



## IV327 - January 2001

### Did the Israeli left disappear?

5 January 2001, by **Michel Warschawski**

The Palestinians too have been aware of this trend, and many political activists and intellectuals have expressed their disappointment and even anger. Yesterday's friends have become again enemies, offering their peace medals to try to legitimise the propaganda machine of war criminals.

The Palestinians have the right to be angered by the behaviour of these hypocrites and to denounce their total lack of moral backbone. They even have the duty to re-evaluate their co-operation with the so-called Israeli peace camp, and to put new and more drastic conditions for its eventual renewal.

Together with the anger expressed by the Palestinians, one can also identify a huge disappointment, as if such a behaviour on behalf of the great majority of the Israeli peace camp was not predictable. This disappointment, however, is a result of a confusion which has developed during the last decade among numerous Palestinians and activists.

This confusion started already, in 1982, when many Palestinians have been fascinated by the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who demonstrated against the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla. "In no Arab capitol were such big demonstrations against the Israeli aggression in Lebanon" used to state Palestinian activists, expressing simultaneously

their disappointment from the lack of solidarity in the Arab countries, and their positive surprise towards the newly emerging Israeli peace camp. No doubt that such a mass phenomenon couldn't be ignored by the Palestinian National Movement, and had to be integrated in their political strategy. But without illusions and idealisation.

There were however both idealisation and illusions, especially at the beginning of the Oslo process. Every Israeli who supported the so-called peace process was perceived by many Palestinians as a friend and an ally. The more these Israelis were close to the centre of the political map, the more they were considered valuable. Little attention was put on the motivations of most of the Israeli supporters to the peace process, of the partners of "people to people" programs, and the price they were ready (or not ready) to pay for peace. The gap was huge between the Palestinian demand for freedom and self-determination, and the Israeli dream of separation; between the demand for rights, and the Israeli conception of percentages; the demand for respect and reciprocity, and the Israeli patronising and dictating behaviour. But some Palestinian intellectuals and activists have been blinded by these new "Friends of the Palestinians", which became for them THE Israeli peace forces and their privileged allies. Now

they are asking, "where are the Israeli peace forces, where is the left?"

Let me tell you, the left didn't wait one day to strongly denounce the crimes of the Israeli army and to blame in a clear voice the full responsibility of Barak and his government. In fact this part of the peace movement never stopped its activities against the continuing occupation, even for one single day. Already in September 1993, the Peace Bloc demonstrated for the immediate dismantling of the settlements, the release of all the political prisoners; throughout the last seven years Bat Shalom and the Peace Bloc launched systematic campaigns for Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem; since two years the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Rabbis for Human Rights have been active against the ethnic cleansing policy in C Areas. While Peace Now and Meretz supported the closure under the false argument that closure=separation=peace all the real peace organisations denounced it as a huge violation of Human Rights as well as a violation of the Oslo agreement. To these peace organisations, one should add the systematic campaigns of B'tselem, Physicians for Human Rights, the Public Committee Against Tortures and several other Israeli Human Rights organisations for the defence of the individual and collective rights of the Palestinians. They didn't stop their mission, under the pretext that a

peace process is on the way, and though many among them invested many hopes in the Oslo process, at least at its beginning, they never stopped to relate to the reality, the reality of occupation and oppression.

For all these organisations, and the few thousands of activists behind them, the Palestinian uprising was not a surprise, and who is to blame was not difficult to find. And they reacted, as strongly as they could: dozens of demonstrations, sometimes with a dozen, sometimes with few hundreds; they wrote courageous articles in the mainstream media (Tanya Reinhart, Uri Avneri, Haim Hanegbi, Yitshak Laor, and others); they organise petitions and solidarity visits to the families of the victims. For more than a month, they are mobilised, days and nights, to denounce Israeli violence, to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to defend its legitimate rights.

Solidarity and unconditional defence of what is right, is what has motivated the real Israeli peace forces, the moral as well as political rejection of any form of oppression and occupation has been their struggle for decades. For them peace is the complete end of occupation, not peace parties financed by the USAID or the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, while the closure is dismantling the Palestinian society and the liberation fighters are still behind bars. This is why they were on the streets from the very first day of the Israeli offensive.

While we were continuing our struggle

against occupation, the rest of the Israeli peace camp, however, was busy in normalisation. Prisoners, settlements, house demolitions and closure didn't bother it. The basic motivation of the great majority of the Israeli peace activists has never been either solidarity with the Arabs or values like the right of people to resist foreign aggression, but keeping the interests of Israel, the way they understand it: not to be involved in a war with no chance to win, keeping a good international image and good relations with the US, keeping the Jewish and democratic nature of Israel etc.

Only when these objectives are in danger, will the mainstream Israeli peace movement mobilise itself. Otherwise, it will rather prefer to keep on-line with the national consensus, and support the policy of the government. This is why, at the beginning of a crisis, one will never see an immediate mobilisation of the mainstream Israeli peace camp: neither in 1982, nor in 1987, nor after the massacre on Haram el Sharif in 1990. A Palestinian activist from Kafr Kar'a, Jamal Zahalka, once called this reaction "the First Day Syndrome": the first reaction is a reaction of support to the official policy; only later, when the price to be paid for such policy is becoming more and more clear, starts a process of disconnection and dissidence.

During the last weeks, we have been witnessing the same pattern, and we can predict that the continuation of the crisis, international pressures,

more casualties on the Israeli side, will gradually push more and more Israelis to return to a more critical stand.

The decision taken by the Palestinian NGOs co-ordination to put an end to the peace parties" with Israeli partners, and other "people to people" initiatives, reflects a new awareness about the reality of the Israeli peace camp and its limitations, precisely because it differentiates between the organisations and movements which are only motivated by their will to impose normalisation on the Palestinian people, and those who are motivated by the defence of the rights of the Palestinians and the struggle for justice.

Peace is not a party, but the end of a struggle, a long and difficult struggle for liberation and freedom. In this struggle the Palestinian people do have allies in Israel, not too many, but dedicated, and motivated by moral integrity and the drive for justice. They don't look for peace celebrations and awards, and they don't ask anything in exchange for what they are doing. They only want to be able to look in the eyes of their children and grand children without shame, and to be able to tell them: injustice was committed in our name, and we did our best to stop it.

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## **Al-Aqsa Intifada: The Refusal to Surrender**

**5 January 2001, by Dr Majed Nassar, Nassar Ibrahim**



The same occupation has been carrying out a policy of terror for years toward the Palestinian people, including arrests, deportations,

killings, and robbery of the national economy, in addition to confiscating lands and building settlements. This same occupying force still refuses to acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, namely, the right for self-determination, the

creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right for all refugees to return.

The spark that ignited this Intifada, moreover, was the provocative visit of Ariel Sharon, accompanied by hundreds of Israeli soldiers, to Al

Haram A-Sharif. Any attempt to minimise this fact or to explain the events in any other way would be a deception.

## A Refusal to Surrender

There has been an increasing loss of confidence in the peace process designed according to the American-Israeli vision, which implies the exclusive implementation of Israeli terms. These terms include:

- Sundering the geographic and demographic unity of the Palestinian people into cantons A, B, and C, divided in concrete by bypass roads that consume thousands of dunums of Palestinian lands;
- The building and expansion of new settlements;
- The continuing siege of Palestinian cities, villages, and camps;
- The policy of house demolitions;
- The rejection of Palestinian basic human as well as national rights;
- The use of Palestinian prisoners as bargaining chips for more concessions.

In addition, Israel consistently refuses to comply with UN resolutions, replacing them with its own self-serving terms of reference, reinforced by creating "facts on the ground." Israel depends exclusively on biased American support which whitewashes Israel's practices against the Palestinian people. The United States, moreover, continues to threaten to use its veto power against any attempt to condemn Israeli crimes.

The recent events, as well as the results of seven years of the Oslo Agreement fiasco and all the subsequent "agreements" are nothing but devices intended to neutralise and deny the rights of the Palestinian people. None of these agreements constitute an effective means for achieving a just peace in the region. The extreme violence employed by Israel against the Palestinian uprising is nothing but another attempt to

dictate by force a peace based on surrender.

## Israel's Intransigence

Although Israel presents itself as a party willing to make compromises, in reality the "facts on the ground" illustrate clearly its complete intransigence with respect to any and all negotiations. Barak went to Camp David, which he saw as the beginning of the final status negotiations, bringing with him the following conditions:

- No withdrawal to the 6 June 1967 borders, in violation of UN resolutions 242 and 338;
- Insistence that most of the settlements should remain and be annexed to Israel - also in contradiction to both UN resolutions and internal law which consider all settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza illegal;
- Denial of Palestinian rights to East Jerusalem, and dealing with Jerusalem in toto as the eternal capital of Israel;
- Refusal to allow Palestinians to return to the homes from which they were expelled in 1948, also in contradiction to UN Resolution 194;
- Refusal to allow a "foreign" army west of the Jordan River.

The meaning of all this is clear: if Israel ever does accept the creation of a Palestinian state, it would be a dependent, non-viable entity without any means of defending itself.

It is important to understand the significance of these conditions for Palestinians, and especially the main "facts" on the ground: the settlements and the growing network of Israeli highways. The settlements are an Israeli political project aimed at nothing less than defeating Palestinian aspirations for freedom and independence. Any realistic discourse focused on the creation of a Palestinian state with the coexistence of the settlements and bypass roads would imply a state without sovereignty. This has always been a

main cause of conflict and confrontation. Israel's vision of annexing the already-existing settlements translates into annexation of an additional 15% of Palestinian lands. At present, there are approximately 200,000 settlers in more than 140 settlements throughout the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. In Hebron, to take a dramatic case, 400 Jewish settlers live in the midst of 140,000 Palestinians but control 20% of the city.

The refugee problem is another basic issue at the heart of the Palestinian cause. Refugees were created as a direct result of the Zionist project in Palestine. Seventy-eight percent of Palestine was occupied in 1948, and as a result, approximately one million Palestinians were made refugees. During the 1967 War, another half a million refugees were added to this number. Today there are approximately four million refugees living in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and elsewhere, as well as in Palestine itself.

These are the facts and the foundation upon which the present Intifada broke out. The only conclusion to be drawn from all this is that while Israel speaks eloquently about its desire for peace, it acts on the ground as a brutal occupying intending to maintain its control forever. Oslo only aided the Israeli occupation army in tightening its grip on each and every Palestinian city and village. Plans for redeployment as laid out in Oslo have only served to improve Israel's strategic military position rather than actually facilitate its withdrawal. The recent summit at Sharm a-Sheikh on 17 October with Clinton, Mubarak, Annan, Solana, Arafat, and Barak, was yet another step in perpetuating the deception that has dominated all attempts to deal rationally with the conflict. The Summit described the Palestinian resistance as simple rioting rather than as the profound expression of the aspirations of an entire population for freedom and independence. The Sharm-a Sheikh Summit and its results were clearly dictated by the American view of "peace" in the region - a vision that would crush the Palestinian Intifada, block the Arab national movement and hinder the broadening of solidarity

movements in Europe and elsewhere in the world. One of the most dangerous consequences of the Summit was the equalisation of the victim and the victimiser, as well as its attempt to ignore the liberation movement's political dimension, which underlie Palestinian resistance. In short, Sharm a-Sheikh was an attempt to transform the reality of Israeli brute force into political gains that would dictate Israel's political conditions in any future agreements.

## **Al-Aqsa Intifada: Unprecedented Palestinian Unity**

The present Intifada is distinguished by a unique unanimity of intent and motivation among all sectors of Palestinian society. Palestinians on the streets of Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank are using similar slogans to express their state of despair and their loss of confidence in the peace process. They have united for the first time with the Palestinians living inside the Green Line, as well as with those living in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Since 1948, Israel has tried to isolate the Palestinians inside the Green Line from the rest of the Palestinian people, treating them as "Israeli Arabs". Nevertheless, Palestinians from 1948 have entered fully into the present Intifada (and one of their number, MK Mohammad Barakeh, is facing trial for his call to support the uprising). Their participation in the Al-Aqsa Intifada is an acknowledgement of their belonging to the Palestinian people. The wide Intifada is also theirs, a means for them to fight for their own rights.

## **Israel's Strategy of Confrontation: "Bring Them to Their Knees"**

Palestinians throughout the world are committed to reaffirming their inalienable, national rights. Sharon's intention, with the blessing of the Israeli government, was to create yet another "fact on the ground". This alone is sufficient to explain Israel's violent reaction toward the Palestinian demonstrators protesting Sharon's visit. Barak's government wanted to deliver a clear message to the Palestinian people: that Israel is ready to do everything necessary to protect its own political interests as defined by Barak at Camp David. The Palestinians must either kneel in submission and accept Israeli terms, or to be subject to Israeli terror and killing.

Israeli army tactics - use of utmost force as quickly as possible in order to crush resistance - has thus far been successfully (though not completely successfully) "hidden" under claims of political and "security" considerations.

Four elements define Israel's strategy in dealing with the Intifada:

- Maintaining Israeli superiority through tactics that ensure the highest possible number of Palestinian losses and the least among the Israeli army;

- Tightening the siege over Palestinian cities and villages, as well as severely restricting freedom of movement through the Israeli army's complete control of all roads;

- Encouraging settlers throughout the West Bank and Gaza to attack

Palestinian villages;

- Attempting to portray the confrontations as one with a truly armed and dangerous Palestinian force, although Israel knows very well that the Palestinian police possess only small or limited arms. Israel, nevertheless, has used this argument as a cover and an excuse for its disproportionate use of combat helicopters, rockets and tanks.

## **The Bottom Line**

Confronted with this reality, Arafat has found himself in front of yet another closed door. Any further compromise on the basic points of the final status negotiations would mean defeat in the struggle toward gaining recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestinians. No Palestinian would stand for it. The demands of the Palestinian people remain simple and clear: a complete end to the occupation; the dismantling of all settlements; the granting of freedom and true independence to Palestinians in a sovereign state, with Jerusalem as its capital; and the right of return to all refugees.

The Palestinian people seek a just political solution, not a new creative form of occupation. This is the reason that the conflict continues and resistance becomes stronger. And this is the reason that the Israeli occupation, with all its tactics of terror and aggression, will never be able to crush the Palestinian spirit and longing for justice. The Intifada is popular political resistance with a political program and clear goals. It will continue until those political goals are achieved.

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## **Thus an Apartheid Regime Develops**

## 5 January 2001, by **Azmi Bishara**

With regards to the Security Forces' pattern of treatment, the Green Line has been blurred. The police forces have clearly institutionalised two different ways of oppressing demonstrations, as well as two different forms of imprisonment and detention. Hand in hand with this is the entire Israeli media which has been mobilised for the benefit of the security forces to incite the Jewish community against the Arab - defining it as the enemy. The representatives of the Left are tongue-tied. The majority of the Israeli public (as revealed by the polls) express understanding with mobs that attack Arabs, this creating the conditions for the establishment of an apartheid regime.

All at once, the secondary contradictions within Israeli society, together with its party divisions, became irrelevant. All have withdrawn to the background because of the 'Arab problem'. It turns out that when the state is not a state of all its citizens - namely, when citizenship is not at the centre of the state- equality becomes a mere illusion and maybe, even a fraud. When a policeman or a border guard policeman is confronted with an Arab demonstrator, he does not use 'discriminating means' with him; he simply behaves towards him as an enemy.

The fact is that every time Arab citizens were murdered in Israel, the Left or what is so-called 'the Left', was in power and the 'Right' was in opposition: the massacre at Kufr Qassem [1956], Land Day [1976], together with the recent events all took place under Labour governments. This so-called Left has always backed the security forces, strengthening them and abandoning the Arab citizens. For years Arab citizens have been complaining about the conduct of Police Commander of the Northern Districts, Alic Ron, but nobody in the Left will listen. The Minister of Interior Security, Professor Ben Ami embraces him and gives him his complete backing.

The recent demonstrations inside

Israel, in which 14 people were killed and hundreds of youngsters were wounded are not the first in which shooting took place in recent years. There have been demonstrations in Al ruha, Um- Al -Sahali, and other places. Though hardly any demonstration in the Arab sector manages to pass without shooting, all remains quiet in Israel. The recent events are not a turnabout, but a case in which quantity has changed into quality. All this time the Israeli Left did not exist. There was complete silence at the time of the shooting in Lydd, where I personally was wounded. Furthermore, no sound was uttered when Alic Ron used violence to implement the policy of house demolition.

It is the paternalism of the Israeli Left that leads it again and again into extreme conduct. Not only does it hold the wrong positions, but - and here as opposed to the Right - it also expects the Arabs to accept these positions. That is why the Left becomes disappointed and angry, and that is why they look for "agitators" and for those to put the blame on. We, who support equal citizenship and liberal position such as opposing an identity policy and struggling for a civil-democratic line of equality, have suddenly become extreme agitators in the state of Israel.

Last year I tried to interest three prominent Israeli newspapers on the subject of increasing violence on the part of the Police, but nobody was interested enough to follow up the subject. Israeli liberalism is shocked only when a Right wing mob sets out to kill Arabs. It so happened that the Left only awoke after the massacre in Nazareth, which started with a Jewish mob from Nazareth-Ilit [Upper Nazareth] running wild but ended with brutal violence against Arabs on the part of the Police. The only thing that the Left did was to organise a delegation to visit the bereaved families. But it is forbidden and unacceptable that the Left becomes one clan that comforts the other clan.

The brutal behaviour demonstrated towards Arab citizens reflects the same values which enable such unrestrained brutality in the Occupied Territories. The same goes for the absolute silence and even the explicit support of the Israeli Left, of all the steps taken by the Security Forces - a silence that continues even in the face of more than a hundred killed and thousands wounded in the recent demonstrations in the Occupied Territories. Also there, the events started in the wake of the Police action when they fired without any justification at people who were praying at the Al Aqsa mosque.

These unprecedented brutal steps, to which the use of helicopters and tanks was later added, won general agreement among the Israeli public- fully accepting the Israeli version concerning the Peace Process ("We have no partner for peace") and the behaviour of the army in the Occupied Territories.

Both inside and outside the Knesset we said that Barak's program, which was celebrated at the time of his victory in the last elections, cannot be a basis for peace. We reiterated that before Barak left for Camp David and naturally after it. So why does the Left seem so surprised? What is indeed surprising is the surprise of the Left that continues to be addicted to the wrong information, and to images of images.

But nobody wanted to listen because everybody was so pleased that Netanyahu had been beaten in the elections. Thus the Israeli Left strengthened the anti-Arab line. The Israeli Left gambled on a peace based on the existing relation of forces and did not set up principles of justice and equality. That is the reason it did not confront the Israeli public opinion on the terms for a just peace, and instead of criticising Barak's initiative, supported and aided the accusation of the Palestinians who opposed an agreement based on an apartheid state, divided into cantons. That is also why the Left stood not only by

Barak's program, but also backed the schedule that he set up in order to find out if 'there is a partner for peace.' or not. The Left, with the Security argument written on its flag, brought militarists to power and did not give one thought to the significance of the 'political' steps taken in the last months. Today we are witnesses to the results of this attitude. And all this after no voice was raised throughout the previous year against the policy of massive settlements, against house demolition, against the deportation of people from their homes and against continuing restrictions on movement and labour. These processes were beyond Barak's governments' areas of interest in its first year.

That also was the case with the Syrian and Lebanon questions: it was possible to withdraw from Syria and Lebanon with a peace agreement. But the Israeli Left celebrated the unilateral retreat instead of exerting pressure on Barak to achieve a comprehensive agreement while he constantly ignores any moral criticism of his program.

I view the war that Israel declared on the Palestinian Authority as the continuation of the same politics executed by different means. That has been the political trend of Barak from its beginning. It boils down to the ultimatum that Barak gave the Palestinians: either everything or nothing - either Arafat immediately puts his signature to Barak's conditions, concerning the 'Four Nos' as he had presented them since his election campaign - or nothing, namely war. The non-'moderate physical pressure' now being exerted on the Palestinians, including threats on the life of Arafat, is a continuation of the diplomatic pressure that began after the Camp David summit. Very few joined us during those months when we tried, time and again, to make it clear that no Palestinian would accept such an ultimatum, and that this was a dangerous policy that would lead to war.

Barak and his supporters paid no attention to the ominous danger and were convinced that they would be able to force an agreement on the Palestinians. Barak was pleased with

his diplomatic achievements and with his success in presenting Arafat as a recalcitrant person who refuses to accept his 'generous' offers. Barak remains linked to the same principles which he declared before the elections; 'The Four Nos': no to Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, no to a withdrawal to the 4th of June borders, no to the dismantling of settlements (with 80% of the settlers under Israeli sovereignty) and a definite no to any debate concerning the Right to Return, or any just solution to the refugee question. That is the reason that the popular uprising was so predictable

Sharon's rush to the Al Aqsa mosque is only a small detail in these happenings and is part of larger Israeli moves. It is difficult to decide whether Sharon's visit was the direct cause, or whether it was Barak agreeing to the visit. It is most plausible that it was the massive presence of the police surrounding the mosque and the massacre of the people praying in Al Aqsa the day after. We must remember that Sharon did not try to provoke the Palestinians. He just came to test if Barak really meant to preserve Israeli sovereignty in that area. Barak and Ben Ami sent thousands of policemen to escort Sharon and on the following day they surrounded the mosque, preparing for the shooting that was to lead to the death of seven men and dozens wounded. Thus, they passed the test set by Sharon for a unified national government, but failed completely in the peace test. The unity between Ben Ami's police and Sharon in the break-in to Al Aqsa is the only basis for the present emergency government. It has no other basis.

Israel had hoped that the Palestinian police would be a kind of militia on its behalf, whose role would be to keep order for Israel in the Occupied Territories. Israel held negotiations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, but expected to receive their help against the Palestinian people.

Israel expected Arafat to behave like Anton Lahad [the Head of the collaborating South Lebanon Army during the Israeli occupation of South

Lebanon], and that he would be instrumental in guarding the interests of Israel in the Occupied Territories. It seems that Palestinian policemen were expected to join the shooting against their own people and not to react when demonstrators were attacked with lethal firearms. When it became clear that in moments of crisis the PLO would unite with its people and would not turn its guns on them, and that the victims of Israel would not send the victims of the occupation to jail - the moment this dream was shattered, Israel again returned to use full force. But unlike the first Intifada, and because a separation of forces between the Israeli army and the Palestinian people actually had taken place, it is not manifested at present in broken bones but in shooting and bombing from afar - a minute Gulf War. And Israel pretends to be surprised that the Palestinian policemen did not shoot their fellow men, but tried to defend the demonstrators who were being attacked by the Israeli army.

Now the only meeting places with the Israeli army is in Jerusalem and at check-points at the time of demonstrations. Since the army has not decided to re-conquer the cities and villages, it bombs them. When there is direct friction as at Al Aqsa, it becomes obvious that Occupation remains Occupation and Israel remains Israel. It doesn't matter if the minister is named Ben Ami or Sharon. The place where the greatest friction took place was at Al Aqsa immediately after Sharon's visit. The Israeli police behaved there the same as they have behaved since '67 - shooting and killing. Nothing has changed.

We have always said that there are three possibilities for an agreement; the first, a two-state solution, namely, the establishment of a Palestinian state within the borders of '67, including Jerusalem, without the settlements. The second possibility is that of a comprehensive solution of living together in one democratic state. The third is an Apartheid reality. Anyone who refuses to accept one of the first two solutions, consequently leads to the third - Apartheid. The Israeli Left did not accept the principle of two states, but supported an agreement based on canonisation of the Occupied Territories. They are

still shocked by the very possibility of one shared democratic state, based on national and citizenship equality. Therefore, they themselves are leading to Apartheid, namely- they support the third solution.

The obvious conclusion that the Left has to draw from these recent events is not to indulge in a kind of hypocritical and beautified despair, but to begin a real soul-searching self-criticism. In this context, we call upon the Israeli Left to regain control and express determinedly their objection to the government's policy, to struggle against Apartheid, against the systematic oppression of the

Palestinian population and against Barak's 'peace plan'. The principles of this policy will only worsen the situation and bring about its escalation. It is not enough simply to call 'the two sides to the discussion table'. The Left must clearly declare the set of morals and values needed for any agreement.

Not only will the Left have a lot to do. Both in the Arab world and in Arab society, many missions await us. The declaration of war on a whole nation has left us with scorched land which enables an irrational political discourse to take over, sometimes that of a religious war. This discourse has

not yet chosen the colours with which the national uprising will be painted, but such a danger is looming, mainly in public opinion and in parts of the Arab media. The national and democratic forces in Arab society must not ignore these phenomena. Difficult as it may well be, we must tackle them even during the most painful process of de-colonisation.

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## The Tantheem Wildcard

5 January 2001, by **Toufic Haddad**

A group of 25 masked men march into the funeral tent. Some are dressed in army fatigues, while others wear vests with military accoutrements. Most brandish M16 automatic rifles while some carry less traditional sawed-off automatic weapons. They pay their respects to the family and make a short but fiery speech about how the martyr's blood has not been spilled in vain, and whose death shall be avenged.

This is the Tantheem, the Fateh based paramilitary group whose Arabic name means "the Organization". Much of the recent gun battles the '67 Occupied Territories have witnessed and which the international media has been keen to report (as though there were a semblance of equal forces squaring off) has been attributed to them. Israel has repeatedly laid blame on the Tantheem for the "cycle of violence" and called upon the Palestinian Authority to disarm them. Yet these demands are little more than bluff: Israel knows as well as the PA that this is impossible as they compose the rank and file of Arafat's only constituency. Furthermore, it could also be claimed that Israel is indirectly responsible for the creation of the

Tantheem given their insistence upon a "strong police force", to use the Oslo agreement's phrasing.

### Who are the Tantheem

The presence of the Tantheem on the Palestinian scene is quite recent, dating back only to the 1995 arrival of the Palestinian Authority in the Occupied Territories. It was then that the establishment of the Palestinian Authority came hand in hand with the establishment of an elaborate security and intelligence network - a precondition Israel made in the Oslo Accords. During an August 30th 1993 Knesset speech, Yitzhak Rabin called upon the creation of "a reality whereby internal Palestinian security will be in the Palestinians' hands". "They will rule by their own methods, freeing, and this is most important, the Israeli army soldiers from having to do what they will do." (Haaretz, Yediot Aharonot 7 September 1993.)

Had Rabin lived longer, he would have been proud of his own forethought when it was fully actualised. The Palestinian Authority gladly collected

the Intifada-tested ranks of the West Bank and Gaza Fateh movement into its myriad security services. In fact, PA security services comprised 70% of the public sector jobs. Needless to say, as journalist Graham Usher put it "the PA does not need a 30,000 strong police force to facilitate the economic, social and political development of its 2.6 million people. A police force of this size is only needed to keep the lid on the people in the absence of such development."

The security services themselves were dominated by Arafat-loyal strongmen, among whose infamous names include Jibril Rajoub (head of Preventative Security, West Bank), Mohammed Dahlan (Preventative Security, Gaza), Toufic Tirawi (Intelligence, West Bank), Amin El Hindi (Intelligence, Gaza), Musa Arafat (Military Intelligence) Haj Ismail (West Bank Chief of Police) and Ghazi Jabali (Gaza Police). Furthermore, their horizontal positioning vis a vis one another endorsed a system of perpetual elbowing between the factions for influence, power and territory, which occasionally erupted into violence.

The role of the security services involved several tasks, most important

of which was the maintaining of the political (largely Islamic) opposition in check. But their work also involved following up on known Israeli collaborators, monitoring the black market arms trade and keeping tabs on criminal activity. The Fateh cadre newly inducted into PA security services were prime candidates for accomplishing this task, given their knowledge and experience of the local scene, not to mention Fateh's particular liking for liquidating collaborators during the Intifada. Occasionally however, the nature of their work, together with the lack of serious accountability within the Fateh family, led to many of their personnel becoming involved in the arms and stolen-car trade themselves.

Things began to dramatically degenerate with the slow but visible decline of the peace process, beginning during the tenure of Netenyahu. Fateh cadres found it increasingly difficult to defend themselves against popular accusations that the Palestinian Authority was performing poorly at the negotiations table, and at the same time was becoming perceived as corrupt abusers of power on the street. Furthermore, the national conscience of many Fateh cadres was becoming infused with a sense that there was something drastically wrong with the political trajectory of the Palestinian Authority. During the Jebel Abu Ghneim /Har Homa settlement crisis in March 1997, an emergency session of Fateh's Higher Committee was held in the Bethlehem village of Beit Sahour. Fateh General Secretary in the West Bank, Marwan Barghouti, commented after the meeting that "Many Palestinians - including from inside Fatah - are questioning whether we made the right choice of peace with Israel....At the Beit Sahour conference, some Fateh cadres called for a return to the armed struggle. This was not the majority view - but there were voices, and we cannot ignore them."

But this was not the extent of Fateh's consternation. Barghouti himself was calling for drastic changes in Palestinian Authority tactics as early as this same crisis: "We are demanding that the PLO cease all negotiations with Israel. We are also

calling for an end to all security cooperation between Israel and the PA. We cannot and will not defend Israel's security unconditionally."

This was the nest within which the Tantheem was born. The Tantheem became the populist front of the Fateh rank and file, many of whom constituted the PA security services, but also many of whom had budding concerns that the PA strategy impeded rather than progressed Palestinian national interests. By projecting a radical image as the defenders of national rights, and armed with the guns that they had at their disposal (largely 'illegal' (M16s) rather than legal (Kalashnikovs)), the Tantheem was able to strike a wedge between the popular perception as Fateh being indivisible from the Palestinian Authority. Along the way they were able to resuscitate to certain degrees, popular faith in their loyalty to the Palestinian cause as opposed to the defenders of the Palestinian Authority corruption. Their participation in demonstrations - be it during local non-violent events, or more recently as active participants in armed clashes with Israel - has gained a cautious respect from the Palestinian masses. Still however looming in the back of popular consciousness was the understanding that Fateh was also responsible for the tragedy of Oslo. In this sense, the demonstrations raging throughout the Occupied Territories are Fateh's redemptory trial by fire, in an attempt to realign themselves in the camp of the Palestinian masses. In this, the PA structure has little to say (or do), except to tag along behind the Tantheem and the Palestinian street, trying to avoid accusations of culpability for the 'disturbances' from the American and Israeli establishments.

## **The Leader of the Pack**

The Tantheem is officially lead by Marwan Barghouti, though it is well know that the fractious nature of the security services is also reflected in its own organisation. All of the PA strongmen have their own following within the Tantheem seeing as they see it within their interests to appear

populist as well. Yet the overwhelming majority of the Tantheem cadre fall behind Barghouti himself, or local Intifada-born heroes within areas where Fateh has been historically strong: Ramallah (al Ama'ri Refugee Camp, and Old Ramallah), Nablus (Balata Camp and the Casabeh/Old city) and Gaza. The important distinction to be made here is that the Fateh rank and file prefer to give their allegiance to local, well-known leaders from the Occupied Territories, as opposed to those who returned with the PA. It is also important to note that because of the loosely knit nature of the Tantheem, it is not as though they can be turned on or off as Israel implies when it demands the Palestinian Authority "stop the Tantheem." One leader in Ramallah might call for a calming of the situation, while another in Gaza might call for its escalation.

The current explosion of violence across the Occupied Territories brought the Tantheem to across road. When Marwan Barghouti confirmed in 1997 that there was "not a majority" of "voices" within Fateh who called for armed struggle, he was speaking in an age when wide swathes of the Palestinian people were beginning to awaken to the inability of Oslo to address their justified historical rights. Three and a half years later, that popular consciousness has solidified and brought with it the imperative of finding alternatives. The Tantheem is part of that alternative, and it is extremely significant that it emerges from perhaps the last but significant remaining constituency within Palestinian society that defended the peace process. The popular outrage sparked by Sharon's visit to al Aqsa forced reactions from all Palestinian factions. The PA was forced to choose to quell demonstrations as Israel demanded (thereby solidifying popular perception as Israeli collaborators) or to at least pretend to support it and stand behind the Palestinian masses. The Tantheem, ripe for resistance from their own humiliation as the former defenders of the 'Peace Process', discovered themselves as the lynchpin which took legitimisation from the PA and gave it to the street.

This more than anything explains why



the demonstrations have continued to for so long. The PA lacks the power to squelch demonstrations particularly because their own constituency (Fateh and the Tantheem) has taken that power away from them. As soon as the Palestinian delegation went to the Shareem al Shiekh Summit to work out a cease-fire deal, Fateh signed its name to a joint communiqué of National and Islamic forces protesting Palestinian participation. Furthermore, once the summit ended, Fateh's Higher Revolutionary Council met in Ramallah for a debriefing of the Shareem conclusions. Barghouti reportedly left the meeting early and in provocative fashion, beneath the gaze of PA-loyal Fateh leaders. "From the very beginning the [Shareem] Summit should have discussed not just the withdrawal of tanks but the real reasons behind the Intifada - that being the Israeli occupation", Barghouti was quoted as saying.

Without hesitation, Barghouti has been at the forefront giving interviews as the self-appointed spokesperson of the Intifada. He has called for the escalation of the Al Aqsa Intifada, advocating the observation of a general strike (which is in effect on a half-day basis), a boycotting of Israeli products, an end to joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols, popular participation in solidarity demonstrations and a blocking of settler by-pass roads. His ascension to the forefront reflects his own acumen in reading the Palestinian political map in the Occupied Territories. One such realisation is that in the light of final status negotiations, the Palestinian people will not accept a return to the humiliating cycle of negotiations before the Al Aqsa Intifada broke out. A second (perhaps no less important) realisation is that Barghouti recognizes the vacuum of

power that exists in the succession of the aging Arafat, now a ripe 72. The Barghouti family (which comprises several thousand members) derives from the peasant-based villages of Ramallah, lacks an aristocratic air, and has deep roots in Palestinian national resistance. His lineage, together with his fire-brand rhetoric during the latest events positions him well as a Palestinian leader, especially when compared with the coterie of Arafat sycophants despised even amongst Fateh.

More than anything the emergence of the Tantheem during the al Aqsa Intifada is an indication of a trend of internal questioning within Fateh. What once was the PA's subcontracted strong arm, has now evolved into a wild card that threatens Israel, the PA and indeed the unity of Fateh. Barghouti knows that when he calls for a boycott of Israeli products, it has been the PA who has been the foremost importer of such products through its private monopolies. Israeli political commentators have recognised such splits, and bicker about whether the situation is part of a larger Arafatist plan, or whether Arafat is in powerless opposition. In many senses, whether Arafat supports or opposes the radicalisation of the Tantheem is irrelevant: for him or anyone else to attempt its subduing would mean political suicide.

## One Final Remark

On October 13th, Israeli helicopters bombed five Palestinian cities after two undercover Israeli soldiers were lynched in Ramallah. The military manoeuvre was largely symbolic knocking-out token Palestinian Authority targets: PA police stations,

communications towers and the Gaza port. One of the targets however was the Tantheem office in Beit Lahiya in Gaza. The bombs were supposed to be a clear message to the Tantheem that Israel is prepared to use any force necessary to liquidate armed resistance to their hegemony. It was also meant to convey that Israel found it very threatening that the Tantheem was swerving from the PA's tack. Indeed, Minister of Internal Security Shlomo Ben Ami was quoted in an interview as saying, "If he [Barghouti] acts independently, we have the means to confront him."

The PA, as the embodiment of Israel's long-sought autonomy plan for the Occupied Territories, is being forced to change its entire national agenda so that it be in line with the Palestinian street, or to loose all legitimacy. If Israel were to completely 'lose' the PA, and particularly Arafat (whose power, symbolism and pliancy have been indispensable assets for Israel throughout the past 7 years) it would be very difficult for Israel to find another 'partner in peace'. In the mean time, the remaining competing strongmen within the PA are not likely to resign power so easily. In this sense, the basis for converging interests between PA elites and the Israeli government draws closer. And indeed, throughout the latest Intifada, top PA security personnel (particularly Mohammed Dahlan) have repeatedly met with their Israeli counterparts (as the Shareem declaration stipulates), within the presence of CIA representatives who have actually moved onto the street as "observers". One must wonder what they talk about.

*This article is taken from the monthly Israeli-Palestinian magazine Between the Lines.*

# Success for Conference of European anti-capitalist left

## 5 January 2001, by François Vercammen

Following a first meeting of this kind in Lisbon in Spring 2000, this one was convened by the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International).

The following groups replied to the invitation: the Red Electoral Alliance (RV, Norway), the Red-Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the London Socialist Alliance (LSA) and the Socialist Alliances (England, Wales), the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP, Britain), La Gauche (Luxembourg), the Left Bloc (Portugal), Zutik (Euskadi), Espacio alternativo (Spain), SolidariteS (Switzerland), OeDP (Turkey), and the Movement of Patriotic Unity (Turkish Cypriot community). Zutik, Espacio Alternativo and the OeDP could not be present, but indicated their agreement with the goal of the meeting and the proposed declaration. The MPU, whose office had just been blown up by the Turkish army, was represented by a comrade from the Cypriot Left from the Greek community. The Socialist Party of England and Wales, (the former Militant Tendency) which forms part of an international organisation, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), sent an observer. Lutte Ouvriere (France) turned down the invitation.

The objectives of the meeting and the criteria for invitation had been set by the comrades of the Portuguese Left Bloc at their counter-summit in Lisbon: to seize the occasion of the EU summit to take a position starting from the concrete policy of the EU, and contribute to the emergence of an anti-capitalist current clearly distinct from social democracy, the Greens and the Communist Parties which support a policy of social neo-liberalism. To give strength and credibility to this approach, it was necessary to begin on the basis of bringing together parties and movements which are representative electorally or influential on the trade union and social levels.

Hinted at here there was also, of

course, the idea of a broad pluralist recomposition, breaking radically with sectarianism and involving the coming together of currents and organisations whose origin, history, programme and practice have long diverged but who have understood that it is by their unity that they can occupy the political space opened up by the neo-liberal degeneration of social democracy and the collapse of Stalinism.

A closer examination brings out this pluralist aspect very well. The ex-Maoist currents are very strong in the Norwegian RV, the Portuguese Left Bloc (the UDP) and the Turkish OeDP. In Denmark, the CP undoubtedly contributes the most militants to the RGA, and in Luxembourg, it is by far the strongest element in La Gauche. The strong visibility of the organised currents should not obscure the role of "unorganised" militants and personalities in initiating or cementing unity. This is the case for example in England where the likes of Ken Loach or Tariq Ali have contributed strongly. It was all the more indispensable because what is at stake is not unifying revolutionaries, but winning entire layers of the militant left (trade union, social and political) still attached to neo-liberal social democracy, and also the Greens and the social democratised CPs.

Remember also that the Trotskyist international current is for its part very diversified, with the International Socialists, the CWI and the Fourth International.

The concrete agenda of the Paris meeting was aimed at coming up with a political declaration and a common press conference. But the LCR, as host, had tried to broaden the agenda in terms of the coming events in the struggle against capitalist globalisation, such as the World Social Forum in January 2001 in Porto Alegre and a debate on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in which the European Federation of Trade Unions (EFTU) was deeply involved; it had initially refused to support any text which was regressive at the social

level only to fall into line subsequently. This debate found a notable echo in the French trade union movement, heavily mobilised on the streets of Nice.

The most essential thing, the real step forward, was the common declaration. Political will allowed agreement on such a declaration despite the debates which marked the meeting.

First, the very heterogeneous construction which the EU represents - grouping national states under the aegis of a supranational proto-state - weighs differently in each country on society, the social movement and the political currents. The anti-capitalists and revolutionaries are no exception. Internationalists in general, they also have to practically resolve the big strategic questions and problems which stem from two centuries (or more) of development of the bourgeois state.

For the radical organisations of the Scandinavian countries (and in part Britain), the struggle against the EU passes through the dissolution of the latter, with a succession of "no's" and a final exit of each country creating a vast crisis in the EU opening the horizon of a broader international co-operation.

An opposite strategy is advanced by organisations in countries currently outside the EU (such as Cyprus, Switzerland, Turkey): they propose the entry of their countries into the EU, not for the advantages that it will bring for their population and working class, but so as to join the common struggle with the social movement mobilised inside the EU.

In the countries situated at the "heart" of the EU, a fight for complete withdrawal would simply not be understood: there, it is about fighting the EU through a united struggle for common European demands on the social, economic, environmental, political, cultural levels. Which also involves alternative institutional propositions. The opening of a crisis of

the EU will take place through this common struggle and a radically democratic approach which takes the constituent process away from the governments.

The second discussion at the meeting focused on the formulation of a democratic demand for self-determination: who will decide - the peoples or the working classes - whether it is a question of entry in the EU (the countries of Eastern Europe) or the case of a major institutional crisis of the EU?

It is not a question of coming up with an abstract and eternal response, but rather the political dynamic at work and in the current phase of the class struggle, the relationship of forces, the situation of the workers' and social movement.

On these two basic strategic and burning questions the meeting opened the discussion without reaching any conclusion. We did not seek slapdash compromise formulae. The absence of any democratic proposal of self-

determination allowing a common activity in Europe is certainly the big weakness of the document. From this fact, the strongly critical analysis of the EU - genuinely shared by all - remains, for the moment, suspended in mid-air, without political and practical perspective.

Nonetheless, we are not talking about Euro-scepticism or a nationalist drawing back.

Indeed the press communiqué came out in favour of a Europe which was social, democratic, and based on values of peace and solidarity - a democratic socialist society, and gave form to this perspective by sketching out an anti-capitalist social programme. Thus this Conference is in step with the left wing of the social and trade union movement in Europe. This is the first very positive point. The second is that faced with the decisions of the Nice summit, other areas of common action are sketched out, such as the struggle against Euro-militarism, for the free circulation of persons (immigrants) and their full

citizenship, and against the EU as active factor of capitalist globalisation. The discussion, at the end of the Conference, revealed a unanimous desire to continue. How? With what short and medium term objective? Through what methods of work?

Should we speed up the pace? Deepen and strengthen the organic links? Let's learn to walk before we can run said one participant. Another replied, Yes, but let's decide to walk immediately and in the right direction. The "balance sheets and perspectives" of the parties which participated will weigh heavily on the orientation to be taken. The next summit of the EU (at Gothenburg in Sweden) offers a new opportunity.

Afterwards will come Brussels (December 2001) which, through its geographical situation in the EU, will create the possibility of forcefully affirming the existence of a European pluralist anti-capitalist current fighting to break the workers' and social movement from the dominant social neo-liberalism.

## European Conference of the Anti-capitalist Left

### 5 January 2001, by European Anti-Capitalist Left

Ten years after the Maastricht Treaty the EU is preparing at the meeting in Nice, under the French presidency for a new stage: a European 'superpower'.

Over these ten years the EU has shown the extent to which it is an anti-social and anti-democratic construction, a war machine against the working and popular classes of Europe and the world.

The EU desperately continues to lack popular support and political legitimacy. The Danish 'no' is the latest example of this. The recent European wide struggles against the neo-liberal policy of the EU and the

growing resistance against the impact of capitalist globalisation, embodied by the IMF and the World Bank. The responsibility of this reactionary offensive lies with the national governments of the member states. The Social-Democratic parties, supported by some Communist parties and Greens in government (France, Germany, Italy), have applied these neo-liberal policies even more efficiently than the conservative bourgeois parties. A large part of the European trade union movement has backed them in doing this. The EFTU, instead of developing militant trade union activity, has aligned itself with the EC in the name of 'lesser evilism'.

We anti-capitalist parties and movements in Europe struggle against the EU's institutions and policies. We struggle in favour of another Europe - social, democratic, peaceful and based on workers' solidarity - a democratic socialist society. We struggle for a radical change of policy, perspective and society. We struggle to stop immediately the autocratic machined of the Council of Ministers and the permanent Intergovernmental Conference.

Nice opens a new stage in the history of the EU that openly shows its imperialist ambitions, defending, as they say, "it's interests all over the world". The conclusions drawn by the

governments of the EU from the Balkan wars will be put into practice.

First, they are creating a European armed force, which will intervene as part of Nato or separately; but with its priority being to stabilise and hegemonise its own periphery. This policy of remilitarization can only succeed if it is combined with a 'Euro-militarist' ideological offensive. We will fight against the rise of the EU's military power as we have previously fought against the militarism of Nato and our own governments.

Second, the Nice summit aims to carry through the economic conquest of Eastern Europe, imposing the neo-liberal rules of the EU upon these countries (the so-called 'acquis communautaire'). For us Europe goes well beyond the EU. We are in favour of voluntarily uniting our continent, but through working class solidarity and co-operation. We propose a joint struggle against the actual policies and institutions of the EU. We are in favour of the free movement of people and are in favour of open immigration into the EU and of their right to full citizenship.

Third, European governments are playing a vanguard role in the WTO in growing inter-imperialist competition with the US and Japan (and some countries of the Third World). The EU

governments want to reform the Treaty (Article 133) and give a free hand to the Commission. It is clear that our struggle against the EU is part of the rising struggle against the impacts of capitalist globalisation, especially following the Seattle mobilisation, and in favour of internationalist solidarity with all the oppressed and exploited people in the world.

Fourth, the reform of the EU institutions (the enlargement of qualified majority voting instead of the right of veto; a smaller Commission; reweighting of the countries in the Council of Ministers and giving more voting rights to the big three of Germany, France and Britain; the freer use of 'enhanced co-operation' between some governments in some fields) paves the way for a 'cabinet' of Germany, France and Britain and a much stronger executive leadership. This is the indispensable tool to lead this imperialist Europe in the coming economic, political and military battles on a world scale. We reject this anti-democratic reform as it strengthens the executive power in the EU.

Fifth, the proposed Charter of Fundamental Rights is a radical setback to the rights that the labour movement has won during the past 150 years. The right to work is replaced by 'the freedom' to work

under any conditions; the right to a decent living wage and a viable minimum income is replaced by 'social assistance' and philanthropy. The right to strike is not recognised at the European level. This draft charter is a step backwards from most national and international legislation. This reactionary charter might become European law, taking precedence over national laws. The EC might have the right to force its application. The European Court of Justice would have the sovereign power to judge. This charter will be a powerful lever for the bosses and governments to undermine the rights of the working classes. We are opposed to the contents of this Charter and, logically, against its inclusion in the Treaty.

Each of us struggles in our country and all together on a European scale, to reverse this neo-liberal policy, in favour of the principle: social needs before profit. This means: the right to a stable and full-time job for everyone; a decent living wage and state pension (unemployment and sickness benefit), healthcare, housing, education and professional training. This will require: the redevelopment of the public sector and the reorganisation of state budgets, a massive redistribution of wealth from capital to labour and all the necessary anti-capitalist measures to change private property into social property.

## Ecology debate opened

5 January 2001

The IEC decided that this debate should take place publicly in the press of the International, and that all those who wish to participate should write contributions which we would also hope to publish. The publication in IV of this document in its current provisional form, like the account below of the oral debate at the IEC, is intended to promote this broad and open debate.

As the resolution's reporter explained,

the draft has a programmatic significance: it is intended to contribute to the renewal, in an essential aspect, of the revolutionary Marxist programme. It seeks to make up for the considerable delay that our movement has suffered from in its theorising on the question of ecology. The draft was drawn up on the basis of a document which had been prepared in 1990 and published in the journal "Quatrieme Internationale" [1] - but

which, because of insufficient time for discussion, was not approved at the 13th Congress of the International. In the opinion of the reporter, this text was an excellent starting point, but it was necessary to update it, render it more readable and, in particular, transcend a certain Euro-centrism, by stressing the increasingly significant role of the socio-ecological movements of the Third World (the expressions Third World or South, used in the

draft to refer to the countries of dependent or peripheral capitalism, have no scientific value and are used only for convenience). The 1990 document also suffered from a certain workerism and it was necessary to correct this through reference to the significant participation of peasant and indigenous movements in the struggle to defend the environment.

In the view of the reporter, the draft is an attempt at a Marxist analysis of the ecological crisis, which puts at its centre the link between the latter and the productivist/destructive logic of the capitalist system. It also differs from the usual ecological texts by a radical proposition for the solution of this crisis which threatens the future of humanity: against the commodification of the world, for an economy based on other criteria than those of exchange value and the law of profit - social needs and the preservation of the environment. This implies a change in social relations and socialist/democratic planning. The text seeks also to promote convergence between the social movements and the ecological movement around demands of common interest.

The reporter admitted that the draft could be improved and contains weaknesses, repetitions and omissions, and he invited IEC members to contribute, through discussion, to its improvement.

Many comrades from various countries - Luxembourg, Quebec, Holland, Germany, the Spanish state, Ecuador, Britain, the Philippines, Italy, France, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Portugal - participated in a frank and amicable oral debate in the plenary session. Most recognised the urgency for the International of grasping this problematic, and the programmatic implications of the debate opened. They also praised the work of the commission and recognised the importance of the draft proposed, which they compared to other programmatic documents approved in the past, like those on women's liberation or socialist democracy. Nonetheless, there were quite a few criticisms and proposed corrections put forward.

Many of these were recognised as legitimate by the reporter, who expressed the desire to integrate at least some of them in the revised version of the document, to the extent that this was possible - that is, within the current word limit of the text (necessary to allow its translation).

Here, grouped by themes, are some of these remarks:

### **Capitalism and the environment**

- It is not enough to talk about capitalism; it is also necessary to talk about the existing technique in our societies and of the productivist model in the relationship of society to nature. Moreover, it is not enough to speak of democratic planning: we must emphasise the preservation of the environment as one of the essential objectives of any planning.

- We should bring out more clearly the links between capitalist globalisation and the environment, the ecological damage resulting from structural adjustment and deregulation.

- There is no reference to the ecological damage caused by imperialist (or reactionary) wars, whether in Europe - NATO's bombing of Serbia - or the countries of the South (Philippines, East Timor and so on).

- We are against the capitalist mode of production, responsible for the destruction of the environment, but we are not advocates of zero production, particularly in the countries of the South, which need to develop their productivity to satisfy the elementary needs of their population.

- The critique of the cultural dimension of capitalist societies, as well as their way of life and consumption, needs to be developed. In particular, a greater place needs to be given to the critique of the car society (or the dictatorship of the car) and the analysis of the huge ecological problems brought about by the individual car system - promoted by the marketing of the car industry, bourgeois individualist ideology, as well as the urban structure of the big cities, which obliges workers to make

long journeys.

The question must be posed of a complete reorganisation of the transport system - for example, trains rather than lorries, collective transport rather than cars - and a new urban planning. The role of the road lobby and the oil multinationals must be addressed. Oil, source of so much pollution and slicks will in any case run out in the coming decades: hence the urgency of the search for new renewable sources.

- To strengthen the alliance between the workers' movement and the ecological movements, the questions which link the two must be stressed: health at work, new sources of employment created by renewable energies, and so on. It is also necessary to set as an objective an ecologisation of the workers' movement and the Fourth International itself.

At the same time, let us be clear: we do not defend all currently existing jobs, for example in the nuclear industry or cars. A fight is needed to guarantee a job and an income for all, but not necessarily in one's current post.

- Our self-criticism, as Marxists, on the ecological question, should be accompanied by a critique of the ecological NGOs, which are often apolitical and / or hostile to Marxism. In the resolution's analysis of the currents of the ecologist movement there is a lack of reference to the so-called direct action current, of libertarian inspiration, composed of very combative youth, which has played a significant role in the anti-neoliberal mobilizations.

- The ecological struggle often has links with the struggles of national minorities (for example, African-Americans in the USA) or indigenous communities, which are victims of particularly brutal forms of pollution and destruction of the environment.

- Whatever one's opinion on the future of nuclear energy, technical solutions are needed to the problems of nuclear waste which have already accumulated to a formidable degree and which must be neutralized.

- The 1990 document contained a list of ecological demands supported by our movement: abolition of nuclear energy and so on. This has vanished in the new version, and this is regrettable, inasmuch as these demands are consensual within the International.

On other questions, however, the reporter remained sceptical, or doubtful, either through disagreement or because these questions needed further debate in the movement or were not indispensable to the document:

- The document is over critical of Marx and Engels. Recent Marxist works show that there is a strong ecological dimension in their writings.

- A more critical attitude is needed towards the Green parties, which are no longer radical in any way. Their evolution is towards increasingly

rightist and moderate positions. They are institutionalised and embourgeoisified, as shown by their position on NATO's war against ex-Yugoslavia.

- The demographic question, which is a key given (albeit a complex and difficult one) of the ecological debate, must be taken up.

- We need to polemicise against the conservative "small is beautiful" ideology, fairly influential in the ecological movement.

- A position needs to be taken on the eco-taxes debate (to support them in certain cases, argued some comrades, while others maintained they should be rejected).

- A fundamentalist position on genetically modified organisms should not be adopted. They can be useful from the point of view of the

production of food or fighting disease. What we should criticise is the private appropriation by the capitalists of genetic discoveries.

Finally, some criticism or proposals were not accepted by the reporter:

- Some sections of the document should be dropped, for example the chapter on the Fourth International and ecology.

- The document is too marked by anti-technical and anti-scientific prejudices of romantic inspiration.

- It would be better to abandon the concept of productivism, which might lead to our being confused with the partisans of zero production.

- We should fight for an ecological dual power, which gives workers in the places they work or live the right of veto on installations, which present a danger to their health.

# Ecology and Socialism

## 5 January 2001

### I. Foreword

Humanity has faced ecological problems at other times, but these have taken on a new urgency nowadays due to their scope and gravity. Damage to the environment often has an irreversible impact on man and nature and the ecological crisis on the horizon at the dawn of the 21st Century is endangering the lives of millions of people.

Contrary to the prevailing currents in the workers' movement, which have tended to ignore or downplay environmental issues, ecological movements and Green parties can be credited with putting these decisive questions on the agenda. However, the solutions they put forth are often ultimately false ones, as they overlook the inherent link between environmental destruction and the profit logic of capitalism. To seriously

deal with ecological dangers, we must break out of the framework created by the profit motive, within the perspective of a democratically planned socialist society.

### II. Elements of the ecological crisis

The ecological crisis, as an outcome of human impact on nature, has reached a point that could threaten the very survival of humanity. In keeping with the economic interests of a small minority, new production forms be implemented faster and faster, with no prior evaluation of their ecological consequences. These minority interests also require maintaining production techniques recognised as harmful. This is going on while technological progress is increasing the possibility of acting upon nature, and hence upsetting or destroying it.

The industrial revolution linked to the rise of 19th century capitalism greatly increased the rate at which waste was released into the atmosphere, severely damaging the health of workers and city dwellers. Overall, ecological shock waves of human origin have come fast and furious. And yet, the ecological crisis as we know it is not the linear outcome of industrial development since the 19th century. It is the outcome of a qualitative leap, the massive generalisation of petroleum use and the phenomenal development of the car, the chemical industry and its use in all economic sectors, in particular in agriculture via fertilisers and pesticides.

Since the 1970s, this qualitative leap has become more spectacular following the crisis of bureaucratically planned economies and above all, in a particularly dramatic way, following the combination of economic crisis and free-for-all industrialisation in the

"Third World".

## **Climate Changes**

Human activities, relying on fossil fuels (energy production, transport), using firewood for household purposes in the Third World with the ensuing dramatic deforestation, as well as farming activities, make up an essential cause of the current global warming. These activities are releasing around 7 billion tonnes per annum of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere (CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O, and CFC). Half of this amount is not recycled by oceans or forests. As a result, the greenhouse effect responsible for the maintenance of temperatures suitable for life on the Earth's surface has spun out of control, leading to grave a disturbance of the planet's complex climactic system. Global warming is just one aspect of this. In many regions, the consequences will be catastrophic for the economy of huge human communities. Disturbances in the atmospheric water cycle are the greatest cause for concern, as they alter the system of rains and evaporation, increasing the number and brutality of tropical cyclones. Rising sea levels are probable. Depending on their scale, these imperil specific island and coastline areas. Based on forecast trends, these climactic disturbances will combine with the continuing drop in stratospheric ozone and the correlating increase in carcinogenic solar ultraviolet rays reaching the ground. The destruction of the ozone layer is caused by the effects of Organo-Halogen Compounds; chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) primarily used in refrigeration and aerosol sprays. Although these have been virtually outlawed, the destructive impact of CFCs already emitted is far from over; it is predicted to last until 2060.

Global changes in regulating mechanisms within and among the primary components of the Earth's environment (atmosphere, oceans, and biosphere) will have repercussions throughout the 21st century. The time frame will vary, but in general it will far exceed the timetables used by the human activities causing them. This fact underlines the urgency of

integrating ecological imperatives into the overall organisation of societies.

## **Air pollution**

Industry, transports and the breakdown of more or less durable consumer goods release a great variety of toxic substances into the air. The unbridled and apparently uncontrollable growth of motor vehicle traffic makes this the primary source of sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide, far ahead of household and industrial heating. Formic aldehyde, mercury and asbestos, for example, are industrial pollutants. These are also found to a very significant extent in everyday consumer products, such as building materials in the case of formaldehyde and asbestos, and mercury in batteries.

City air can contain 1,000 times the level of these toxins found in country air. Air pollution has become a serious blight in major urban centres, both in wealthy countries and in the particularly sprawling, anarchic cities found in poor countries. In the urban setting, this pollution has led to an alarming increase in respiratory ailments: asthma, bronchitis, and lung cancer. European studies have revealed that pollution in Western Europe's major metropolitan areas can be blamed for several thousand deaths per year.

Asbestos gives rise to many fatal forms of cancer among shipyard and building workers. Because these cancers have a latency period, the annual death toll is increasing by leaps and bounds, revealing the extent of the problem. More than 100,000 asbestos-related deaths are predicted in France alone in the first quarter of the 21st century. Protests against asbestos hazards have brought about a sharp reduction in its use in rich industrialised countries, and a search for replacement materials. However, its use in the "Third World" is still on the upswing.

Sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide are the cause of acid rains, a major cause of damage to the Northern Hemisphere's temperate forests.

## **Water pollution and soil deterioration**

Waste, of household, agricultural or industrial origin alike, is carried off in the world's waters, turning them into gigantic sewers. Continental waters, rivers and lakes are the hardest-hit, but pollution is reaching the sea more and more, via rivers and coastal cities. The direct consequences are the accumulation of heavy metals; mercury, cadmium, etc, and highly toxic organic compounds, in sediment on the ocean floor, riverbeds and lakebeds. Above all, fertiliser build-up, involving nitrates and phosphates, has led to an unbridled proliferation of algae and water plants. Their breakdown then exhausts the oxygen dissolved in the water: resulting in a massive death of aquatic life.

The state of the oceans is rapidly growing worse, all the more because they are directly polluted by the astronomical quantity of petroleum seepage from underwater drilling sites, vessels outgassing, and even dumping toxic, chemical and radioactive waste.

Water pollution is linked to soil pollution, which is both a cause and effect of certain forms of water and air pollution. This is a consequence of agricultural practices imposed by market pressure: intensive farming (misuse of fertiliser and pesticides) monoculture, crops unsuited to local ecosystems and climates, etc. This means massive soil destruction on a global scale; a toxic soup of pollution, exhaustion, desertification, massive erosion, all bound together with the economic and social causes of hunger affecting 800 million people in the Third World.

## **Forest destruction**

Among the most dramatic manifestations of the ecological crisis, the destruction of the world's forests is among the most disturbing, because of the extent of its consequences. In 50 years, one third of the world's woodlands has disappeared. This has hit tropical countries the hardest. In the industrialised countries, the wooded area has remained relatively stable, but forests are slowly dying from air, oil and soil pollution. However, in the "Third World", deforestation is at the heart of the ecological crisis. Deforestation is the

outcome of a vicious cycle of poverty and depletion of arable land. Another cause is the over-harvesting of tropical woods, with no concern for sustainable management. This destroys biodiversity - the tropical forests are home to over 50% of the plant and animal species of our planet - and the forest population's resources, in order to provide a cheaper product for Western building and furniture markets.

Moreover, since 1997, Amazonia, Central America, Russia and Southeast Asia have been hit by increased outbreaks in forest fires. In Indonesia, giant forest fires, which destroyed 10 million hectares in 3 years, have had an impact on 70 million people and cost over 4.5 billion dollars. On the planetary level, deforestation is aggravating the greenhouse effect.

### **Threats to Biodiversity**

The existence of tens of thousands of species is menaced by the countless attacks on ecosystems. One quarter of the Earth's biodiversity could disappear within the next 25 years. In certain cases, these attacks could eventually destabilise the environmental balance, with incalculable consequences on human living conditions.

Biodiversity must be defended, not for sentimental or aesthetic reasons, but on behalf of our own species. Failing to master the consequences of the irreversible changes that it can cause to the environment, humankind must be careful to go about its activities while respecting the ecological balance of nature.

Anyone wishing to protect the ecological balance must attack the very basis of capitalism. Capitalism cares nothing about pollution, exploiting resources with the single objective of short-term gain even if this threatens the very existence of tropical forests, a treasure house of animal and plant species, or marine life.

Likewise, it seeks to take hold of technological innovations such as GMOs, whose spread into the environment is an irreversible and

potentially dangerous process.

Instead of remaining a laboratory technique, the production of genetically modified organisms has become one of the key biotechnologies of capitalism. Capitalism is using to find new markets. Capitalism is seeking control over the most intimate level, heretofore outside its scope: reproduction and the genetic control of plant and animal species.

### **Industrial disasters and nuclear risk**

The disastrous ecological consequences of capitalist production also take the form of wide-scale accidents, or the potential risk of such accidents, in industrial complexes such as chemical plants and nuclear power plants. The Bhopal disaster, its 15 000 deaths and the sufferings of the many methyl isocyanate victims who are still dying by the hundreds every year, was one of the most tragic examples, along with Chernobyl.

Nuclear power's very nature, the incalculable extent of its possible adverse effects, and especially its very long-term lasting impact, and along with the existence of alternative solutions, quite rightly represent a particularly alarming example of the (aberrant) choices made in terms of development of the productive forces.

Radioactive risk does not only mean the threat of major accidents. After 40 years in existence, the atomic industry has still not found a solution to the nuclear waste storage problem. Threatened with decline, it is now promoting its ecological virtues to promote new electro-nuclear programmes, now at a standstill. The atom is claimed to be a way of reducing CO2 emissions. This claim downplays radioactive pollution hazards (authorised or accidental dumping) and the fact that vehicles are by far the main cause of CO2. Moreover, such a relatively inflexible energy system, based on huge production units and building hundreds of new power plants, would monopolise investments at the expense of other systems (energy saving, renewable energies). Moreover, production over-capacity and loss over distribution systems

would encourage power wastage. It would also perpetuate a development model that is harmful in the long run.

Far from creating new emergencies pushing traditional economic, social and political problems to the margins, on the contrary, all the elements of this ecological crisis are closely tied to these concerns.

The ecological crisis has become a dramatic and spreading phenomenon, leading to local and partial disasters. In certain cases these are irreversible, in others they can be reversed in the short or medium term or only over 2 or 3 centuries (the age of many trees). This depends on the conscious choices made by human communities.

## **III Structural causes of the ecological crisis**

Although it cannot escape the laws of nature, in various ways the mode of capitalist production comes into fundamental contradiction with nature and the natural evolution process. For capital, only the quantitative aspect is decisive, determining the relation between labour time and money in the framework of the law of value; qualitative and global relations cannot be taken into consideration.

Capitalist production is based on carrying out cyclical processes in the shortest possible time to get a return on capital invested. Thus, it must impose a rhythm and framework on natural processes that is foreign to them. The exploitation of natural resources cannot take the time needed for their formation or their renewal into account. The spread of commodity production cannot respect pre-existing modes of social organisation. Occupying the space needed for a smooth production process, energy supply and distribution must go ahead without taking the natural environment, fauna and flora into account. It is not capitalism's lack of wisdom that brings about environmental destruction, but the very logic underlying the system. This is why the social democrats calls for "qualitative growth" are stymied by



capital's logic: qualitative growth and the law of value are mutually exclusive.

Capitalist rationality determines the movement of individual capital. However, competition among capital makes the system as a whole irrational. The intelligence brought into play to improve production or save on raw materials stops at the company door. The environment foots the bill wherever "nobody" feels responsible- for example, in the case of water, air and soil pollution.

Moreover, competition leads to periodical overproduction crises, revealing that a considerable quantity of energy and materials has been invested in commodities that don't sell. Furthermore, the market promotes the production of superfluous products in use-value terms (advertising, various drugs, arms, etc.) but with an exchange value that makes for big profits. Competition and the race for profits and super-profits are the ultimate reason behind criminal behaviour, recognised as such by capitalist legislation itself: non-respect for environmental regulations, use of toxic substances, inadequate quality testing, falsifying content listings, unauthorised dumping of waste, etc.

### **The ecological crisis in the imperialist metropolises**

The most advanced economic exploitation, i.e. the process of economic quantification of pre-existing natural, social and historic substrata, is found in the developed capitalist countries. Nowadays, commodity production governs all sectors of social life, while the social process of production has become more and more fragmented. Property relations have become more and more centralised - competition among owners of the means of production keeps them from becoming entirely frozen.

This has led to the same major ecological problems in all imperialist countries. Here is yet more proof that these problems cannot be viewed as "breakdowns" or "system failures"; they correspond to this system's logic throughout the world.

The virtually complete exploitation of the last cubic centimetres of land for use as industrial zones, shopping centres, bedroom suburbs, theme parks or administrative zones has greatly increased commuting time and traffic, while the structure of needs has remained essentially unchanged. Transport policy, based on private cars using petroleum fuel, has resulted in chronic traffic congestion, threatening all major metropolitan areas with paralysis and asphyxia.

Particularly in the energy field, centralised property relations have dictated the building of huge fossil fuel or nuclear power stations. This choice is detrimental to air quality and completely irrational from the standpoint of an economical use of energy.

Market irrationality and the profit motive play a decisive role in the problem of waste. It is more and more "advantageous" for each firm to throw away, flush out or burn what is useless for production. Hence, mountains of waste, in particular toxic waste, have practically become a symbol of the society of capitalist overabundance.

The consequences of these basic ecological problems are: destruction of natural sites and urban sprawl, over-congestion of the road system, air pollution caused by the private car, poisoning by the chemical industry, radioactive pollution due to nuclear energy, ever-growing mountains of waste. Capitalism is not capable of correcting these "failings". If natural resources, such as water, wood, soil, are "freely" available, under capitalism they are used up, wasted and polluted, most often without control. They are - and not only in the economic sense - "exogenous factors". They remain conditioned, that is they are objects of the search for private profit. In other words, the limited nature of resources is only seen by those who must purchase them. Their sellers have a basic interest in expansion and oppose any attempt to safeguard them. All attempts at control run counter to capitalists' current push for greater deregulation. If not, they can only be contemplated on the basis of the false premise that the law of value can distinguish between "good" (environmentally

friendly) profits and "bad" profits. Hence, imperialist countries are resigned to trying to patch up problems after the harm is done. At most, this can only result in very limited or partial remedies such as mandatory filters to purify water and air, etc.

Capitalist production also reshapes its own consumers. Thus, individuals' behaviour is a factor aggravating the ecological crisis and hampering a solution to it. However, individual changes in behaviour can only exert a minimal influence on the fundamental environmentally destructive nature of capitalist production.

### **Ecological crisis in the dependent countries**

A study by the United Nations agency for the environment has drawn the lucid conclusion that the ecological problems of the "Third World" are problems of poverty. This would be perfectly just keeping in mind that this poverty is not the outcome of fate, but of the imperialist countries' economic policies and actions. By twisting the facts, it might be possible to present the environmental crisis in the imperialist countries as the consequence of an affluent society and not the outcome of a market economy. However, in the dependent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the relation between economic crisis and ecological crisis comes into sharp focus. For millions of human beings, the growing destruction of the environment and biosphere and the everyday struggle for survival are facets of the same direct experience. Over 800 million people are malnourished, 40 million die every year from hunger or diseases caused by malnutrition. Almost 2 billion do not have regular access to clean drinking water; 25 million die as a result every year. One and a half billion human beings suffer from an acute lack of firewood, their only source of energy. In this part of the world, there is a grave shortage of food, water and fuel, the three essential elements for people's very lives. The UN estimates that approximately 500 million people are "environmental refugees", forced to leave their regions of origin in the wake of drought, floods, soil erosion,

the extension of export-oriented agriculture, etc. The fact is that the ecological crisis in these parts of the world is not a "time bomb", or a problem for the future, but an existential crisis here and now.

The primary cause of dire poverty and ecological crisis is the capitalist mode of production. The well-known structures of imperialist dependency and the world market it dominates have subjected the natural environment of dominated countries to far more direct and brutal economic exploitation than is the case in imperialist countries. Environmental destruction according to the world market's needs and multinationals' interests comes into even more flagrant contradiction with the social structures and ways of life handed down through history. In all these countries, imperialism has shaped their territory by imposing an infrastructure almost entirely built up around centres of economic activity dependent on the world market. It is on this basis that "natural resource centres", business centres, and holiday zones, plantations and grazing lands are chosen, for export-oriented production. This puts enormous pressure on people who fall victim to these processes, pushing different ways of life and "outmoded" social functions are pushed towards a country's peripheral regions. The impact has been and continues to be far graver than in the capitalist metropolises, subject as these countries are to processes set in motion by others.

We can also observe the fatal effects of the law of "combined and uneven development" in the dependent countries from an ecological standpoint.

The world market carries its environmentally destructive dynamics and its most agonising contradictions into the most "backward" corners of the world. Its action here is incomparably more devastating, the forces opposing it incomparably weaker. We can set forth a series of structural characteristics of this mechanism:

- Direct exploitation of raw materials for the world market (minerals, wood,

cotton, rubber, etc.) and the parallel development of infrastructures, roads, railways, power plants, etc.;

- The transformation of land into farmlands or pasture reserved for export production, via a land-clearing policy involving heavy use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides with the resulting pollution.

These two processes make the land question the great burning issue in most of the dependent countries. The rural population is pushed into regions unable to sustain permanent settlement or agriculture. These people have no choice but to clear the land and use farming methods that only speed up the exhaustion of land and its erosion. Clear-cutting hillsides, burning tropical forests, settling arid or flood-risk regions, the destruction of fertile soil layers, etc. compound the risk of long-term climate changes and "natural disasters".

An urbanisation brought about by a specific economic structure and the land question. According to UN estimates, cities in the dependent countries are growing three times faster than in the industrialised capitalist countries. In these cities, the usual urban problems are even more catastrophic for the environment and living conditions. Air pollution caused by motor-vehicle traffic and household heating is an acute threat. The quality of clean and purified water is the second problem facing cities in the dependent countries.

Waste disposal is the third. In most major cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America, rubbish is simply piled up or burnt in the open air.

For most of the population of dependent countries, energy supply is a problem of everyday survival. 1.5 billion human beings are short of firewood. The annual working time devoted to gathering firewood (or other fuel sources such as manure, plant residues, etc.) has increased fourfold, sometimes reaching 190 to 300 working days yearly. Especially in rural areas near cities, but also in many other regions, forests are clear-cut because of the energy shortage.

The problem facing dependent

countries most spoken about these days is the debt to banks and imperialist governments. This has an impact on ecological crisis because the debt requires stepping up the priority on export production, in turn increasing acute poverty and the rural exodus. In the 1990-1995 period, deforestation in 33 African countries ranked among the poorest and most indebted was 50% greater than forest destruction in other African countries, and 140% greater than the average rate of world deforestation. At the same time, there are no resources to finance conservation measures. International financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, exact a higher and higher toll on man and nature for the consequences of debt.

All of this is cynically rounded out by a series of direct acts of destruction of nature and ecological crimes committed by imperialist multinationals. Hazardous production units (especially in the chemical industry) are transferred to the dependent countries. There they not only benefit from cheap labour but also can pollute the environment with impunity.

The governments in most dependent countries are powerless in the face of ecological crisis. Their connection to imperialist interests and their own privileges or class interests extend economic dependency and ecological crisis. Even certain international aid programmes (to fight hunger, to fight ecological disasters or recent plans for a partial cancellation of the debt in exchange for environmental protection measures) often merely contribute to enriching elites in power.

Solving the ecological crisis in the dependent countries is unthinkable without breaking dependency on imperialism. Seeking "modernisation" through credits and debt to solve urgent social problems has been an error that only compounds the situation. This is truer still for the ecological crisis. Poverty and economic dependency force millions of people take part in behaviour causing dire harm to the environment, but without which they could not even survive. This means the process of anti-imperialist revolution,

"permanent" revolution, in the dependent countries must consciously take up ecological issues and make them part of their programme of struggle against capitalist plunder. This is the condition for successfully building alternative, socialist production relations.

### **Ecological crisis in the former bureaucratised societies**

Despite the disappearance of the USSR and most societies patterned on the Soviet model, it is necessary to briefly examine their environmental policies. The ecological track record of the USSR and countries with a bureaucratic central planning system is as bad, if not worse, as the imperialist metropolises, especially in terms of air, water and ground pollution, and nuclear power - Chernobyl! - and problems facing major metropolitan areas.

One of the reasons for this situation is the fact that these societies only partially succeeded in overcoming the capitalist law of value and the objective restrictions on production it entails. In many key production sectors, dependency on capitalism and the world market was still present. Exploitation of natural resources for an export economy and dependence on products and technologies derived from capitalist industries also led to an inevitable destruction of the environment in these societies too. This happened in a way comparable what we see in dependent countries.

The planned economy was an attempt to develop a directly social economy. Contrary to capitalism where the usefulness of labour is based on the market alone, that is, the ability to sell products, non-capitalist societies attempted to determine and plan social needs before production. It is obvious that this attempt can only succeed if all human needs and specific interests are brought into an overall process of democratic deliberation and decision-making. When an actual shortage must be shared out, democracy becomes even more essential. However, the bureaucratisation of transitional societies completely eliminated democracy. The multitude of social and national, cultural and economic

needs of different people became standardised, and forcibly inserted into a plan dictated from above. As all qualitative aspects were buried along with democracy, the determining characteristics of the plan could only be quantitative standards and rates of growth. Thus, transitional societies put the accent on quantitative increase in growth, sometimes even more than capitalist societies. These rates were set forth by decree and enforced with repression. Protecting resources and the environment were at best included in such plans in quantitative terms (number of purification stations, filters, certain budget outlays, etc.). This planning was from the outset beset with errors and huge oversights in planning (with a corresponding misuse of resources). Without social controls, these were only rectified when they were finally recognised "higher up".

Furthermore, the different parts of the plan corresponded to the interests of different fractions of the bureaucracy that set them. This is how the gigantism that was so typical of the USSR and other bureaucratic states came into being.

The bigger, larger-scale and more centralised the projects were (example: changing the course of Siberian rivers), the more power it meant for the bureaucrats. Since the 1970s, bureaucrats concerned with environmental issues did come on the scene, but they lacked clout and remained stuck in small, low-level departments.

Optimism and faith in progress were a tenet of the bureaucracy's ideology. Bureaucracies put forth the prospect of "competition between the two systems" and "overtaking" capitalist societies. From this standpoint, the capitalist consumer and modernisation models that caused such environmental harm were valued and taken up as ideological values playing a part in framing the plan.

The bureaucracy only used models based on quantifying natural resources (namely, models comparable to those used by conservative bourgeois economists).

It goes without saying that the

ecological crisis can only be exacerbated in the context of economic pillage and free-for-all capitalism now reigning in Russia since the fall of the USSR, with the blessing of Western powers and the IMF.

## **IV. Workers' movement and ecology**

Ecologists accuse Marx and Engels of productivism. Is this accusation justified?

No, to the extent that no one had spoken out with such force as Marx against the capitalist logic of production for production's sake, capital accumulation, wealth and commodity production as an end in itself. The very idea of socialism - contrary to the pathetic bureaucratic caricatures of it - is producing use value, goods necessary for the satisfaction of human needs. The supreme aim of technical progress in Marx's eyes is not an infinite increase in goods ("having") but a shorter working day, and more leisure time ("being").

However, it is true that sometimes we find in Marx and Engels - and even more in later Marxism - a tendency to make "development of productive forces" the main vector of progress, and a relatively uncritical stance towards industrial civilisation, especially in terms of its destructive relationship to the environment. The following passage of the *Gründrisse* is a telling example of Marx's too uncritical admiration for the "civilising" mission of capitalist production, and its brutal instrumentalisation of nature:

"Thus capital creates the bourgeois society and the universal appropriation of nature as well as of the social bond itself by the members of society. Hence the great civilising influence of capital; its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere local developments of humanity and as nature-idolatry. For the first time, nature becomes purely and object for

humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognised as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production".

On the other hand, we also find texts by Marx explicitly mentioning the ravages Capital has wrought on the natural environment - bearing witness to a dialectical vision of the contradictions of "progress" brought about by productive forces - for example, in the famous passage on capitalist agriculture in Capital:

"The increased productiveness and quantity of the labour set in motion are bought at the cost of laying waste and consuming by disease labour-power itself. Moreover, all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country starts its development on the foundation of modern industry, like the United States, for example, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth-the soil and the labourer."

Even in Engels, who so often celebrated man's "mastery" and "domination" over nature, we can find texts that call our attention more explicitly to the dangers of such an outlook. For example, we can mention the following passage in the article, "The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man" (1876)

"Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor

and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture, they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. (...)

Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people; like someone standing outside nature - but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly".

It would not be difficult to find other examples. The fact remains, however, that Marx and Engels lack an overall ecological outlook. The ecology question is one of the greatest challenges for a renewal of Marxist thought at the dawn of the 21st century. It demands of Marxists a thorough critical reappraisal of their traditional concept of "productive forces" and a radical break with the ideology of linear progress and the technological and economic paradigm of modern industrial civilisation.

Parallel to the development of reformism in the ranks of the workers' movement, Marx and Engels' critical reflection on the threat capitalist civilisation poses to nature was downplayed. Reformism took up the productivist concepts/outlook of bourgeois society just as it was becoming an integral part of it by accepting its major institutions (State, army, legislation, etc"). For example, early in the 20th century, the Deutscher Metallarbeiterverband (DMV), the metal workers' organisation, dominated by social democracy, explained in a telling statement: "The faster technical development is, the faster the capitalist mode of production will have reached the point where it will block by itself and will have to be replaced by a higher mode of production,"

Social democracy and Stalinism, despite their disagreements on many questions, shared a productivist concept of the economy and a profound lack of sensitivity to

environmental questions. We must recognise that revolutionary currents in general - and the Fourth International in particular - were very late in integrating the ecological question. The persistence of ecological disasters, the growth of environmental protection movements, these movements' partial victories, and their attempts to structure themselves politically ("Green" parties, etc.) have led to differentiations within the workers' movement. In a series of countries, entire unions or at least strong minorities within their ranks oppose the "peaceful" use of nuclear energy - CGIL in Italy, British miners - and are displaying a heightened sensitivity to ecological questions: CUT in Brazil, SUD in France, the Workers' Commissions in Spain, IG-Metall in Germany, etc.

At present, we can distinguish among four currents in parties and unions that claim to speak for the workers:

a) The "hard-core" fraction that wants to keep on as if nothing has changed. Even this fraction has had to make some adjustments, in light of the catastrophic developments for the environment. This current is now calling for emission standards and new regulations, but advocates continued use of nuclear power. Without revising its short-sighted positions, it has declared its agreement with "patching up" the ecology, especially if it opens up new markets.

b) A technocratic current that thinks it can solve ecological problems via high-tech solutions. Indeed, most often these would only shift the problems round: for example, what to do with the enormous quantities of filtration residues, purification sludge and other waste? Peter Glotz of the German SPD is calling for co-operation with the "end of the pipe technology" fraction of major capital. Through an alliance among "the traditional left, technical elites and critical minorities of capitalists with a sound outlook in terms of growth", socially directed innovation could be achieved. He expressly rejects any challenge to private property over the means of production.

c) The third current that could be

called "reformist-ecologist", also refuses to speak about production relations. Once again, they claim it is possible to rid capitalism, or as they put it delicately, "industrial society", of its sins against the ecology. Erhard Eppler, as chairman of the German SPD's "Fundamental Values Commission" explained: "More than ever, the task of social democracy is to proceed, through a new policy of reforms, with democratic, human and ecological corrections to industrial society."

d) The fourth current, in the minority, but far from negligible in numbers, is eco-socialism, integrating the fundamental achievements of Marxism - while ridding it of its productivist dross. Eco-socialists understand that market and profit logic (as well as the authoritarianism of the defunct "people's democracies") are incompatible with ecological demands. While criticising the ideology put forth by the leading currents of the workers' movement, they understand that workers and their organisations are an essential force for transforming the system.

Eco-socialism is the current in the workers' and ecology movements most sensitive to the interests of workers and peoples of the South. It breaks with the productivist ideology of progress - in its capitalist and/or bureaucratic form (so-called "actually existing socialism") - and opposes the infinite expansion of an environmentally destructive mode of production and consumption.

It understands that "sustainable development" is impossible within the framework of the capitalist market economy.

As revolutionaries, our objective is to join forces with this current and convince workers that partial reforms are totally inadequate. Micro-rationality must be replaced with socialist, ecologist macro-rationality, calling for a genuine change in civilisation. This is impossible without an in-depth technological reorientation, seeking the replacement of current energy sources with other, non-polluting and renewable ones, such as solar energy. This means the first issue at hand is

the question of control over the means of production, and above all over decisions relating to investments and technological change.

An overall reorganisation of the mode of production and consumption is needed, based on criteria foreign to the capitalist market: people's real needs and environmental safeguards. In other words, an economy in transition to socialism, based on the peoples' own democratic choices of priorities and investments - and not the "laws of the market" or an all-seeing politburo. A planned economy, able to find lasting ways of overcoming the tensions between satisfying social needs and ecological imperatives. A transition leading to an alternative way of life, a new civilisation, beyond the reign of money, consumer habits artificially fuelled by advertising, and the endless production of environmentally harmful goods (the private car!).

## **V. Achievements and limits of the ecology movement**

The ecology movement's fundamental achievement, which has brought about an in-depth change in public awareness of environmental questions, has been and remains the understanding of the extent to which late capitalism has destroyed the environment. Destruction of nature has reached a point that imperils all humanity. Here, as in the case of a world nuclear war, it is a question of survival. However, contrary to the danger of nuclear destruction, it is a question that is always "new" and more and more obviously becoming more and more serious. The ecology movement's fundamental achievement is at the same time its basic limit. Since this movement views the environmental question as vital to all humanity, it seeks out interclass solutions and consequently, fails to call upon adequate means (class struggle against capital).

Another achievement of the ecology movement is the way it questions the concept of "progress". It has demonstrated the shortcomings of the

Marxist analysis of late capitalism. We can no longer speak as during the beginning of capitalist development of a positive development of the productive forces, only trammelled by private ownership of the means of production or developed at the expense of the proletariat. More and more, capitalism, having survived much longer than historically necessary for the development of the productive forces, is transforming productive forces into destructive ones. But this also means that these forces cannot be liberated as such, that is, used in a socialist system on behalf of all. They will have to be vetted and critically analysed. This is not merely a theoretical question, but also a very practical one, involving a criticism of the idea of "overtaking capitalism", so typical of Stalinist bureaucratic thought. Moreover, a more elaborate analysis of the material side of production (use value) is being made for the first time, by asking which products are desirable from an ecological and social viewpoint etc.

After the setbacks following the 1968 movement, the ecology movement has once again brought a utopian dimension into politics. Discussions about a fundamental change in the social system, another way of living and producing, are re-introduced on the basis of ecological demands. The aforementioned debate about use value of products also encompasses a discussion of socially useful production. New utopian ideas about a different society are being voiced, and concrete "reconversion plans" sketched out.

The ecology movement first developed in Europe. It involved mass mobilisations, even in countries where the workers' movement was on the defensive, such as Austria, Switzerland and Germany. Militant and concrete forms of struggle, such as demonstrations, blockades, and occupations of sites gave rise to a "culture of resistance". At first these struggles focused on the nuclear question above all, but the movement takes up and mobilises around other questions, such as air and water pollution and GMOs. Scandals such as the "mad cow" crisis have raised public awareness about "junk food"

and the dangers arising from the logic of the capitalist market. In France, the Confédération paysanne (Small Farmers' Union) was the catalyst of a radical dynamic. Starting out from a symbolic action (dismantling a McDonald's) in retaliation against US sanctions based on France's ban on importing hormone-treated beef, the struggle widened to take on the WTO - with support from trade unions, ecological organisations and left-wing parties, and strong sympathy in public opinion. Strong support was shown in June 2000, at the rally in solidarity with the small farmers facing trial in Millau (France).

Major ecological mobilisations have also taken place in the USA, and given rise to a complex, heterogeneous movement, ranging from "deep ecology" - which claims to give priority to plant and other animal species over humans, to eco-socialism. The recent Spring 2000 mobilisations in Seattle displayed this movement's strength and the willingness of several of its components - for example the major environmental association "Friends of the Earth" - to join forces with unions and the left in the fight against the WTO and an increasingly commodified world. Seattle also allowed for an initial convergence in the struggle among movements from North America, Europe - the Confédération Paysanne was represented by its spokesperson, José Bové - and the Third World.

It would be very mistaken to think ecological issues only concern the countries of the North - a luxury for wealthy societies. More and more, social movements with an ecological dimension are emerging on the periphery of capitalism, the "South".

These movements are reacting to deepening ecological problems in Asia, Africa and Latin America, a consequence of imperialist countries' deliberate policy of "exporting pollution", and the unbridled productivity demanded by "competitiveness". We are witnessing the appearance of popular mobilisations in the South in defence of peasant agriculture, communal access to natural resources, threatened with destruction by the aggressive expansion of the market

(or the State). Other struggles are arising to fight the damage to the immediate environment brought about by unequal exchange, dependent industrialisation and the development of capitalism (agribusiness) in the countryside. Often, these movements do not define themselves as ecological, but their struggle still has an essential ecological dimension. It goes without saying that these movements are not opposed to improvements made by technological progress. On the contrary, the demand for electricity, running water, proper sewage and more medical dispensaries ranks high in their list of demands. What they are refusing is the pollution and destruction of their natural surroundings in the name of "market laws" and the imperatives of capitalist "expansion".

A 1991 text by Peruvian peasant leader Hugo Blanco (of the Fourth International) is a remarkable expression of the meaning of this "ecology of the poor". "At first glance, defenders of the environment or conservationists seem like nice, rather eccentric fellows, whose main goal in life is preventing the extinction of blue whales or pandas. The common people have more pressing concerns, for example where their next meal will come from. However, in Peru there are a great number of people defending the environment. Of course, if you told them 'you are ecologists', they would probably answer, 'ecologists, my eye'. And yet: who can deny the inhabitants of the town of Ilo and surrounding villages, struggling against pollution caused by the Southern Peru Copper corporation, are defending the environment? And isn't the Amazonian population totally ecologist, ready to die to defend their forests from pillage? Or the poor population of Lima, protesting tainted water?"

Brazil is among the countries where the link between social and environmental issues has been made on a mass scale. We can see the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) mobilising against GMOs, in a direct confrontation with the major multinational Monsanto. Municipalities and provinces governed by the Workers Party (PT) are attempting to make ecological aims a part of their participatory democracy

programme. The Rio Grande do Sul provincial government, close to the MST and the PT, wants to ban GMOs from the region. Wealthy landowners in the region are indignant, going on record against what call an "archaic outlook". They view the struggle against transgenic seed as a "conspiracy to impose agricultural reform".

Indigenous peoples, living in direct contact with the forest, are among the primary victims of the "modernisation" imposed by agrarian capitalism. As a result, they are mobilising in many Latin American countries to defend their traditional way of life, in harmony with the environment, against the bulldozers of capitalist "civilisation". Among the countless manifestations of the Brazilian "ecology of the poor", one movement has stood out as particularly exemplary, by its social and ecological, local and planetary, "red" and "green" scope. Namely, the fight of Chico Mendes and the Coalition of Forest Peoples in defence of the Brazilian Amazon region, against the destructive appetites of major landowners and multinational agribusiness.

Let us briefly recall the major events in this confrontation. Chico Mendes was a trade-union activist, with ties to the (CUT) and the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). Explicitly referring to socialism and ecology, in the early 80s, Mendes organised land occupations by the seringueiros, peasants who lived by tapping rubber trees, against latifundistas who were sending in bulldozers to cut down the forest and replace it with grazing lands. Afterwards, he succeeded in bringing together peasants, farm workers, seringueiros, trade unionists and indigenous tribes - with the support of rank-and-file Church communities - in the Alliance of Forest Peoples, that was able to thwart many clear-cutting attempts. International awareness of these actions warranted him the Global Ecological Prize in 1987. However, a short time afterwards, in December 1988, latifundistas exacted a heavy price for this ecological struggle by having hired killers murder him.

Given the links forged between social

and ecological struggles, peasant and indigenous resistance, survival of local populations and safeguard of a global imperative (protection of the last major tropical forest), this movement can become a paradigm for future popular mobilisations in the "South".

In certain countries - especially in Europe - the ecology movement has succeeded in winning many reforms, partly slowing down the breakneck pace of environmental destruction. For example, practically no new nuclear power plants are being built, the production of certain chemical products (CFCs, fertilisers, etc.) has been limited, and stringent standards have been enacted for certain factories, motor vehicles, etc. A capitalist environmental industry has emerged, and ecological reforms have even found their way into bourgeois party policy platforms.

And yet, despite all attempts at reform, despite the environmental industry, destruction on the global level has become more serious than ever before.

Pollution of the seas, clearing of tropical forests and climate changes all show that the global dynamics of ecological crisis remain unchanged. From this standpoint, this crisis shows the need for a fundamental change in our society; above beyond any reforms that may see the light of day.

As the ecology movement has no coherent revolutionary programme and fails to see the workers as a revolutionary subject, it is a long way from fulfilling its aspiration to become a new social force that can occupy or inherit the place of the workers movement. Nevertheless, if we leave out explicitly bourgeois or reactionary groups, small in numbers, the ecology movement remains an important ally of revolutionaries in the overall struggle against the capitalist system.

## **VI. Environmental problems and bourgeois**

### **domination**

Due to of the impact of capitalist production on the environment, destruction of the natural basis for human societies has reached a new level. This has become a problem in and of itself for bourgeois order and ideology.

- The ecological crisis is world-wide and, in the competitive context inherent to capitalism, can only be viewed only as a common evil;

- Certain causes of the ecological crisis go back many years, others are the products of the combined development of various separate factors. For this reason, it is difficult to establish and date their temporal and physiological causes. In the same vein, mastering the ecological crisis calls for time and investments that would be the undoing of all bourgeois concepts of input/output cycles.

- Finally, contrary to what is observed in classical economic crises, in capitalism's harmful social consequences and even in the aftermath of military conflicts, dominated and exploited classes can only be made to foot part of the bill for ecological crisis. However, it is undeniable that oppressed classes bear the brunt of the burden, especially in dependent countries. This is truer still, given the interaction between social and economic crisis and ecological crisis.

The growing awareness of ecological crisis and the ecology movement developing since the early 1960s, have represented a vigorous attack on one of the key concepts in bourgeois ideology - the idea that the bourgeois social and economic order is capable of guaranteeing continuous "progress for all", and that harnessing nature is inherently positive and that all problems pertaining to it could be solved.

Up against this ideological challenge, there have been attempts at updating bourgeois ideology. The first, known throughout the world, was the Club of Rome report ("The Limits to Growth", 1972). This report documented the rapid progress of environmental

destruction and put forth a supra-national policy against demographic growth, wastage of natural resources, environmental destruction, etc. This study, and others following, were a double-edged sword. On the one hand, science and bourgeois ideology retook the initiative on environmental questions and undertook a discussion on the prognosis and the solutions to be put forth. On the other, these studies shored up pessimistic views on the world's future and were a further impetus to the ecology movement.

The capitalist world economy's existing order lost its aura of superiority; its finality and its mechanisms were questioned from within. At the same time, these analyses led to catalogues of demands that tended to promote world planning and a political regulation of the economy. Thus, they came into direct conflict with the capitalist market economy, economic liberalism and government deregulation offensives on the agenda throughout the world at the time.

No later than the mid-1980s, a second bourgeois offensive on the environmental terrain proved necessary. Thereafter, it became necessary to provide solutions, especially in terms of concrete policy, to these contradictions. The Brundland report ("Our Common Future") adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1988, was an expression of this. It is already entirely marked by the bourgeois conviction that although capitalism unfortunately harms the environment, it is also in a position to make the necessary corrections. Thus, it claimed to bring together the elements for a more balanced form of growth ("sustainable development"), The 1990s saw a deepening of the contradiction between promises of new international regulations of globalised capitalism and this very system's brutal social and environmental impact. The Rio Declaration, which came out of the Earth Summit (1992) certainly set forth certain principles, such as the precaution principle, which did represent progress in awareness about the elements of the ecological crisis. Neither Agenda 21, a giant mixed bag of 2500 measures, nor the international conventions on

biodiversity and climate change have led to the radical solutions needed. With the birth of the WTO further subjecting the environment to the effects of liberalised international trade, these conventions have had very little effect. Proclamations in defence of biodiversity are powerless against ongoing damage to the natural environment.

On the political level, they run up against the interests of agrochemical and pharmaceutical multinationals that seek to take hold of living organisms by increased use of GMOs and patenting genomes. The Kyoto Protocol (1997) on the greenhouse effect does not put any onus on rich countries to implement measures aimed at meeting the very modest objective of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. 125 billion dollars over 10 years had been announced in Rio for environmental defence policies on the world scale. In 1996, only 315 million dollars had been invested. Between the reformist ideas put forth by the Bruntland report, and again in Rio, and the dominant ultra-liberal imperialist model, the latter has won the day for the time being.

Today, a practical approach to environmental problems is part of every bourgeois government's programme. In general, there is an attempt to set limits to air, soil and water pollution. To these are added gradual plans to reduce the dangerous effects of production-process residues. When all is said and done, these are band-aid measures that do not counteract the real destruction taking place. Economic programmes and policy orientations concerning the "ecological market economy" have also taken on importance. Up until now, attempts to re-orient the capitalist economy to an environmentally friendly functioning have not got off the drawing table.

However, in the context of capitalist globalisation, a vast offensive is underway to impose a system of "marketing the right to pollute" on the world level in order to reduce the quantity of greenhouse gases. Advocated by the United States, this mechanism was accepted by the European Union. This is a dangerous development that must be fought.

Firstly, it opens the way to strengthening under-developed countries' dependency on the North. In a mechanism assigning each country an exchangeable pollution quota, the decision-making power belongs to those who hold financial power to trade in pollution as they see fit. The highly indebted countries of the South and the East would run the risk of selling their quota to the Northern countries, though the latter pollute the most by far.

Moreover, the system aims to make pollution a commodity, hence a source of profit. How could we imagine under such conditions that this would lead to an effective reduction in pollution?

Finally, it must be emphasised that the purpose of this mechanism, the key element of the liberal offensive in the environmental field, is to defuse the subversive power of the ecological critique, which raises a challenge to the overall functioning of the capitalist system. It aims at restoring credibility to the idea that the market is the best instrument in the fight against pollution, that more capitalism would make for intrinsically "cleaner" capitalism.

This idea must be fought, just like the thesis whereby environmental protection could become the motor behind "a new modernisation of the capitalist economy". A great gap separates the rich States from the poor States. While in wealthy imperialist countries, some progress has been made in stemming some of the most problems of pollution and destruction, in the poor countries, even the slightest necessary measures fail due to lack of funding or in the face of the interests of a handful of firms that succeed in making a profit precisely by damaging the environment.

## **VII. Experiences in the political organisation of the ecology movement**

In a growing number of countries, Green parties are developing. In

Western Europe, they have gained parliamentary representation in countries as different as Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, Sweden and Portugal and constitute a significant European Parliamentary group with 47 Members. They now take part alongside left-wing coalitions in governments in three countries in the Union: Germany, France and Belgium. Green parties are even found in dependent countries (Brazil, Turkey, etc.) In the United States, Ralph Nader's candidacy in the presidential race symbolises the political emergence of a front uniting environmentalists, youth and trade unionists, on the basis of anti-globalisation struggles.

Of course, the development of green organisations and parties over the past twenty years or so can be explained by the emergence of ecological crisis on a global scale. However, it cannot be understood without supplementary political factors, such as the lack of overall perspectives by traditional leaderships of the workers movement or the absence of revolutionary breakthroughs in capitalist Europe since 1968.

It is completely wrong to put all the different "Green" experiences in the same bag. Depending on the countries, political cultures, their concrete historical origins, they have specific characteristics. Their palette ranges from a strong influence of bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces to the coexistence of leftist, alternative and eco-socialists, and includes reformist Green currents.

We can say in general and with all due caution:

- these are attempts at organising within the reformist left, most often somewhere to the left of the traditional leaderships;

- although 75% of their social base is made up of salaried employees, these currents do not view themselves as a part of the workers' movement;

- while they often began as informal electoral structures based on ecology-centred platforms, Green movements have taken critical stands in other



areas too (social policy, arms race, Third World, etc.).

The Greens' activity bears the stamp of a combination of frequently correct criticisms of sectoral social injustices alongside illusory reformist "strategies". In most cases, government or parliamentary activity virtually stifles Green Party grassroots activism, fosters the appearance of traditional forms of power delegation, and by so doing tends to undermine the radical nature of its movement. Worse still, the German Greens, for example, are in the process of losing all the utopian power embodied by the ecological critique, and are becoming a simple "party of reform" among others. When the Grünen entered the government in late 1998, this brought about a veritable political earthquake in their ranks. The shock waves continued with a difficult compromise on the nuclear issue, the war in Kosovo and the intensified neo-liberal course of government policy. Just the same, it is fruitless to speculate on the rhythms and forms of changes ecologist parties may undergo and to what extent the very nature of the Greens will be transformed by the choices and policy shifts they make.

Revolutionary Marxists judge political actors first of all not on the basis of their claims, their programmes or their awareness of their own role, but on the basis of their actual function in the class struggle. In general, we can affirm that the appearance of Green organisations and parties has not been a step backward. On the contrary, in many cases, it has broadened the left's action.

The Greens must not be ignored, on the contrary, an active policy must be developed in their direction: common actions, debates on their theoretical positions, etc. In certain countries, protest parties and ecological movements have arisen, forming electoral coalitions and harnessing a segment of critical opinion. It is up to each section of the International to concretely decide the best form of co-operation with such parties or movements.

## VIII. The Fourth International and the ecological crisis

As we have seen in Chapter 4, we find the premises of a radical ecological criticism of capitalism in the original Marxist texts. But, as was the case for most parties in the workers' movement, our International failed to take it up in the first years of its existence. For example, it would be useless to look for it in the Transitional Programme, the basic programmatic document of the 1938 founding congress. In the period following the Second World War, revolutionary Marxists did not ignore environmental destruction or air and water pollution. However, these phenomena were seen as one of the negative consequences of an exploitative, inhuman system and not viewed as a global phenomenon threatening to destroy the very basis of all life.

This has changed since the early 1970s, when capitalist society's self-destructive tendency became a widely discussed subject, a subject of debate for such bourgeois ideologues as the Club of Rome in 1972. Articles and studies written by members of our movement appeared.

But the real test for organisations of the workers' movement was the birth of a popular movement against nuclear energy, especially in Japan, Western Europe and the United States.

Practically all the sections of the Fourth International have been involved in these mass movements, although very few sections found ways of consolidating their ecology work when the anti-nuclear movement went into decline. The experience of these movements did make its way into our discussions for the World Congresses. In the 10th Congress's texts, ecology and related problems were not even mentioned. However, at the following congress, in 1979, the struggle against the nuclear industry was viewed as a "question of survival for

the working class" and it declared that the task of the International and its sections was to "strengthen the movement by bringing industrial workers" into the struggle. At the 1985 congress, the positions were further developed. The documents provide a more detailed analysis for each of the three sectors of the world revolution. The main resolution called on the International and its sections to put far greater emphasis on the ecology question in their propaganda and their activities and organise common actions alongside ecology movements. In 1990, a commission made up of different sections of the International drew up a draft resolution on ecology, which was presented during discussions at the 13th Congress, but it was decided to hold further debates before adopting a resolution.

Today, the Fourth International views environmental destruction as one of the main threats to humanity, a problem giving a new meaning to the Rosa Luxemburg's famous formula: Socialism or Barbarism. It sees a commitment by the workers' movement and its organisations in the struggle against planetary destruction as its primary task in this area. It is striving to pave the way for co-operation between the social movement and the ecology movement, not only against different forms of destruction, but also against the system causing them in the first place. It wants to contribute to discussions in these movements and tries to counteract widespread illusions on the possibility of "clean" capitalism.

In many countries, the International is taking an active part in ongoing struggles, such as the struggle against GMOs and the destruction of the Amazonian forest in Brazil. The European sections are increasingly involved in ecology movements in their own countries. In our analyses, the ecological issue is one of the most important poles around which the workers' movement must reorganise.

All of this does not mean that there have not been problems bringing these "new issues" into our movement's activities. Many comrades have continued to look upon ecological problems as one contradiction of

capitalism among many others. They have not seen them as problems closely linked to everyday struggles for the survival of the working class, against subhuman living and working conditions and the threat of war. Most of the sections only started pondering ecological questions when they made the headlines in the news following actions by other forces. As a result, the debate within the International has taken shape rather slowly. While other currents and individuals have been discussing the question of ecology and socialism for many decades, revolutionary Marxists have remained relatively silent. It is becoming clearer and clearer that Marxists must make a special effort to apply their method to the real issues at hand. It is no longer possible to simply take a few elements of ecological thought and give them a dab of red paint.

The Fourth International does not wish to simply take part in discussions on concrete ecological policy. It also wants to take the political and organisational steps forward necessary for mass actions. Only through the action of mass movements can current conditions be changed.

## **IX. Action Programme**

Today, throughout the world there is a broad range of initiatives and movements against the pillage and destruction of nature. The Fourth International supports these initiatives and these movements and takes part in them, sometimes critically, because the general outlook of certain ecologists is at times rather confused. The experiences of the ecology movement prove that only broad mobilisations and mass protests make it possible to win over public opinion and obtain real results.

To a large extent, ecological crisis and social crisis are stoked by identical mechanisms. The interests of major economic lobbies, the ever-more exclusive dictatorship of 'the markets', the world order incarnated by the WTO, IMF, WB and G8, etc., are combining to bleed humans and nature dry. Common factors are at

work in the contemporary ecological and social crises, common remedies can and must be put forth. It is essential to break the stranglehold of "economic liberalism" and put human needs and ecological imperatives at the forefront.

This is why there is community of ecological and social struggle, and common terrain for convergence.

### **1. Defence of Public Services**

The example of transport is a clear example of the extent to which public policy is required for an adequate response to social and ecological imperatives. In Europe, the logic of the markets requires cutting the railway system to "profitable" technologies and routes, relying on roads and highways as the solution for everything else. Social needs (economical public transport, a complete system serving the entire territory, decent salaries and working conditions) and ecological ones (reducing the most polluting, physically-destructive and energy-intensive forms of transport) requires the development of public transport, in a public service logic. The same goes for other areas. But this observation does not close the debate on how public services must be organised in the modern world. In fact, State monopolies tend to develop their policies on the basis of non-democratic objectives. (In the energy field, we can mention links between petroleum producers and imperialist interventions in Africa, or links between civil and military nuclear uses). They use narrowly capitalist management approaches and productive models, applying profitability/efficiency standards copied from private monopolies.

### **2. The struggle against pollution**

We have become more and more aware of the human costs (damage to health, rising prices, etc.) and natural costs (attacks on biodiversity) of pollution, as well as the role played by many entrenched economic interests in aggravating this problem. The dominant place of the car, the resulting air pollution and growing health problems in urban centres. The power of agribusiness, brutal pollution

of water systems, and almost irreversible pollution of ground water. The weight of the nuclear lobby and the accumulation of radioactive waste over very long periods, in France and other countries. The role played by major private interests in the socially unacceptable increase in the cost of drinking water in the North - and massive lack of access to drinking water in the South. In each of these areas, ecological and social struggles require counterpoising an alternative logic to that put forth by the dominant economic forces.

The gravity of pollution and public health problems has led to increased public awareness. It has become more difficult to present so-called ecological issues as marginal questions, as unrelated to social questions, or as elitist concerns, and petit-bourgeois luxuries. In Europe, the "mad cow" crisis probably marked a sea change, analogous to Chernobyl in the area of nuclear power. It cast a light on the serious threat posed by the agribusiness mode of production.

It is also necessary to combat illusory strategies such as a market for the right to pollute that Northern countries are attempting to impose on the planet. Pollution should be eradicated, not sold to the highest bidder.

### **3. In defence of employment**

An environmental protection policy would create new jobs in many fields. It is also essential to point out that the dominant economic logic, which overexploits the natural environment, also gives rise to unemployment. This is clearly the case with agribusiness, which is emptying the countryside both of its natural (drastic reduction in the variety of landscapes and biodiversity) and human features (drastic loss of employment and rural exodus). This is also the case of the automotive industry, which massively reduces its labour force - while increasing its production capacity and whose word has become law in terms of modes of transport, town and regional planning and urban development. An alternative socio-economic logic would make it possible to develop a means of production that is less predatory of nature and our

way of life, while creating more jobs.

#### 4. The struggle for land

This is one of the most essential vectors of the convergence between social and ecological movements on the international scale. It is no accident that the most radical farm movements from a social viewpoint are also those with the most advanced environmental consciousness. They are up against polluting agribusiness, with its GMOs, its fertilisers and pesticides poisoning the environment; they take a stand against capitalist agriculture that destroys soil and forests. In the countries of the South, this struggle is inseparable from the struggle for radical land reform, against the latifundistas' monopoly over land ownership, and for land redistribution. But the struggle for an alternative agriculture, respectful of the environment and based on small farmers' work, co-operatives, rural communities or indigenous communities is a planetary challenge, concerning both the Third World and capitalist metropolises. One of the most important forces in this battle for land is "Via Campesina", an international network of the agricultural left, made up of movements as important as the Brazilian MST or the French Confédération paysanne. These social movements promote another outlook on agricultural production, aiming to satisfy the population's social needs rather than those of the global capitalist market, and respecting peoples' right to feed themselves.

#### 5. Eliminating the debt system

"Development through debt", got its initial impetus from financial powers

in the North, and led to a system of control over debtor countries' economic policies (above all in the South) and strengthened powers for the IMF and WB (including in the North). The diktat of debt interest charges and the WTO's ultra-liberal hard-liners have dire consequences for human societies (destruction of the social-safety net, of subsistence farming), and of nature (destruction of natural resources for export purposes). This means the fundamental mechanisms of this system of domination must be fought from both the social and ecological standpoints.

The trade rules brought in by the GATT, followed by the WTO, reinforce domination by major multinationals in the North. By forcing local markets to open up to their products, these institutions have increased dependency (even in terms of food), undermined social equilibria and led to an irrational increase in international trade, which feeds the energy and ecological crisis.

#### 6. Long term and democracy

The ecological question requires that we take very long-term consequences into account, as natural rhythms have a very different time frame from the necessarily short one of the market. Many social needs (education, health, etc.) also demand a longer timetable than the "almighty market" does to achieve their aims - and this is one of the main reasons they are public services in the real sense. Ecological consequences and human needs both require that our alternative policies take these long and very long term time frames into account. This means thinking in terms of solidarity among

generations. After the defence of social needs, ecology has given a new legitimacy to the concept of planning. What is planning, if not taking long-term effects into account?

But ecology has also played a part in the development of an in-depth critique of the bureaucratic experiences of the former Eastern Bloc countries. Is this indispensable meeting between ecological, democratic and social issues and forces possible? Yes, because contemporary ecological and social crises share a common origin - in capitalism. Common causes call for common solutions.

Anti-capitalism is not a set of "negative" ideas. Indeed, it makes it possible to foresee a common ground between ecological and social struggles. It also helps to set forth shared alternatives, in a positive spirit of solidarity. It enlightens us as to causes and solutions. On the other hand, should political ecology fail to integrate/bring in a critique of capitalism, it runs the risk of adapting to the mainstream, losing its radical edge and falling back on elitist, ultimately anti-democratic solutions that are socially inegalitarian, and at once impotent and unjust. This calls for true links, not merely identifying ecology with its social impact. Ecologist thought has indeed brought in a major dimension, not found as such in social thought - an analysis of the relation between human societies and nature. This is its original contribution and its specific terrain. So we can say that we must neither prune back the ecology question to the social terrain alone nor ignore social antagonisms in the name of planetary ecological imperatives.

## USA - Elections 2000

### 5 January 2001, by Noam Chomsky



Protesting disenfranchisement

For many commentators, the fact that the presidency "is hinging on a few hundred votes" reveals the

extraordinary health and vigour of American democracy (former State Department spokesperson James

Rubin). An alternative interpretation is that it confirms the conclusion that there was no election in any sense that takes the concept of democracy seriously.

Under what conditions would we expect 100 million votes to divide 50-50, with variations that fall well within expected margins of error of 1-2%? There is a very simple model that would yield such expectations: people were voting at random.

If tens of millions of votes were cast for X vs. Y as president of Mars, such results would be expected. To the extent that the simplest model is valid, the elections did not take place.

Of course, more complex models can be constructed, and we know that the simplest one is not strictly valid. Voting blocs can be identified, and sometimes the reasons for choices can be discerned. It's understandable that financial services should overwhelmingly support Bush, whose announced plans included huge gifts of public resources to the industry and even more commitment than his opponent to the demolition of quasi-democratic institutions (Social Security in particular). And it is no surprise that affluent white voters favoured Bush while union members, Latinos and African-Americans strongly opposed him ("supported Gore," in conventional terminology). But blocs are not always easy to explain in terms of interest-based voting, and it is well to remember that voting is often consciously against interest. For example, in 1984 Reagan ran as a "real conservative," winning what was called a "landslide victory" (with under 30% of the electoral vote); a large majority of voters opposed his legislative program, and 4% of his supporters identified themselves as "real conservatives."

Such outcomes are not too surprising when over 80% of the population feel that the government is "run for the benefit of the few and the special interests, not the people," up from about half in earlier years. And when similar numbers feel that the economic system is "inherently unfair" and working people have too little say, and that "there is too much power concentrated in the hands of large

companies for the good of the nation." Under such circumstances, people may tend to vote (if at all) on grounds that are irrelevant to policy choices over which they feel they have little influence.

Such tendencies are strengthened by intense media/advertising concentration on style, personality, and other irrelevancies (in the presidential debates, will Bush remember where Canada is?; will Gore remind people of some unpleasant know-it-all in 4th grade?). Public opinion studies lend further credibility to the simplest model.

Harvard's Vanishing Voter Project has been monitoring attitudes through the presidential campaign. Its director, Thomas Patterson, reports that "Americans' feeling of powerlessness has reached an alarming high," with 53% responding "only a little" or "none" to the question: "How much influence do you think people like you have on what government does?" The previous peak, 30 years ago, was 41%.

During the campaign, over 60% of regular voters regarded politics in America as "generally pretty disgusting." In each weekly survey, more people found the campaign boring than exciting, by a margin of 48% to 28% in the final week. Three-fourths of the population regarded the whole process as largely a game played by large contributors (overwhelmingly corporations), party leaders, and the PR industry, which crafted candidates to say "almost anything to get themselves elected," so that one could believe little that they said even when their stand on issues was intelligible. On almost all issues, citizens could not identify the stands of the candidates - not because they are stupid or not trying.

It is, then, not unreasonable to suppose that the simplest model is a pretty fair first approximation to the truth about the election, and that the country is being driven even more than before towards the condition described by former President Alfonso Lopez Michalson of Colombia, referring to his own country: a political system of power sharing by parties that are "two horses with the same owner." Furthermore, that

seems to be general popular understanding.

On the side, perhaps the similarities help us understand Clinton's great admiration and praise for Colombian democracy, and for the grotesque social and economic system kept in place by violence. And the fact that after a decade in which Colombia was the leading recipient of US arms and military training in the hemisphere - and the leading human rights violator, in conformity with a well-established correlation - it attained first place world-wide in 1999, with a huge further increase now in progress (Israel-Egypt are a separate category).

When an election is a largely meaningless statistical tie, and a victor has to be selected somehow, the rational procedure would be some arbitrary choice; say, flipping a coin. But that is unacceptable. It is necessary to invest the process of selecting our leader with appropriate majesty, an effort conducted for five weeks of intense elite dedication to the task, with limited success, it appears.

The five weeks of passionate effort were not a complete waste. They did contribute to exposing racist bias in practices in Florida and elsewhere - which probably have a considerable element of class bias, concealed by the standard refusal in US commentary to admit that class structure exists, and the race-class correlations. There was also at least some slight attention to a numerically far more significant factor than the ugly harassment of black voters and electoral chicanery: disenfranchisement through incarceration.

The day after the election, Human Rights Watch issued a (barely-noted) study reporting that the "decisive" element in the Florida election was the exclusion of 31% of African-American men, either in prison or among the more than 400,000 "ex-offenders" permanently disenfranchised. HRW estimates that "more than 200,000 potential black voters [were] excluded from the polls." Since they overwhelmingly vote Democratic, that "decisively" changed the outcome. The numbers overwhelm those debated in the intense scrutiny

over marginal technical issues (dimpled chads, etc.). The same was true of other swing states. In seven states, HRW reported, "one in four black men is permanently barred" from voting; "almost every state in the U.S. denies prisoners the right to vote" and "fourteen states bar criminal offenders from voting even after they have finished their sentences," permanently disenfranchising "over one million ex-offenders." These are African-American and Latino out of any relation to proportion of the population, or even to what is called "crime." "More than 13% of black men (some 1.4 million nation-wide) are disenfranchised for many years, sometimes for life, a result of felony convictions, many for passing the same drugs that Al Gore smoked and George W. snorted in years gone by," U. of New Mexico Law Professor Tim Canova writes.

The few reports in the mainstream U.S. press noted that the political implications are highly significant, drawing votes away from Democratic candidates. The numbers are large. In Alabama and Florida, over 6% of potential voters were excluded because of felony records; "for blacks in Alabama, the rate is 12.4 percent and in Florida 13.8 percent"; "In five other states - Iowa, Mississippi, New Mexico, Virginia and Wyoming - felony disenfranchisement laws affected one in four black men" (NY Times, Nov. 3, citing human rights and academic studies).

The academic researchers, sociologists Jeff Manza (Northwestern) and Christopher Uggen (Minnesota) conclude that "were it not for disenfranchised felons, the Democrats would still have control of the U.S. Senate." "If the Bush-Gore election turns out to be as close as the Kennedy-Nixon election, and Bush squeaks through, we may be able to attribute that to felon disenfranchisement." Re-examining close Senate elections since 1978, they conclude further that "the felon vote could have reversed Republican victories in Virginia, Texas, Georgia, Kentucky, Florida and Wyoming, and prevented the Republican takeover" (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 8). Citing the same studies, the Santa Fe New Mexican (Nov. 19) pointed out that

5.5% of potential voters in New Mexico - where the election was also a statistical tie - were disenfranchised by felony convictions. "As many as 45 percent of black males in the state can't vote - the highest ratio in the country," though the total figures are not as dramatic as Florida. Figures were not available for Hispanics, who constitute 60% of the state's prisoners (and about 40% of the estimated population), but the conclusions are expected to be comparable. "Neither party seems interested in addressing the issue, Manza said. Republicans feel they have little to gain because these voters are thought to be overwhelmingly Democratic. And, he added, Democrats are sufficiently concerned about not appearing to be weak on crime that I'm sure they would not be jumping up and down on this'." The last comment directs attention to a critically important matter, discussed prominently abroad (see Duncan Campbell, Guardian, Nov. 14; Serge Halimi and Loic Wacquant, Le Monde diplomatique, Dec. 2000; also Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Christian Science Monitor, Dec. 14). For the past eight years, Clinton and Gore disenfranchised a major voting bloc that would have easily swung the election to Gore. During their tenure in office, the prison population swelled from 1.4 to 2 million, removing an enormous number of potential Democratic voters from the lists, thanks to the harsh sentencing laws. Clinton-Gore were particularly devoted to draconian Reagan-Bush laws, Hutchinson points out. The core of these practices is drug laws that have little to do with drugs but a lot to do with social control: removing superfluous people and frightening the rest. When the latest phase of the "war on drugs" was designed in the 1980s, it was recognised at once that "we are choosing to have an intense crime problem concentrated among minorities" (Daniel Patrick

Moynihan, one of the few Senators who paid attention to social statistics). "The war's planners knew exactly what they were doing," criminologist Michael Tonry wrote, reviewing the racist and class-based procedures that run through the system from arrest to sentencing - and that continue a long and disgraceful tradition (see Randall Sheldon, Controlling the Dangerous Classes: A Critical Introduction to the History of Criminal Justice). Twenty years ago, the US was similar to other industrial countries in rate of incarceration. By now, it is off the spectrum, the world's leader among countries that have meaningful statistics. The escalation was unrelated to crime rates, which were not unlike other industrial countries then and have remained stable or declined. But they are a natural component of the domestic programs instituted from the late Carter years, a variant of the "neo-liberal reforms" that have had a devastating effect in much of the third world. These "reforms" have been accompanied by a notable deterioration in conventional measures of "economic health" world-wide, but have had a much more dramatic impact on standard social indicators: measures of "quality of life." In the US, these tracked economic growth until the "reforms" were instituted, and have declined since, now to about the level of 40 years ago, in what the Fordham University research institute that has done the major studies of the topic calls a "social recession" (Marc and Marque-Luisa Miringoff, The Social Health of the Nation; see Paul Street, Z magazine, November 2000). Economic rewards are highly concentrated, and much of the population becomes superfluous for profit and power. Marginalisation of the

superfluous population takes many forms. Some of these were the topic of a recent Business Week cover story entitled "Why Service Stinks" (Oct. 23). It reviewed refinements in implementing the 80-20 rule taught in business schools: 20% of your customers provide 80% of the profits, and you may be better off without the rest. The "new consumer apartheid" relies on modern information technology (in large measure a gift from an unwitting public) to allow corporations to provide grand services to profitable customers, and to deliberately offer skimpy services to the rest, whose inquiries or complaints can be safely ignored. The experience is familiar, and carries severe costs - how great when distributed over a large population, we don't know, because they are not included among the highly ideological measures of economic performance. Incarceration might be regarded as an extreme version, for the least worthy. Incarceration has

other functions. It is a form of interference in labour markets, removing working-age males, increasingly women as well, from the labour force. Calculating real unemployment when this labour force is included, the authors of an informative academic study find the US to be well within the European range, contrary to conventional claims (Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, *Am. J. of Sociology*, Jan. 1999; also *Prison Legal News*, Oct. 2000). They conclude that what is at issue is not labour market interference, but the kind that is chosen: job training, unemployment insurance, and so on, on the social democratic model; or throwing superfluous people into jail. In pursuing these policies, the US has separated itself from other industrial countries. Europe abandoned voting restrictions for criminals decades ago; in 1999, the Constitutional Court of South Africa gave inmates the right to vote, saying that the "vote of each

and every citizen is a badge of dignity and personhood." Prior to the "neo-liberal reforms" and their "drug war" concomitant, the US was heading in the same direction, the *National Law Journal* (Oct. 30) comments: "The American Bar Association Standards on Civil Disabilities of a Convicted Person, approved in 1980, state flatly that[persons] convicted of any offence should not be deprived of the right to vote' and that laws subjecting convicts to collateral civil disabilities 'should be repealed'."

Without continuing, the Clinton-Gore programs of disenfranchising their own voters should be understood as a natural component of their overall socio-economic conceptions. And the elections themselves illustrate the related conception of the political system of two horses with the same corporate owner. None of this is new, of course. There is no "golden age" that has been lost, and this is not the first period of concentrated attack on democracy and human rights. Insofar as the November 2000 elections are worth discussing, they should, I think, be seen primarily from these perspectives.

## Women lead the way

5 January 2001, by **Susan Caldwell**



Washington - 15 October 2000

On October 15, in Washington, 20,000 people marched, including some 2000 women and men from countries other than the United States. In New York, about 10,000 women and men from many nations rallied at the United Nations and then marched to Union Square. They joined the March and represented women all over the planet taking part in the World March of Women. Close to 100 countries were

represented. Notable among the delegations were the large European contingent, energised by the success of the March of European Women, held earlier in Brussels on October 14 which brought together almost 35,000 women. There were also 250 women from Mexico, who arrived in a motorcade that set out from Chiapas. Some 50 Japanese women also attended, as well as a large number of Native women and vibrant groups of women from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

These women represent both a

continuation of the wave of women's liberation movements from the 1970s and new generations of young women fighting against the poverty and violence created by the neo-liberal globalisation. They are part of the mobilisations against neo-liberal globalisation in Seattle, Washington, Melbourne and Prague - and now focused on the specific impact on women. There are two major new features of between this Women's March 2000 against Poverty and Violence: those joining agreed to a radical anti-neo-liberal globalisation and anti-patriarchy platform, and,

almost all were part of a four year organising process that generated the simultaneous actions in each country as well as the march in New York.

Focusing on the 'female face of poverty', the platform of the Women's March 2000 calls for the abolition of the third world debt as well as rejection of the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment programmes. While noting the link between poverty and violence against women, the platform also notes that many rich countries maintain patriarchal laws and policies that treat women as 'less than human' and thus perpetuate and reinforce the violence that women suffer. The World March of Women demanded from the UN and its member States concrete measures to put an end to poverty and the different forms of violence against women. It demanded genuine respect for the rights of all women regardless of their origin, their sexual orientation or their social or cultural affiliation.

And this raises a weakness of the Women's March 2000. While the platform is quite radical, the strategy is one of lobbying governments and the various institutions of national and international governments. This flows from the origin of the call for the World March of Women by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ) after the UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995. Like other NGOs (non-governmental organisations), the FFQ had taken part in the parallel conference of NGOs same time but on the outskirts of Beijing. With the focus on lobbying governments but deciding, as a result of the surprise success and impact of the 1995 Bread and Roses March of Women in Québec, that governments paid more attention to public actions than just private lobbying, the FFQ launched the appeal for a World March of Women in 2000. With the original contacts being those women-based NGOs that had been at Beijing, the lobbying strategy was maintained. Thus the Women's March calls upon the very institutions - the IMF, World Bank, and national governments that are the source of the problem - to reform themselves and to adopt and apply the human rights legislation to protect women from violence and to ensure swift action against poverty

and its effects on women and children.

Respecting national differences and seeking to operate in a democratic way, the FFQ was able to get the funding for a conference in Montréal, Canada, in 1998 to develop and adopt the platform. The focus was on developing national unitary structures for the March in each country and encouraging the development of national demands and actions as well as international ones. While the conference was exciting, conflict arose over the style of decision making (consensus versus vote-taking) and the inclusion of lesbian rights in the international platform when this would preclude the involvement of many women's organisations from non-American or non-European areas of the world. This concern with the non-representativeness and the sometimes bureaucratic functioning continued throughout the preparations for the World March.

But the very impact of ongoing neo-liberal globalisation lead to a broad response:

- from women in the 'first world' who had seen their gains of the 1970s and 1980s eroded as well as the cutbacks in social services causing both job loss and increased work load;

- from women in the 'third world' who saw the devastation of the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment on educational and social services leading to virtually no public health care services with a consequent increase in maternal and infant death rates and a return of previously controlled illnesses such as TB and cholera;

- from women in war-torn areas who were both victims of violence by enemy soldiers and were further victimised as refugees in camps in nearby areas. At the Women's March in New York, six women from countries in conflict (Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan, Palestine, Rwanda and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) talked with emotion and conviction of the effects of these conflicts, particularly on the lives of women and children. They denounced the industry of death that travels from country to country in the form of arms

and other kinds of trafficking.

In all women from 159 different countries organised and acted within the framework of the World March of Women 1000 Against Poverty and Violence. Roughly five million signatures were collected from all over the planet in support of its two demands - to eliminate poverty and violence against women - and were presented to the UN. The actions in each country sought specific changes - whether to the minimum wage laws or to increased funding for women's centres or for education for girls, etc. Few, if any, concrete changes can be seen as a result of these actions. But women have recognised the reality of their ability to collectively organise and the strength of this collective solidarity.

The decision has already been made to continue the organisational network set up for the Women's March and to begin discussing both a balance sheet and the prospects for future actions. Socialist-feminist organisations, including our sections, need to be part of these discussions and organisations, in order to push the platform to develop a more explicitly anti-capitalist analysis, including going beyond lobbying and having a misplaced faith in the national and international institutions to either implement current human rights legislation or to reform themselves into progressive structures. The organising also needs to expand to include more grass-roots women's organisations in all countries which will raise again the question of the need for truly representative decision making structures.

But with the recommitment of feminists from the 1970s and 1980s and the involvement of young women of the 'Seattle generation' now taking place, there are grounds for hope. The younger generation of women are often spontaneously anti-capitalist because of their opposition to neo-liberal globalisation and, being products of the period after the gains by the women's movement, are organically anti-patriarchal. Consequently, the resurgence of a women's liberation movement is back on the agenda. Our slogan of the 1970s remains to be realised: "No

socialist revolution without women's liberation and no women's liberation without socialist revolution".