youth who are the heart and soul of these mobilizations. It is all the more important given that during the recent elections the immense majority of youth voted for the new president, Vicente Fox. The media have been astonished by the success of the march, as have the layer of pro-state organic intellectuals who had told us incessantly that the Zapatista phenomenon was in serious decline.

They failed to see that in the course of the last seven years the EZLN has drawn very close links with that part

of Mexico which does not feel itself to be represented by the traditional political system or which, while supporting a political party, in particular the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), understood the process of political participation as something which goes further than representative democracy.

Two legitimacies confront each other in Mexico today: that of Vicente Fox, who has succeed in profiting from the social discontent produced by 70 years of domination of the single party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and who wishes to oversee the constitution of a new ruling "political class", where the bourgeoisie not only rules but also governs; and the legitimacy of the EZLN and the indigenous peoples in struggle, the only sector never domesticated by the old Mexican political regime.

After having vainly attempted initially to throw some spanners in the wheels, the government now claims now to support the rising wave of mobilization in the hope of profiting from it. The EZLN represents the only political force that can tell Fox that he enjoys no credibility among the indigenous peoples and that the Zapatistas are the most resolute adversaries of his Puebla-Panama plan.

The confrontation of these two legitimacies is beginning to affect the

social climate. Employers, some of whom have made declarations favourable to the recognition of indigenous rights, are very concerned with the development of this march, which crystallizes the unity of Mexico's poor - official statistics estimate them at 71 million, out of a total population of 100 million - and dangerously threatens the stability of the nation.

The goal of the Zapatista march is to gain the constitutional recognition of the rights of the 15 million Mexicans who form the indigenous peoples. While they have constituted the material and spiritual base which allowed the foundation of the Republic, they have never been considered as bearers of rights, nor recognized in their culture, their forms of social organization, their specific jurisdictions, or their languages; in a word, they have never seen their right to autonomy recognized and this has been the political cause of the some 200 uprisings which have marked the history of the indigenous peoples of this country.

The success of this march shows also that the ideas of the left remain capable of gaining mass social support, on the condition that they remain independent of the regime and its mechanisms of control. The defeat suffered by the Mexican left until the appearance of the EZLN stems from

the way in which the regime has succeeded, through a generalized corruption, of emptying the plebeian and emancipatory discourse of socialism of all legitimacy. It is not for nothing that the Zapatistas stress that it was the privatisation of agriculture

carried out by Salinas de Gortari, with the support of a good part of the Mexican left, which played a key role in the decision to organize the uprising of January 1994.

It can be said without exaggeration

that the future of the country and the left is at stake in this massive mobilization of the poor of Mexico. Beyond it remains to analyse the importance of this march at the level of the living forces of the left on the international scale.

"A world where all worlds fit in"

10 March 2001

2. The Zapatista movement has been a key factor in this change of climate. From its initial uprising in January 1994 and then through calling the first Intercontinental encounter for humanity and against neo-liberalism, the EZLN has become an unavoidable political and moral reference point. All those who, on the basis of their own struggles, oppose the conservative counter-reforms carried out in the name of "modernisation" are part of the same process. Without doubt, the EZLN has been a fundamental protagonist in this movement for "another world is possible". This movement became visible at Seattle but had in truth been gestating for some years previously, with struggles that reject concessions like that of the Zapatistas and the expression of struggles of the indigenous, peasant, trade-union movement, the movements of the unemployed, of

women, for human rights and many other popular sectors.

3. Now the EZLN is beginning a new phase of struggle with the launch - after the historic defeat of the PRI - of a challenge to the new government. It is marching to Mexico City to demand the fulfilment of the San Andres Accords and their translation into legal and constitutional reforms. The EZLN sees this as a decisive step towards a peace with dignity, one that respects and recognises the rights of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. They see the fulfilment of the San Andres Accords as necessary for a political exit from the conflict, along with the release of Zapatista prisoners and the withdrawal of the federal army from their communities.

4. Struggles against capitalist "neo-liberal globalization" such as the

struggle of the Zapatistas, but also experiences like the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the recent victory of the popular and indigenous movement in Ecuador, or the campaigns against Plan Colombia and the imperialist project of AFTA, show that there is a growing movement of resistance to the powers-that-be which can actually win some victories and struggle for "a world where all worlds can fit in".

5. The Fourth International reaffirms its solidarity with the struggle of the EZLN, its March and its demands, and also salutes the Indigenous National Congress which is currently meeting. This militant position will be expressed both through the work of our comrades in Mexico and also in the field of internationalist solidarity.

February 21, 2001

Marcos, ATTAC and José Bové

10 March 2001



Bové, Cassen and Marcos

The purpose of the meeting had been decided upon in Chiapas in a recent discussion between Marcos and Ignacio Ramonet, Director of Le

Monde diplomatique and Honorary President of ATTAC.

Subcommander Marcos stated that, once the Mexican government fully fulfils the contractual obligations it made in the 1996 San Andrés agreements and, in particular, sends the Indian Bill of Rights and Culture to

Congress, it was his intention to create a political organization in Mexico in which everyone will be able to act openly and, unlike political parties, will oppose the devastating effects of neo-liberalism and globalization. The Subcommander stated that this organization, even if it does not bear ATTAC's name, will act

in consort with ATTACs international network as it presently exists in Europe, Africa, America and everywhere citizens' movements exist to oppose globalization.

Marcos reaffirmed his total support for the initiatives undertaken by the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre and his intention, in particular, to take an active role, as soon as circumstances permit, by visiting Porto Alegre - a name which has come to symbolize resistance to globalization. For the immediate future, Marcos and the French delegates proposed to organize a first international meeting in Mexico City on April 14 and 15 prior to the second WSF to take place in Porto Alegre. Captioned, "Porto Alegre Contra ALCA (FTAA)," the meeting will bring together the speakers and participants who came from every corner of the globe to the first WSF and the intellectuals and representatives of the Mexican citizens' movement. It is

scheduled to take place one week prior to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City and one week after the demonstrations that are expected in Buenos Aires when the Ministers of Finance from the countries negotiating the "ALCA" will meet.

José Bové, speaking on behalf of Via Campesina, then proposed that a seminar be held, as a second phase, in Mexico, in around August, in preparation for the the World Social Forum 2002 in Porto Alegre on the topic of peasant farming. This seminar will take place immediately after the Latin-American Congress of Via Campesina. Organizations representing farmers from other continents will be invited to attend with their Latin-American counterparts. Together, they will draw up an inventory of cultivated lands in the world and work out precise proposals which will be presented at the WSF.

Subcommander Marcos announced his

intention, furthermore, to participate in the initiatives to be taken by ATTAC, Via Campesina and other citizens' organizations in the world as a whole to scuttle the plans for increased "liberalization" of international trade. Such plans are on the agenda of the next ministerial conference of the WTO scheduled to take place in Qatar in November 2001.

Bernard Cassen proposed that Marcos and other members of the ZNLA form a delegation which will be invited to France and other European countries by ATTAC, the Farmers' Federation, the French Freedom Foundation and Le Monde diplomatique. Marcos accepted this invitation in the hopes that the situation in Mexico will evolve and permit him to quickly honour his commitment.

Mexico City, March 11, 2001

José Bové, Farmers' Federation

Bernard Cassen, ATTAC

Political challenges

10 March 2001, by Michel Husson

Thousands of Mexicans - indigenous peoples, young activists, those disillusioned with the traditional left, former guerrillas, trades unionists - came to support the march as it wound its way across the country have pronounced a second sentence of death on the PRI. On July 2, 2000, the party-state had already lost presidential power to Vicente Fox, candidate of the PAN (Party of National Action) and a former chief executive of Coca-Cola Mexico. A hundred days after assuming power he finds himself in a media-political face off with Marcos. Fox's skill in taking into his government people of left origins (in the Mexican tradition), will only grant him a very short "state of grace". He has to govern with the perspective of a sharp slowing up of an economy intimately linked with that of the United States.

Three demands

What is striking is the speed with which Fox has retreated politically before Zapatism. The PRI, after having negotiated the San Andrés agreements with the EZLN, had broken them and started a "low intensity war" based on the army and the paramilitary groups. While taking a fairly evasive stance on Chiapas, Fox saw fit to distance himself from this policy. But Zapatista pressure led to him retreating more quickly.

The programme that the EZLN has come to defend in the capital has three points: withdrawal of the army from Chiapas, liberation of Zapatista political prisoners, and introduction of the legislation on indigenous culture and rights negotiated in the framework of the San Andrés accords.

On the two first points, Fox has partly conceded. On the third, he has left the doors open. The PAN parliamentary group wishes to vote legislation through, but not that negotiated with the Zapatistas in the framework of the Commission of Reconciliation and Pacification. The PRD is for, while the PRI is hesitating. The most probable outcome is that Marcos will return to Chiapas, while a delegation of the EZLN remains in Mexico city to negotiate, undoubtedly under the leadership of commandant German. More or less ridiculous obstacles, like the question of whether he must take off his balaclava mask inside Parliament, have been lifted, with the obvious approval of Fox. In a televised interview, Fox practically took as his own the slogans of the demonstrators: "welcome, subcommandante Marcos, welcome Zapatistas to the political

arena and the discussion of ideas". Marcos even had the opportunity to turn down an invitation to visit the president at his residence.

The big question is knowing what the Zapatistas will do with this relationship of forces. Use it for the defence of the demands advanced on the rights of the indigenous peoples, that much is obvious. But will it go further, towards a refoundation of the left on a nation-wide scale? That is very much less sure: from the precedent attempt of the FZLN not much remains and Marcos' whole philosophy is to oppose the party form and the seizure of power. In an

interview published by "Proceso" on the day of his arrival in Mexico City, Marcos defines himself as a rebel, not a revolutionary: "if Marcos and Zapatism were to be transformed into a revolutionary project, in other words something which gives birth to a political actor inside the political class, then this would be the immediate defeat of Zapatism as alternative project".

What left alternative?

The Zapatista march creates then a new relationship of forces, but also a

vacuum, in stressing the absence of an independent left capable both of supporting the struggle of the Zapatistas and proposing a left alternative to a profoundly neoliberal government. In the absence of the emergence of such an actor, which can no longer be the PRD of Cardenas, there is even the possibility that the PRI will be reborn from the ashes, a little like the former Communist parties in some eastern European countries.

All these questions are posed or will be posed, but in a framework profoundly modified by the superb initiative of the Zapatistas.

After the success, the same dilemmas

10 March 2001, by Ernesto Herrera

In this sense, the enormous popular mobilization at Porto Alegre witnesses to the breadth and radical diversity of the resistance to capitalist-imperialist globalisation, as well as the impasse in which the conservative hegemony finds itself.

The scenario of struggle is changing favourably, developing a renewed internationalism, solidarity-based and combative. Social antagonisms are accelerating at the same rhythm as political instability, above all in the so-called Third World. On the other hand, a new and decisive relationship of forces has not yet been shaped.

The dilemmas continue. How do we translate struggles and civil disobedience into a movement of refoundation? How do we pass from an alliance against "neo-liberal globalisation" to an anti-capitalist alternative? How do we combine the breadth of a heterogeneous social and political composition with the necessary programmatic rigour?

In this sense, any illusion that we are going through a similar experience to that of Marx and Engels in relation to the First International does not fit in

with the reality of the WSF. Among other things, because we are separated by more than a century's distance.

Various forums took place simultaneously. One in the camps of the peasants, the indigenous peoples and youth. Here the mood was one of rebellion and barricades. The talk was of "all methods of struggle" and "moving on to action", with a utopian air. It was different in the workshops, where discussion centred on concrete and immediate demands. Social activists, trades unionists and rank and file militants monopolized the discourse. The desire and concern to sketch out possible alternatives supplanted the grand narratives. At the same time, there was an absence (or criticism) of the party political elements - the same was true in the camps.

In the conference hall, it was different again. The key themes were announced on the agenda: a new organization of production, a more equitable trade, regulation of the circulation of finance capital, the agrarian question.

Attendance was massive. Theoretically solid expositions, with debates, consensus and disagreements between the panellists and many questions raised from the body of the hall. Here the political-programmatic issues and the nature of the "alternative project" are central. The question of democracy occupied a privileged place - understandably, since the Forum took place in the cradle of the democratic-popular experience of the "Participatory Budget".

Richness and tensions

Obviously, then, there were distinct sensibilities, which brought both richness and tension to the Forum. The demands that would alter the dominant economic order - and that have the greatest impact on mobilisations - were the total cancellation of the foreign debt of the countries of the Third World and the imposition of the Tobin tax as a levy on international financial transactions (which amount today to two billion dollars a day). Less defined demands,

like "fair trade" and the "ecological debt" that the rich countries should pay to "reduce inequality" were also put forward.

The arguments in favour of these "measures of global impact" are based on shared and dramatic analyses. The countries of the South now owe four times what they owed in 1980 and six times its initial value. On this theme, Eric Toussaint, president of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (COCAD), did not spare his criticisms of Lula and left leaders and economists who support an "audit" rather than a cancellation of the debt.

One of the broadest consensus was around opposition to genetically modified products, as much through concern for the environmental risks as with the defence of the health of consumers and the peasants who struggle against the monopolization of seeds by a few trans-national companies. Also free trade and privatisation drew general disapproval, as factors leading to unemployment, greater inequality and less access to the public services. Other proposals contemplated stretched from opening the frontiers to workers to considering water and seeds as the common heritage of humanity; thus their privatisation including though the purchase of patents, is inadmissible.

Divergences

However, divergent roads and ideas were also expressed. There was a growing clamour against the agricultural subsidies which block off the markets of the rich countries and depress the prices of the main exporting countries of the South. On the other hand, the poor farmers, represented by the international organization Via Campesina, decided to act against the importing of food, which is detrimental to their activity. "Agriculture is not a business" and food should not be treated as a commodity, but as a human right, argued the leaders of the movement, like the Brazilian Egidio Brunetto, the Honduran Rafael Alegría and the Frenchman José Bové.

The division between radicals and moderates was evident, for example, in relation to the difference between those who proposed the abolition of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, like the Filipino Walden Bello, and the "realists" who advocate its reform, like the Brazilian economist Luciano Coutinho.

An example of the first group are the defenders of the Universal Minimum Income, as a lifelong right for everybody, breaking with the dominant culture that considers that only work legitimates a remuneration.

Behind many questions lay the difference between the partisans of a strategy of anti or extra-institutional resistance, of accumulation of forces and radical civil disobedience in a perspective of "popular power", and those who believe in gradual changes for the deepening of democracy and participation, as well as a pragmatic and realistic strategy of "culture of governance".

The question of the social subjects also was absent from the agenda. Many referred to "civil society", though, as François Houtart notes, society continues to be divided into classes.

There was no shortage of polemic either. In particular, when government ministers from the French Socialist Party were present at some of the conferences and debates. Jean-Pierre Chevenement had to listen to the reading of a card signed by activists and militants - led by the MEP and leader of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International), Alain Krivine- which accused him of being responsible for an anti-immigrant law. François Houtart also received his just desserts, for being the "representative of a country which subsidizes its agricultural products against the Third World" and which "bombs African countries".

The utopian viewpoint of some, with medium term goals, contrasted with the urgency of others, like the movements against Plan Colombia, or the acceleration of the project of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, or anti-imperialist solidarity with the Cuban revolution.

The presence of a delegation from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) drew the attention and enthusiasm of hundreds of participants, particularly youth and political activists. Javier Cifuentes, member of the International Commission of the insurgent organization, stressed the importance of the WSF: "We agree with its ideal. We believe that a better world is possible. This is the struggle of the FARC in Colombia. We are present also to denounce Plan Colombia and call attention to the question of Amazonia. The Brazilians must not allow the United States to appropriate Amazonia for itself".

Meanwhile, trade unions and social networks insisted on the necessity of raising a barrier to the USA's project of re-colonisation. The Continental Social Alliance called for participation in the Second Summit of the Peoples which will take place in Quebec City in the Canadian state from April 16-21, and for the continuation of debate on the strategies of resistance to FTAA, adding that "a first step in this direction will be the mobilizations which will take place in Buenos Aires at the beginning of April, parallel to the meeting of the FTAA trade ministers".

Statements

There was no "final declaration", a decision that appears reasonable. The plurality of the political and social composition of the WSF would have complicated its drawing up and a single document would not have adequately reflected the hundreds of debates, reflections and proposals. On the contrary, there were several statements: by the social movements [1] the Parliamentary Forum, the workshop of the World March of Women, and so on.

In all these statements there is a challenge to the elites and the hegemony of capital. The necessity of building a broad alliance against "neo-liberal globalisation", the intention of continuing and strengthening resistance and organized mobilization.

This change in the situation is

expressed in the declaration of the parliamentarians which not only denounced the "re-colonisation of the world", but associated itself with campaigns "against the mechanisms of the immoral debt and for the abolition of the debt of the poor countries; for the establishment of taxes on speculative movements of capital with the installation of a Tobin type tax; for the elimination of tax havens". It does, for sure, maintain the illusion of "a profound reform of the WTO and the international financial institutions", but the statement is nonetheless favourable in general terms.

Clearly, we will have to see whether the majority of these senators and deputies who, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, largely belong to parties of the Sao Paulo Forum - and who have come to adopt the road of an institutional pragmatism- will finally take up the cudgels in their respective parliaments for what was agreed in Porto Alegre.

The statement from the women's workshop reaffirmed: "No to the current neo-liberal capitalist globalisation ... Yes to the alternatives of solidarity" and denounced a "sexist globalisation" that "accentuates the massive and growing feminisation of poverty and exacerbates the multiple acts of violence against women". Overall, there was little integration of the question of women in the central axes of the Forum, although the interventions of Buenaventura de Souza and Frei Betto related the emancipatory political project to a multicultural and feminist dimension.

Another world is possible, but which?

Bernard Cassen, director of Le Monde Diplomatique and one of the main organizers of the WSF said: "We are here to discuss ideas. Then we have to seek forms of translating them into struggles. In some years we will be ready to propose measures". (Zero Hora, Porto Alegre, January 24, 2001). He added that he was "more interested in concrete actions of

organized movements than in polarizations between right and left", which in his view "have lost meaning".

Ignacio Ramonet in his article "Porto Alegre" (Le Monde Diplomatique, January 2001) put forward a similar view. The purpose of the WSF is not to protest "as in Seattle, Washington or Prague ... but to try, this time with a constructive spirit, to propose a theoretical framework and practice that allows us to advocate a new globalisation and affirm that a new world is possible, less inhuman and more solidarity-based".

Nonetheless, there were protests and proposals for mobilisation in Porto Alegre, not to mention the beginning of a theoretical and programmatic reflection that refers to the class dimension, the labour-capital antagonism and the social appropriation of the means of production. In other words, the premises to establish a theoretical framework that can establish political frontiers and clarify in what manner "another world is possible".

If the "anti-globalisation" movement is reduced solely to opposition to the more undesirable effects of commercial interchange, the horrors of the payment of the foreign debt and the conditions imposed by institutions like the WTO, World Bank and IMF, it will remain hostage to some problems relating to disequilibria in the "functioning of the market". The critique of commodity fetishism and the commodification of all human and social relations would lose a great deal of its force.

The breadth and radical nature of today's struggles do not merely confront the adjustment plans of the "neo-liberal model" and their consequences. They place the relations of power and property on the agenda of daily combat: when to take over a factory, invade a latifundio (plantation), occupy a housing block or set up a "pirate" radio. That is, when those at the bottom take back their rights which have been expropriated by capital. Each struggle, in its own manner, places the question of power on the agenda, albeit sometimes only tendentially. This makes it necessary (and urgent)

to develop instruments of organization and political strategy. The resistance to capitalist-imperialist globalisation amounts to a formidable laboratory of experiences of struggle, political, theoretical and programmatic reflections for an international movement like the WSF that aims to create an alternative to the globalisation of capital.

The "Rebel International"

In August 1997, the First Meeting For Humanity and Against Neo-Liberalism took place. Called by the EZLN, it sought to build, according to Subcomandante Marcos, a movement where there would be a place for "all the worlds". Thousands of activists and sympathizers of Zapatismo gathered in Chiapas, in the majority social movements and NGOs. There was talk of an "International of Hope". A seed was planted, although the attempt did not prosper, mainly because it was a movement of solidarity with a localized struggle.

The international context was at its most unfavourable, and the breach between the social and the political had reached its apogee.

Seattle changed the framework. In particular because of the profile given to the social resistances, and because it had been preceded by a significant victory: the defeat of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

The itinerary of protests and "anti-globalisation" revolts assumed a greater continuity from Seattle onwards and the failure of the "Millennium Round" in November-December 1999. A little later came Ginebra and Colonia, then London, Bangkok, Davos, Washington, Geneva, Prague, and Nice. The chronology is impressive and creates difficulties for those who had succumbed to "ebb", "defeats" and "ideological regression" - in some cases, to justify demoralization and systematic adaptation, in others, to conceal impotence and a political incapacity to grasp the changes in reality and in the dynamic of the class struggle. In both cases, the fall of the Berlin wall

weighed heavily on their shoulders.

Latin America has not been absent from this process of resistance and counteroffensive, including before Seattle. Strikes, uprisings and popular mobilizations have followed, one after the other. Governmental instability was (and is) the distinctive characteristic of the region.

The breach between social polarization and political expression has been closed. This is shown in an unequivocal manner by the political

advance of the left in Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, or the struggle for human rights and against impunity, the recent and formidable victory of the indigenous movement in Ecuador or the continental mobilization against Plan Colombia. The Zapatistas, meanwhile, have retaken the initiative and have marched to Mexico City.

In all cases, it is obvious that the conditions for the recomposition of the radical left and an anti-capitalist programmatic reconstruction are

increasingly present today, on condition that political objectives and theoretical definitions are clarified.

The WSF was defined by some participants and journalists as a new "Rebel International". Its organizing principles and instigators are not persuaded on this point. The next meeting (Porto Alegre 2002) will indicate whether things will advance in this direction or whether, on the contrary, the Forum becomes the "anti-globalising" interlocutor of "neo-liberal globalisation".

A festival of multicoloured plurality ... unlike Davos

10 March 2001

Social movements, NGOs, ATTAC groups, community networks, committees for the cancellation of the foreign debt, trade union and peasant co-ordinations, ecologists, Black and Afro-identity movements, Feminist and lesbian-gay organization, human rights activists, alternative media, punks, "moradores de la rua" (street dwellers), neighbourhood movements, Christians for liberation, musical bands, all mixed up together.

Parties of the left and centre left in different variants. Intellectuals, academics, economists, parliamentarians, "social entrepreneurs", a few ministers. Historic figures of the anti-colonialist struggle like the Algerian Ahmed Ben Bella. Personalities like Danielle Mitterrand. Well known individuals like Cuathemoc Cárdenas, Ricardo Alarcón, Eduardo Galeano, Frei Betto, Buenaventura de Souza, or the irrepressible Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Old guerrilla chiefs like the Venezuelan Douglas Bravo, some nationalist military figures like the Ecuadorian Lucio Gutierrez, and radicals from Euskal Herriarrok.

Also some notable absences: among

others US intellectual Noam Chomsky, Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize for Literature winner José Saramago, Germany's Gunther Grass, the president of the Frente Amplio of Uruguay Tabaré Vázquez and the Zapatistas.

The agenda was scarcely affected by the ridiculous act of the Brazilian Federal Police who sought to deport José Bové for participating in the destruction of genetically modified crops in a plantation owned by the multinational Monsanto.

There were 4,702 delegates from 117 countries, 165 special guests, 2,000 youth and 700 indigenous people camped in the city parks, 764 media outlets represented by 1,870 journalists. Around 20,000 people were on the march through the main streets of the city which opened the event. There were more than 400 workshops, oficinas and panels.

The organization of the WSF would not have been possible without the support of the state of RÃo Grande del Sur, governed by Olivio Dutra and the prefeitura (municipality) of Porto Alegre - both ruled by the Workers'Party (PT). In particular, all

the press coverage emphasized the role played by vice-governor Miguel Rossetto and his collaborators, mostly militants of the Democracia Socialista tendency of the PT.

The Fourth International at Porto Alegre

The World Social Forum was attended by supporters of the Fourth International from a variety of countries: France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spanish state, South Africa, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, not to mention our Brazilian hosts.

In all cases, as members and activists of social organizations, trade unions, groups from the ATTAC networks, committees of solidarity, community radios and as political militants. The workshops, camps and conferences saw them participating as animators, coordinators, organizers and panellists. Simultaneously, various activities took place. On January 26, there was a discussion on the book

"Marxism, Utopia and Modernity" by its authors Daniel Bensaid and Michael Lowy, with an attendance of more than 350 people and Emir Sader, Isabel Loureiro, Raúl Pont, and José Correa Leite among the panellists. On January 31 at midday, a comradely lunch and in the evening a meeting where comrades Alain Krivine, Pierre Rousset, Christophe Aguiton and Raúl Pont, spoke to 400 people on their first impressions on the Forum and its challenges.

Throughout the five days of activities, 3,000 copies of the publication "Resistances" in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish, English) which included the draft resolution on "Resistances to Capitalist Globalisation" which will be put to the vote at our next World Congress, were distributed. In the prologue there was a text by Michael Lowy entitled "What is the Fourth International?" which summed up our position in relation to

the WSF.

"The Fourth International is present at the World Social Forum through its militants, its parliamentarians, trade union leaders and activists from various social movements. We bring our contribution: the internationalist revolutionary Marxist viewpoint, but also we are here to listen to and learn from the experience and thinking of others. Because we know that it is through combats in the streets like Seattle and meetings like this in Porto Alegre that the seeds of the internationalism of the 21st century are being planted".

Also, 500 copies of the review Desde los Cuatro Puntos, edited by the Mexican comrades of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, were distributed, as were the draft resolutions for the FI's World Congress, the resolution of the International Executive Committee on

Plan Colombia and the campaign of solidarity with the political and social organizations of this country.

For their part, the comrades of Democracia Socialista brought out a special edition of 1,500 copies of Raúl Pont's "Participative Democracy: the experience of Porto Alegre".

The press of the Fourth International, Inprecor and International Viewpoint, were sold on the stand of the Partido de los Trabajadores, as were new editions of the books "The Place of Marxism in History" by Ernest Mandel, and "Democracia, Participación, Ciudadanía" by Raúl Pont.

Dick Nichols, a leader of the Australian revolutionary organization the Democratic Socialist Party, which has fraternal relations with the Fourth International, also participated in all these activities.

Social Movements call for mobilisation

10 March 2001

Davos represents the concentration of wealth, the globalization of poverty and the destruction of our earth. Porto Alegre represents the hope that a new world is possible, where human beings and nature are the centre of our concern.

We are part of a movement which has grown since Seattle. We challenge the elite and their undemocratic processes, symbolised by the World Economic Forum in Davos. We came to share our experiences, build our solidarity, and demonstrate our total rejection of the neo-liberal policies of globalisation.

We are women and men, farmers, workers, unemployed, professionals, students, blacks and indigenous peoples, coming from the South and from the North, committed to struggle for peoples' rights, freedom, security, employment and education. We are fighting against the hegemony of

finance, the destruction of our cultures, the monopolization of knowledge, mass media, and communication, the degradation of nature, and the destruction of the quality of life by multinational corporations and anti-democratic policies. Participative democratic experiences — like that of Porto Alegre — show us that a concrete alternative is possible. We reaffirm the supremacy of human, ecological and social rights over the demands of finance and investors.

At the same time that we strengthen our movements, we resist the global elite and work for equity, social justice, democracy and security for everyone, without distinction. Our methodology and alternatives stand in stark contrast to the destructive policies of neo-liberalism.

Globalisation reinforces a sexist and patriarchal system. It increases the

feminisation of poverty and exacerbates all forms of violence against women. Equality between women and men is central to our struggle. Without this, another world will never be possible. Neo-liberal globalization increases racism, continuing the veritable genocide of centuries of slavery and colonialism which destroyed the bases of black African civilizations.

We call on all movements to be in solidarity with African peoples in the continent and outside, in defence of their rights to land, citizenship, freedom, peace, and equality, through the reparation of historical and social debts. Slave trade and slavery are crimes against humanity.

We express our special recognition and solidarity with indigenous peoples in their historic struggle against genocide and ethnocide and in defence of their rights, natural

resources, culture, autonomy, land, and territory.

Neo-liberal globalisation destroys the environment, health and people's living environment. Air, water, land and peoples have become commodities. Life and health must be recognized as fundamental rights which must not be subordinated to economic policies. The external debt of the countries of the South has been repaid several times over. Illegitimate, unjust and fraudulent, it functions as an instrument of domination, depriving people of their fundamental human rights with the sole aim of increasing international usury. We demand its unconditional cancellation and the reparation of historical, social, and ecological debts, as immediate steps toward a definitive resolution of the crisis this Debt provokes.

Financial markets extract resources and wealth from communities and nations, and subject national economies to the whims of speculators. We call for the closure of tax havens and the introduction of taxes on financial transactions. Privatisation is a mechanism for transferring public wealth and natural resources to the private sector. We oppose all forms of privatisation of natural resources and public services. We call for the protection of access to resources and public goods necessary for a decent life.

Multinational corporations organise global production with massive unemployment, low wages and unqualified labour and by refusing to recognise the fundamental worker's rights as defined by the ILO. We demand the genuine recognition of the right to organise and negotiate for unions, and new rights for workers to face the globalisation strategy. While goods and money are free to cross borders, the restrictions on the movement of people exacerbate exploitation and repression. We demand an end to such restrictions.

We call for a trading system which guarantees full employment, food security, fair terms of trade and local prosperity. Free trade is anything but free. Global trade rules ensure the accelerated accumulation of wealth and power by multinational

corporations and the further marginalisation and impoverishment of small farmers, workers and local enterprises.

We demand that governments respect their obligations to the international human rights instruments and multilateral environmental agreements. We call on people everywhere to support the mobilizations against the creation of the Free Trade Area in the Americas, an initiative which means the recolonisation of Latin America and the destruction of fundamental social, economic, cultural and environmental human rights.

The IMF, the World Bank and regional banks, the WTO, NATO and other military alliances are some of the multilateral agents of neo-liberal globalisation. We call for an end to their interference in national policy. These institutions have no legitimacy in the eyes of the people and we will continue to protest against their measures. Neo-liberal globalisation has led to the concentration of land ownership and favoured corporate agricultural systems which are environmentally and socially destructive. It is based on export oriented growth backed by large scale infrastructure development, such as dams, which displaces people from their land and destroys their livelihoods. Their loss must be restored.

We call for a democratic agrarian reform. Land, water and seeds must be in the hands of the peasants. We promote sustainable agricultural processes. Seeds and genetic stocks are the heritage of humanity. We demand that the use of transgenics and the patenting of life be abolished.

Militarism and corporate globalisation reinforce each other to undermine democracy and peace. We totally refuse war as a way to solve conflicts and we oppose the arms race and the arms trade. We call for an end to the repression and criminalisation of social protest. We condemn foreign military intervention in the internal affairs of our countries. We demand the lifting of embargoes and sanctions used as instruments of aggression, and express our solidarity with those

who suffer their consequences. We reject US military intervention in Latin America through the Plan Colombia.

We call for a strengthening of alliances, and the implementation of common actions, on these principal concerns. We will continue to mobilize on them until the next Forum. We recognize that we are now in a better position to undertake the struggle for a different world, a world without misery, hunger, discrimination and violence, with quality of life, equity, respect and peace.

We commit ourselves to support all the struggles of our common agenda to mobilise opposition to neo-liberalism. Among our priorities for the coming months, we will mobilize globally against the:

- World Economic Forum, Cancun, Mexico, 26 and 27 February
- Free Trade Area of the Americas, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6-7 April and Quebec City, Canada, 17-22 April
- Asian Development Bank, Honolulu, May
- G8 Summit, Genova, Italy, 15-22 July
- IMF and World Bank Annual Meeting, Washington DC, USA, 28 September - 4 October
- World Trade Organisation, 5-9 November (Qatar)

On April 17, we will support the international day of struggle against the importation of cheap agricultural products which create economic and social dumping, and the feminist mobilization against globalisation in Genoa.

We support the call for a world day of action against debt, to take place this year on July 20. The proposals formulated are part of the alternatives being elaborated by social movements around the world. They are based on the principle that human beings and life are not commodities, and in the commitment to the welfare and human rights of all.

Our involvement in the World Social Forum has enriched understanding of each of our struggles and we have been strengthened. We call on all peoples around the world to join in this struggle to build a better future. The World Social Forum of Porto

Indigenous mobilization defeats neo-liberalism

10 March 2001, by **Ernesto Herrera**

Today the struggle has prevented the implementation of the most anti-popular economic measures like the increase in gas tariffs and fuel prices. The Conaie has ensured the cancellation of the debt owed to the state by the body responsible for rural social security, together with the establishment of a policy of protection for Ecuadorian emigrants (in particular those going to the EU) and a credit mechanism for the poorest agricultural workers. They have also ensured the non-participation of Ecuador in "Plan Colombia", a political decision which is fundamental for the entire region. Conaie president Antonio Vargas stressed that this agreement was a victory that can be attributed "to our struggle, which is not only that of the indigenous peoples ... it is one step more on the road that leads to the end of poverty and exclusion".

During this new popular uprising organized by the Conaie, the National Peasant Coordination, the Popular Front and the Pachakutik movement, the Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indigenous Peoples rallied to the movement for the first time, allowing, as its leader Marco Murillo stressed, "the complete unity of the indigenous people".

This uprising was marked by the death of four indigenous activists, with more than 50 wounded and 300 demonstrators held. Unlike the

mobilisation that overthrew the government of Jamil Mahuad in January 2000, this movement set itself more modest objectives: to block the government's neo-liberal measures. Some 8,000 indigenous people, trades unionists, and students confronted the police, blocked the roads, organized strikes and occupied the universities and churches, showing once again the depth of popular discontent and the inability of the ruling class to establish a system of political domination which allows the implementation of the IMF programme with any chance of success.

The persistence of this indigenous radicalism influences other social sectors and feeds a growing politicisation of struggles and demands. There is no longer a real division between social and political questions. The mobilizations which initially affected the provinces and the peasant communities then spread to the national level, witnessing to the spirit of revolt of the indigenous peoples and, beyond this, the whole of the Ecuadorian people, against a cruelly inhuman economic policy.

Dollarisation has bought neither stability nor improvement of the quality of life. It has not revived growth or reduced inflation. The economic situation is still further degraded. According to the National Institute of Statistics, the rate of inflation, which could exceed 35% this

year, is linked to the policy of dollarisation that has pushed up the price of goods and services, aligned on international rates, and increased the speculative search for available dollars. This has led to an unprecedented concentration of incomes; the rigidity of rates of exchange has made exports less competitive and encouraged imports, ruining thousands of companies, with more than 200,000 people thrown into unemployment. The foreign debt is expected to reach 1.2 billion dollars, the equivalent of 30% of the public expenditure budget and nearly 8% of GDP.

Ecuador is in a situation of social emergency: 20% of the population lives on an income of less than a dollar a day and poverty affects 85% of the country's inhabitants; the poorest 10% of the population receive 0.6% of income while the richest 10% get 43%; nearly 50% of children suffer from malnutrition; half the indigenous population is illiterate and three children out of four leave school before the end of the primary stage.

This recent victory, beyond immediate conquests, underlines the decisive political importance of the indigenous movement, in terms of the relations of forces and the definition of a project on a national scale, but also in the construction of a vast network of solidarity, on the scale of the country as well as on the international level.

The Apotheosis of Bureaucratic Degeneration

10 March 2001, by **Andreas Kloke**

At the same time, DIKKI, a supposedly left, nationalist party failed to obtain the necessary 3% to re-enter parliament. SYN, which split from the CPG in 1991 and has become a party with a mild parliamentary and "Europhile" social-democratic line, managed only with great difficulties to be represented, getting 3.1%. The CPG is not only the biggest left party but also the only parliamentary force that takes a clear position for the defence of workers' interests against the neo-liberal offensive of the Greek and other EU governments and against the austerity policy supported by both PASOK and the right opposition in favour of the ECU, to which Greece was recently admitted.

The CPG also played an important role in the anti-imperialist mobilisations against the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia, Clinton's visit to Athens and other opportunities, as well as in the mobilisations of the peasants against the agrarian policy of the government and the EU, the school occupations in 1999/2000, the protests against the "reform" of education that makes it much more difficult for students to get a school-leaving qualification and in some defensive struggles of the workers against the onslaught of government and capital.

Nevertheless the influence of the CPG in the trade unions has declined gradually in the last few years and only the union of the construction workers is still under its control. But the whole trade union movement, still largely led by a bureaucracy close to PASOK, is undergoing a sharp decline that nobody would have expected to this extent at the beginning of the 1990s.

So the CPG leadership made certain efforts to show a left profile in order to gain influence among the youth and to correspond to the mood of the party's rank and file. But there's no doubt that the main result of the party congress is the confirmation of the basically right, partially even reactionary, Stalinist-bureaucratic line of the party apparatus, and this, of

course, "unanimously". There was virtually no real controversial discussion at the congress and this, even for the CPG, is a novelty.

Return to classic Stalinism

The "unanimity" could be achieved only by the hardest bureaucratic measures against deviant opinions during the preparations for the congress. Trade union leaders Kostopoulos (ex-parliamentarian) and Theonas (Euro-parliamentarian), who had supported the opening of the party to the collaboration with other political forces, were ruthlessly excluded from the party without having the opportunity to present their opinions according to the rules of democracy. Lots of articles were published in the party newspaper Rizospastis that branded the "deviationists" more or less openly as "agents" of the "class enemy". These repulsive methods guaranteed the seemingly total triumph of the leading clique around Papariga, Gontikas and Mailis at the congress. The background of this conflict is the sharpening sectarian line followed by the party leadership in the last few years. This line refers to certain elements of "third period" policy that was the leading orientation of the Comintern in 1928-34, though the classical right line of the "popular front" remains in force.

One has to consider that the party leadership was confronted for the first time after decades with the problem of forming its own point of view on so many difficult and complex issues of international affairs, for example on the end of the "socialist camp" itself. The party leadership "solved" this problem by a big leap back into the good old times of Stalinism, explaining the collapse of the Soviet Union mainly by "revisionist" developments since the 20th congress of the CPSU when Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes in a halfhearted way.

The CPG has tried to avoid the process of social-democratisation that virtually all the European CP's underwent, some of them a long time before 1990/91 like the Italian PCI or partially the French PCF, and after 1991 more or less all the former Stalinist parties which had exercised power in Eastern Europe. But the CPG leadership has found no better explanation than old Maoist "theories" and uses now certain elements of allegedly "left" tactics applied in the far-off days of Stalinism. In the political practice of the last few years this meant that the CPG leadership did not even try to build up common fronts of struggle together with other political currents in the trade unions like PASOK or SYN or is even openly opposed to doing so. PAME, the so-called "front of workers' unity" supported by the CPG, doesn't mean anything else but unity of the party with itself and, though not yet applied consistently, the preliminary stage of purely "red" unions of the CPG. What cannot be achieved by these tactics, of course, is a real workers' front against the escalating attacks of the ruling class on their rights and standard of living.

Anti-imperialist rhetoric

In the last years and particularly since the wars in former Yugoslavia broke out, the party propaganda focused on a specific form of "anti-imperialism". The CPG misses no opportunity to blame NATO and the imperialist powers for everything that happens in the Balkans and in the world. The party congress decided to construct an "Anti-imperialist Anti-monopolist Democratic Front" (AADF) as central core of the party's political orientation.

The "solidarity" of the party leadership with the peoples of the Balkans in the 90es was, however, very one-sidedly limited to "friendship with Serbia" which, in fact, consisted of an

unconditional support for Milosevic's regime including all its wars and crimes that were committed at the expense of all the other peoples of former Yugoslavia and the Serb people itself. Except Milosevic's regime, all the other governments of the area, like the Albanian, Macedonian ("FYROM") and all the political forces of the Kosovars, were and are "agents" and puppets of NATO imperialism.

With this assessment the CPG leadership manages to avoid any serious analysis of the national and social problems of the peoples and all its wisdom is largely limited to the position that the borders of former Yugoslavia should not have changed and at least be conserved as they are now. In this latter point its position coincides with the viewpoint of the NATO imperialists.

The "AADF" means in practice a codification of the party's "united front" policy with the most backward circles of the right, certain petit bourgeois layers and nationalist intellectuals who instinctively reject some ideological consequences of EU-integration and capitalist "globalisation" and have partially adopted an anti-Western attitude characterized even by hostility towards the Enlightenment. This spectrum includes the extreme and fascist right, the recent church hierarchy led by Athenian archbishop Christodoulos, nationalist circles in PASOK and "New Democracy" as well as in smaller parties and even parts of the so-called extreme left and groups of Trotskyist origin which in fact have surrendered to a particularly aggressive version of Greek nationalism - in the name of "anti-imperialism", of course. The CPG leadership has recently tightened its links with these circles and nationalist journalist Liana Kanelli was elected as member of parliament for the CPG last year.

"Patriotism" and nationalism

Criticizing the economic policy of the government, one of the principal accusations of the CPG leadership is the "sell-out" of the national economy

to the interests of European monopoly capital. As far as foreign politics are concerned, an important component of the party's criticism is the alleged policy of abandonment to Turkish "expansionism" under the pressure of US imperialism. This concerns mainly Cyprus and the Aegean Sea. The CPG supported the deployment of Russian S-300 missiles in Cyprus (which were deployed in Crete finally) and in this way more armament in the divided island. As general secretary Papariga said in a TV interview years ago, the CPG supports defence of the fatherland "tooth and nail" showing by this how far the party is away from its ideological origins in the early 20s when it was strongly opposed to the wars of the Greek establishment and the communists resisted Greek imperialism as they said at that time.

The recent CPG leadership argues that Turkey is particularly aggressive and is supported by international imperialism. From this point of view, the huge armament programs and the enormous money Greece spends every year for this purpose are simply measures for the defence of "national independence and sovereignty". The "patriotic" viewpoint of the CPG leadership is rather illogical, however, since it also blames the Greek governments for their subordination under the dictates of the big imperialist powers in NATO and EU. But why should we support a government and an army of such a state in the event of war? Is Greece more underdeveloped or colonial than Turkey?

The CPG leadership is strictly against buying weapon systems from NATO countries and suggests instead further construction of the "national" armament industry. As the case of the S-300 missiles shows, it has no objections to buying weapons in Russia.

Last year archbishop Christodoulos mobilized ten thousands of people against the intention of the government to abolish the recording of religious denominations on ID cards. This ID record was originally introduced by the Nazi occupation authorities in order to find out who was Jewish. It means a clear discrimination against minorities that

are not "Greek orthodox", i.e. "reliable citizens" but belong to potentially "dangerous" sections of the population like the Turks (so-called Muslims) and Pomaks in Thrace but also Catholics and others. The CPG leadership took a "neutral" stand on this conflict and contented itself with stating that both sides were trying to distract the attention of the people from their actual problems.

During the last 10 years, since the borders to the Eastern European countries were opened, a deep transformation process of the Greek working class has taken place. Hundreds of thousands of "illegal" immigrants, mainly Albanians but also many from other Eastern European countries, Asia and Africa, virtually all of them without political rights, without social security or trade union protection, are today a constant component of the most oppressed layers of the working class, particularly in agriculture. The more or less "illegal" immigrants are estimated to constitute some 15-20% of the work force today. The official police terror against these absolutely underprivileged people but also the rise of racism combined with nationalist tendencies in broader layers of the population have become everyday reality. The "Theses" of the party's CC presented to the party congress, a text of 48 pages, have literally nothing to say about all these problems.

The theses of the CC

The "Theses" of the CC are entitled: "Struggle has a prospect - with a strong CPG - Popular Front". The terms "popular power" and "popular economy" dominate in the important chapter on the "AADF". It is the task of the AADF to struggle for the realization of these two goals and "to take a firm stand for the international orientation of the country, for the development of new ways concerning collaboration in trade and economy, to break at the same time with the imperialist blocs (that means EU and NATO) and to oppose them, in a world that will not only be ruled by imperialist domination but also by the

strengthening tendencies of confrontation, independence and emancipation." (Thesis 20) Therefore the CPG aims for stronger economic collaboration not only with countries it considers to be still "socialist" (China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba) but also with other countries that follow an "anti-imperialist" line (whatever that means) like Milosevic's Serbia and Russia. This perspective, however, seems to exist only in the imagination of the CPG leadership.

How can the suggestions of the CC and the goals of the AADF be implemented in reality? Thesis 20 explains that " a revolutionary government (...) as power of the working class and its allies" could be created in "a revolutionary situation". But in the following section it says: "Under the conditions of class confrontations and decline of the influence of the bourgeois parties and

their allies while the conditions for a radical overthrow and revolutionary transition have not yet developed, a government of anti-imperialist, anti-monopolist forces can emerge on the basis of parliament."

So it's quite obvious that the CPG leadership, despite its recourses to tactical elements of the "third period" and despite its "left" and anti-imperialist" rhetoric, remains trapped in the logic of class collaboration and the classical version of the popular front. The goals of "anti-monopolism" and "anti-imperialism" can be achieved without breaking with the institutions of the bourgeois state and the capitalist profit system altogether! This world of true democracy of middle class employers and shop owners can become reality if Greece cuts its links with EU and NATO. This means an important theoretical achievement: 10 years after the

collapse of "real socialism", "socialist camp" and, in the final analysis, of Stalin's reactionary idea of "socialism in one country", the CPG leadership discovers the possibility of a "non-monopolist", petit bourgeois democracy in one capitalist country (or some capitalist countries).

The theses actually do not offer important elements of an analysis of the international situation or the conditions in Greece from a Marxist viewpoint but "mediocrity, intellectual indolence, detestation of theory, open contempt and vulgarisation of scientific and theoretical research are being promoted. (...) There is no serious analysis of the most important contemporary contradictions but it is simply stated that they are sharpening as, incidentally, in the last 200 years. No social-economic relations are analysed but simply consequences registered." [