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A new wave of struggles

26 March 2005, by **Murray Smith**

The last major social confrontations in France took place in the spring of 2003, with the mass mobilizations against the government's plans for pension reform, of which the backbone was a three month long teachers' strike. In spite of its scale and militancy this movement was defeated, essentially because of the refusal of the main union confederations to build towards a general strike that could have forced the government to abandon its plans.



Following this defeat there was a sharp downturn in the class struggle, which enabled the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin to successfully launch further attacks. A reform of the health insurance system in the spring of 2004 went through with resistance at a much lower level than in 2003. The process of privatisation of the state electricity company EDF was begun, in spite of considerable resistance from the employees directly concerned, who were left by the union confederations to fight alone. Driven back on the social front, working-class voters used the ballot box to hit back at the government, by voting massively for the Left, and in particular for the Socialist Party, in the regional elections in March 2004 and then in the European elections in June of the same year.

The government's electoral setbacks did not of course make it change course and the SP had nothing more to say to voters than "wait for 2007 and put us back on power". The result was to foster a climate that in the autumn of 2004 was being widely described as morose. The question that remained open was how far the defeat of 2003 was conjunctural, and how far it would have a lasting impact on working-class combativity.

A new wave of resistance

The answer to this question began to be given in the first weeks of 2005. There is no doubt that the cumulative effect of the neo-liberal measures that have been carried through by governments of both right and left over the last twenty years has pushed the working class back. Unemployment is never far from 10 per cent, the labour market is being deregulated and job insecurity is spreading. Public services and the Welfare State have been steadily eroded. Wages have stagnated while shareholders pocket juicy dividends.

All of this has worsened the material conditions of workers and pushed them onto the defensive. Nevertheless, it has been shown repeatedly over the last decade that the capacity for resistance remains

strong, especially when the unions call united actions, and this has again been confirmed in recent weeks.

From 18-20 January there were three days of strikes and demonstrations. On the 18th, postal workers struck and demonstrated against plans to cut jobs and close post offices, in what is clearly perceived as the run-up to privatisation of postal services. On the 19th, it was the turn of rail and electricity workers, protesting at plans to cut jobs. And on the 20th the mobilisation involved public sectors workers as a whole. More than 300,000 demonstrated in 70 towns and cities. January 20 was marked in particular by a strong mobilization of teachers, who struck and came out onto the streets on a scale that had not been seen since the defeat of their strike in 2003.

The next national initiative came on February 5, a Saturday. More than half a million workers from both public and private sectors demonstrated in 120 towns and cities across France. The demonstrations were initially called in defence of the 35-hour week, under threat from government plans to "soften" the law to permit longer working hours. But the issues of wages quickly came to the fore. When the Socialist Party-led government introduced the law on the 35-hour week, it was accompanied by a wage freeze and increased job flexibility. With the present

government's attack on the 35-hour week, workers are now faced with working more for less. On February 5th they said no on both counts.

Parallel to these strikes and demonstrations by workers a massive movement of school students took shape. It began in protest against the Fillon Plan, which threatens to lower the quality of education for the mass of school students, reinforce selection and in particular devalue the baccalauréat, the examination that gives students access to higher education.



School students demonstrate against education reform

But the movement was also an expression of a wider malaise, a protest against the gap between the ideal of equal education for all and the reality, a reflection of the anxiety produced by the pressure to succeed and the perspective of increasingly uncertain employment prospects. The movement appeared on a limited scale on January 20. But it quickly snowballed. More than 100,000 school students demonstrated on February 10. The movement was disrupted by the February holidays, staggered across France's three education zones. But when they were over, on March 8th there were even bigger demonstrations - 165,000 across France.

The movement was marked by a high level of self-organisation, although the two school student unions linked to different currents in the Socialist Party tended to monopolise media access. In spite of - or perhaps because of - the scale of the movement, teachers' unions failed to really co-ordinate their own actions with the school students' mobilization.

In these demonstrations, particularly in Paris, there appeared the phenomenon of the casseurs ("smashers-up"), gangs of youth who came to the demonstrations not just to break shop windows, as had happened in previous movements, but to attack and rob demonstrators. Some of these youth were dropouts but many were

still at school, though mostly in the technical high schools.

They tended to come from poor neighbourhoods in the North and East of Paris and its suburbs and to be very largely from immigrant backgrounds. It was of course necessary to defend the demonstrations against these youth, who were taking out their frustrations not on those responsible for their situation but on other young people whom they saw as privileged. But the scale of the phenomenon is an indication of the alienation of a whole layer of youth whom the process of social selections has relegated to a future of unemployment or dead-end jobs. It is a problem that the workers' movement and the left will ignore at its peril.

On March 6 a demonstration expressed another facet of what was developing into a generalised challenge to neo-liberal policies. In semi-Arctic conditions 6,000 people came from all over France to demonstrate in the town of Guéret, capital of the largely rural Creuse department. The site of the demonstration was no accident. Last autumn more than 250 mayors and councillors from the department had resigned en masse in protest against closures and cutbacks in public services. All the parties of the left were represented at Guéret, including the Socialist Party in the person of its First Secretary, François Hollande. However many demonstrators felt that the Socialist Party leader was somewhat out of place in a demonstration in defence of public services, since his own party had largely taken part in dismantling them and he himself is currently defending a neo-liberal constitution whose ethos was the antithesis of public service. As a result, Hollande was welcomed by a hail of snowballs and a few eggs.

The biggest mobilization since 2003

The next day of action called by the unions took place on March 10. It was the biggest mobilisation since the spring 2003 movement. A million

people took part in demonstrations in 115 towns and cities, most of them striking to do so, since this time it was a working day. As usual, the biggest contingents were from the public sector, including for example bus and underground workers who had not struck in January. But without any doubt the most significant development was the widespread participation of private sector workers. This involved not only traditionally militant sectors like engineering and cars, but also the food industry and many smaller factories and service sectors.

In 2003 the private sector was not directly affected by the pension reform, although many private sector workers still took part in the big days of action. This time wages, a burning question in both public and private sectors, were at the centre of the mobilization, and the private sector was more strongly represented than in the one-day general strike on May 13, 2003, which represented the high point of the movement two years ago.

February 5 and March 10 were called by all the main union confederations, including the usually reticent CFDT, which has still not lived down its desertion of the movement in 2003. The composition of the demonstrations confirmed the decisive weight of the CGT, which can generally mobilize at least as many demonstrators as the other unions combined. But the March 10 demonstrations also had significant contingents from other confederations like Force Ouvrière, UNSA, the CFDT and among teachers, the FSU. The militant Solidaires confederations (which includes the SUD unions) also had a significant presence.

The social climate cannot just be reduced to the big national mobilisations. These are taking place against the background of a multitude of local disputes, many in the private sector, often of short duration, mainly centred on wages and not infrequently successful. A prime example was the victorious strike at the Citroen car factory at Aulnay, north of Paris. Citroen has a notoriously anti-union management and this was the first strike since 1984 and the first victorious one since 1982. And in a highly positive development, it was

spearheaded by a layer of militant young workers.

Although wages are at the centre of most disputes, not all strikes are over directly economic issues. Some are in protest at the human consequences of staff cuts and the new "enterprise culture". In January the rail network was hit by a wave of spontaneous strikes after a woman ticket collector was raped when she was alone in a late-night train. And in February, following the accidental death of a stewardess at Orly airport, airport personnel went on strike when management tried to make one of their colleagues carry the can for an accident whose real cause was lack of personnel.

The government has reacted to these movements by making some very minor concessions. Faced with the school students' movement Fillon was obliged to drop the part of his plan that directly affects the baccalauréat, though the rest of his plan was voted into law on March 24. And after March 10 the government announced the opening of talks in the public sector, which began on March 22 and look like dragging on for some time. As for the private sector, a meeting between unions and employers on March 18 turned out to be a damp squib. Negotiations on wages were put off until June 10th, conveniently after the referendum on the Constitution.

The government is now trying to mollify private sector workers by facilitating their participation in the profits made by their enterprises. The unions have jumped at the slightest sign of a willingness to negotiate on the part of the government. But criticism of any even minimal concessions has come from within the governing majority, and much more sharply from Ernest-Antoine Seillière, president of the bosses' organisation MEDEF. Seillière and his organisation have consistently behaved like a right opposition to the government, criticising every hesitation and any whisper of even the slightest concession to the working class. As for the government any gestures it makes in the direction of the unions are not out of fear of a general strike. On that level the union leaderships are no more likely to launch an all-out

mobilisation than they were two years ago. The explanation lies elsewhere.

The spectre of the referendum on the Constitution

Any modest concessions, gestures or cosmetic changes that the government feels obliged to make, are closely linked to its growing anxiety over the coming referendum, fixed for May 29, on the projected European constitution. Over the last few months, polls have indicated steadily growing support for the "No" vote. Towards the end of March, for the first time, two separate polls actually showed majorities of 51 and 52 per cent respectively for the "No". This went up to 55 per cent in a poll made public on March 25. These indications have to be approached with some caution. In the first place, the polls also indicate that around half the electorate have either not decided to vote or have not yet decided which way they will vote. Secondly the campaign for the "Yes" vote is only just getting under way. And it will be waged by the government, the media, business and financial circles and the Socialist Party with more material resources than the partisans of "No" will have. It is nevertheless possible that a combination of a spreading understanding of what is actually in the Constitution and a desire to deal another blow at the government could undo their plans. And that is what is worrying Chirac, Raffarin...and François Hollande.

Up to now, more clearly than at the time of the referendum on the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, the campaign for the "No" has been clearly marked to the left. But there is also a "No" from the right. It comes from Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front, from a minority of the governing UMP and from the right-wing Catholic "Movement for France" of Philippe de Villiers. For the moment they are not making the running, but the way the debate is being organised means that three out of the four parties who will have airtime to defend the "No" will be from the right and the far right, so They will probably become more vocal

as the campaign develops. From the left there will only be the Communist Party. The LCR and Lutte Ouvrière have been excluded as not representative enough. For the "Yes" there will be two parties of the right, the UMP and the UDF, as well as the Socialist Party and the Greens. It is possible that the substantial minorities in these parties who oppose the Constitution will be allowed time to do so.

The campaign on the left is rapidly gathering speed. The Communist Party and the LCR both started campaigning early against the Constitution and are the main political forces in the rapidly proliferating collectives for a "No" from the left - of which there are now about 350 all over France. There are several currents within the Communist Party, and some are more committed to building a united front against the Constitution than others. But the leading group around National Secretary Marie-George Buffet is trying to limit the degree of collaboration with the radical left and in particular the LCR, so as not to prejudice future participation in a Socialist Party-led government. Therein lies a problem for the CP. The campaign against the Constitution has undoubtedly reinvigorated the party and helped it recover after its electoral disaster in 2002.

But the fact that the campaign is being waged not only against Chirac and Raffarin but against the SP leadership will make it harder for the party leadership to justify going back into government with that same leadership. The global justice movement ATTAC and the Fondation Copernic, a kind of anti-neo-liberal think tank, are both actively involved in campaigning against the Constitution. And very significant divisions have appeared in the Socialist Party and the Greens. Last November an internal referendum in the Socialist party resulted in a 60-40 margin in favour of a "Yes" vote. That, François Hollande thought, was that. He was wrong.

From the beginning, some leaders of the SP left, like Jean-Luc Mélenchon, one of the leaders of the Nouveau Monde current, announced that they

would not abide by party discipline and have campaigned actively along with the other forces opposed to the Constitution. They have now been joined by former national secretary Henri Emmanuelli - who has nevertheless announced that he will not collaborate with the radical left. And Laurent Fabius, Socialist Party no 2, presidential hopeful and leader of the "No" campaign within the party, has been edging more and more clearly towards open opposition, taking strength from the growing "No" sentiment on the left. Faced with the scale of the revolt, the Hollande leadership has periodically threatened disciplinary action but so far has backed down from taking any, giving an impression of indecision which is tending to further weaken its authority. On a smaller scale, the Greens, who took a "Yes" position by the narrow margin of 52-48, have the same problems as the Socialist Party.



Perhaps the most spectacular development was the position taken by the CGT. France's main union confederation has over the last decade, under general secretary Bernard Thibault and his predecessor Louis Viannet, been moving away from its traditional links with the Communist Party, towards "responsible", "non-political" unionism. And it has moved closer to the mainstream of the European TUC of which it is now part.

Thibault did not dare to try and get the CGT to adopt the ETUC position of support for the constitution. That would have been a bridge too far. His aim was for the confederation not to take a position. In a spectacular vote at the end of January, he was resoundingly disavowed by the National Confederal Council, the CGT's "parliament" between congresses, made up of representatives of industrial federations and regional unions. Representatives of both the CGT and Solidaires are participating in the "No from the left" collectives. And in spite

of the ETUC leadership's intention of keeping the question of the Constitution out of the March 19th ETUC demonstration in Brussels, the strong presence of the CGT, with its "No" badges put it fairly and squarely at centre stage.

So a dynamic for a "No" from the left is clearly building up. On recent demonstrations, notably at Guéret and on March 10th, many if not most demonstrators wore "No" badges. This dynamic is entirely in line with the climate of opinion in France. Over the last ten years not only has social resistance remained at a relatively high level, but the climate of public opinion has increasingly expressed opposition to neo-liberalism. This is reflected in all sorts of opinion polls that regularly show people's attachment to, for example, public services, and in the fact that movements like the one in 2003, and the current mobilisations, have been consistently supported by around two thirds of the population. Thus the more the Constitution is targeted as and identified as embodying neo-liberal values, the more the left "No" campaign gathers strength.

A looming crisis

Conversely, Hollande's attempts to argue for a "Yes from the left" and to keep his distance from Chirac have run into serious trouble. The constitution seeks to embody and set in stone the neo-liberal Europe that the EU is trying to build. It is the central project of the European ruling classes. It is supported by every one of the 25 governments, by the multinationals, by the leaders of industry and finance. The principal political parties, including social democracy, also support it. "Yes" to the constitution means "Yes" to neo-liberalism and militarism. There is in fact no such thing as a "Yes from the left".

But Hollande and the SP leadership have to pretend there is. So they cannot be seen to campaign alongside Chirac. Of course they had to vote

with him when the joint meeting of the two houses of parliament approved the constitution at the end of February. But to run a joint campaign would be the kiss of death. So the SP is reduced to envisaging a joint campaign with the Greens in a situation where most of the rest of the Left, as well as minorities in both parties, are supporting the "No".

All of this adds up to a potential political crisis. That is why, in spite of Seillière's grumbling, Raffarin will not dare to launch any more major attacks until the referendum campaign is over. He may even be obliged to make some further at least token concessions with the aim of lowering the temperature and avoiding the nightmare scenario of a referendum campaign taking place against a background of continuing strikes and demonstrations.

A victory for the "No" in France would have wide-ranging effects. On a European level, it would deal a body blow to the projected Constitution and create an institutional crisis in the EU. It would be a formidable encouragement to all those who are resisting the neo-liberal offensive, not only in France, and indeed not only in Europe. Conscious of the danger of a French "No", EU leaders have agreed, oner ressure from Chirac, to re-examine the notorious Bolkestein directive on the liberalisation of public services - though not to withdraw it. In France a victory for the "No" would further discredit not only the already punch-drunk Raffarin but also Chirac, who will be increasingly obliged to take centre stage in the campaign. It would unleash a crisis in the Socialist Party. The stakes are therefore high on both the European and the French levels. That is why the ruling class and its parties will pull out all the stops to avoid defeat. And why the partisans of a "No" from the left will be straining every muscle in the next two months to make their worst nightmares come true.

Photos in this article are by Patrice Leclerc, from his site Photothèque du mouvement social.

Fourth International leadership meets

18 March 2005

The status of permanent observer was accorded to the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) by acclamation. Guests at the meeting included a representative of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) of the United States.

The agenda included the following discussions:

- the international situation and the war in Iraq (a **resolution** was adopted);
- the development of the international radical anti-capitalist parties network;
- the political situation in the Philippines and the murderous aggression of the (Mao-Stalinist)

Communist Party of the Philippines against the whole of the left in this country (a **declaration** was adopted);

- the policy of the Lula government and orientations for the construction of a socialist alternative in Brazil (two texts of orientation were adopted with a view to pursuing the discussion with the Brazilian comrades [See "**On the Brazilian situation**" and "**Letter from FI leaders**"]);
- the political situation in Europe and the campaign against the EU's constitutional treaty;
- the global justice movement and the future of the world and regional social

forums;

- the political situation in Venezuela and solidarity with the "Bolivarian revolution" (a **motion** on solidarity was adopted).

The delegates from Portugal reported on the electoral campaign of the Left Bloc which had just been successfully concluded. The delegate from Sri Lanka spoke on the initial results of the campaign of solidarity with the victims of the Tsunami led by our comrades of the NSSP. Finally, in closed session, the IC discussed the press of the International and its system of education while adopting the financial balance sheet for 2004 and a budget for 2005.

Lula and Chavez - diverging strategies

17 March 2005, by **François Sabado**

The situation in Latin America remains profoundly unstable and in some cases explosive. It is one of the regions of the world that is most brutalised by the neo-liberal steamroller, but also one of those that has accumulated the most revolutionary experiences and witnessed the development of revolutionary movements.



However, the national economies have been strictly "adjusted" to fit in with the logic of the financial markets and international institutions. Public services have been massively privatised, the labour market largely deregulated, agriculture subordinated to agro-exportation and to domination by the latifundia and the big economic

groups. In short, whole sectors have been laid waste by neo-liberal destruction, and in the case of Argentina, it is a whole country that has been dismantled.

In these conditions, Latin America has undergone successive waves of struggle and seen the emergence of experiences and the building of social movements that permanently stimulate resistance to the neo-liberal model: the Bolivian insurrections for the control of natural resources (gas and water); unions and the piquetero movement fighting unemployment and poverty in Argentina; social and democratic mobilisations based on the indigenous movements in Ecuador; mobilisations of civil servants against pension reform, of bank workers, combined with the deep-rooted movement of landless peasants in

Brazil; the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela.

The accumulated strength of these social movements has also been expressed in the electoral victories of the Left: Gutierrez in Ecuador, Kirchner in Argentina, Lula in Brazil, Tabarez with the Broad Front (Frente Amplio) in Uruguay. It also found expression in the victory of Chavez in the recent referendum in Venezuela. This conjuncture puts a series of strategic debates back on the agenda.

Lula's adaptation to neoliberalism

Placing himself in continuity with former president Cardoso, Lula began, his term of office by appointing to

strategic governmental posts some of the most prominent representatives of the neo-liberal project: the minister Palocci and the director of the central bank, Mireilles. At the same time, he announced that Brazil would honour all its engagements, in particular the repayment of its foreign debt.

This would define a classical policy of financial and budgetary orthodoxy: increase in the budget surplus from 3.75 per cent - the rate demanded by the IMF for the repayment of the debt - to 4.5 per cent; rise in interest rates to 18.25 per cent; cutting of social budgets, in particular the funds allocated to the "Zero Hunger" plan; limits placed on the agrarian reform, due to problems of financing the occupation of land; refusal to honour his electoral promise of increasing the minimum wage: neo-liberal reform of pensions, with reinforcement of pension funds; de facto privatisation of the electricity sector through selling electricity at very low prices to the private sector; a counter-reform that reduced the power of workplace union branches, limiting their right to strike and to negotiate...To sum up, these measures curb inflation and support the exports of the agro-industrial sector, to the detriment of the agrarian reform. They allow moderate economic growth in Brazil but accentuate the inequalities in Brazilian society.

Over and above the ups and downs of the social mobilisations of Brazilian workers, these policies have consequences for the mass movement: they weaken it in relation to the bosses, they disarm, disorient and demobilize it...

The Brazilian example is instructive: if you accept the criteria of the neo-liberal order and if you refuse to confront the ruling classes, the room for manoeuvre for a policy aimed at satisfying popular demands is virtually

non-existent. A government that serves the financial markets cannot at the same time finance any kind of social policy. The problem is not economic. It is political.

The Bolivarian revolutionary process

That is the fundamental difference with the experience of the Bolivarian process in Venezuela. Where Lula has sought to accommodate the financial markets and international institutions and make alliances with the Right, Chavez and those around him have chosen to confront US imperialism and its allies in the Venezuelan Right, basing themselves on the massive mobilisation of the Venezuelan people. The government was able to forcibly take back control of the management of the national oil industry (PVDSA) and thus redirect a large part of the oil revenues towards financing social programmes. Exchange controls, the dynamic of the agrarian reform - which authorizes the occupation of non-productive land, abandoned by the big landowners - and the recent expropriation of the Venepal paper mill, closed by its owner for political reasons, all strengthen the mobilisation of the partisans of the revolutionary "process".

We should also underline the organisation at grassroots level of committees for health and education, which have succeeded in obtaining, with the help of the Cubans, formidable results in both domains. Venezuelans now have access to universal free medical treatment, several hundred neighbourhood clinics have been built and several million people have restarted their education, from literacy classes right up to higher education. Six new universities,

reserved for students from poor backgrounds, have been opened. More than 500,000 grants of 100 dollars have been distributed to those most in need. At the same time, these measures stimulate experiences of direct democracy. As a Venezuelan trade unionist put it neatly during the WSF: "Chavez's word has liberated popular energy".

That is the Chavez option: a policy of a partial break with US imperialism and the ruling classes, which is opening the way to the mobilization and to self-organization of millions of Venezuelans. It is not a question of making a new model out of it. The Bolivarian leadership has not overturned property relations and no structured revolutionary political movement appears to be emerging. So it is difficult to foresee how this new political experience will evolve in the future. But the Bolivarian process proves that there is no "one and only policy" whereby we are forced to accept the rules of the neo-liberal model. Certainly the oil revenues enable Chavez to finance social programmes. But he still had to confront the pro-imperialist forces up until the coup d'état of April 11th, 2002, a confrontation that Lula rejects.

However, the gigantic profits of Brazilian enterprises and of the big landowners also constitute the basis for carrying through a redistribution of wealth. It is a question of political will. And there, the Bolivarian revolutionary process is a formidable point of support.

This article first appeared in the March 3rd issue of Rouge, weekly paper of the LCR, French section of the Fourth International. François Sabado is a member of the Political Bureau of the LCR and of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International.

The CPP-NPA-NDF "Hit List" - a preliminary

report

15 March 2005, by **Pierre Rousset**

It is essential to understand the real scope of the assassination policy of Left activists pursued, after the 1992 crisis, by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA) and its politico-diplomatic arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

I am presenting here data on people who have been killed since 1992; on people who are presently hunted down, who received death threats or have escaped murder attempts; and on people being accused to be "counter-revolutionaries", "agents" and "criminals" (such accusations may lead to death sentences if the CPP leadership so decides). A list of organisations threatened is also given at the end.



Funeral of Popoy Lagman

These data are far from being complete. This is only a preliminary report. A later version of this CPP-NPA-NDF "hit list" will be prepared when more information will be available to me. To get a full picture is not easy. All the more because, out of fear, relatives of victims may not volunteer information: A peasant family will be at risk if, in a zone where the NPA operates, they denounce a murder.

The global picture

Some figures. This preliminary report presents the case of 27 people killed by the NPA plus 9 who escaped assassination attempts (36 in all). The First Quarter Storm Foundation learnt of some 30 killings in the past four years only (while some of my records are from an earlier period). Obviously, many of the cases recorded by the FQS are not listed here. It confirms that the real figures of victims of the

CPP-NPA-NDF assassination policy are well above those I know of.

I also present below a list of 16 other activists who are publicly labelled "counterrevolutionaries" by the CPP. There are of course many more of them, but it shows, together with the corresponding list of organisations threatened, the scope of the CPP-NPA-NDF "revolutionary versus counterrevolutionary" policy.

Even with its limitations, this preliminary report represents a factual answer to many of the arguments of those who chose to cover-up and defend the CPP policy.

1. We are not faced with a very limited number (two or three as often suggested) of so-called "criminal cases". Cadres and members of mass organisations have been killed and are threatened, as well as members of most political groups from the Left not led by the CPP. This is notably the case for the five major independent Left parties: Akbayan! (Citizen Action Party), the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP), the Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao (RPM-M) and the Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines (RPM-P); the CPP denies having killed in 2001 a leader of the Workers Party of the Philippines (PMP), but today it openly threatens this organisation too.

2. Killings would in no way be justified if the "context" were, as some like to say, a confrontation between "reformists" and "revolutionaries". But the "context" is in fact totally different. For many years, the organisations targeted by the CPP-NPA-NDF were underground revolutionary parties. The broad left legal party, Akbayan!, began to be very severely attacked only in 2003-2004, and even then those targeted often belonged to a revolutionary tradition.

The CPP-NPA-NDF policy of assassination is turned against the whole independent Left and popular movements, whether reformist or revolutionary. The real "context" which helps us understand the assassinations is the will of the CPP-NPA-NDF to impose its monopoly of power above the people's movement. The real issue raised is the right of a pluralist progressive and revolutionary Left to exist in the Philippines.

3. The intricacies of the Filipino Left are for sure difficult to understand from abroad. But the question here is not to discuss the merits and demerits of each party (or each individual). One can be very critical of the political line or the political evolution of a given organisation or individual. We are not asked to involve ourselves in the debates over politics, strategy and programme in the Philippines.

If our responsibility is engaged, and if we have to express solidarity, it is because we are faced with an overall policy of threats, death sentences and killings deployed by the CPP-NPA-NDF on a national scale, something that no other group is doing.

4. The CPP-NDF officials adamantly deny that there is an NPA "hit list". The overall picture shows that such a "list" actually does exist. Individuals and leaders of organisations are listed in the Order of Battle of the NPA as "legitimate" targets.

One concrete example shows the reality of the matter. April 8, 2001, NPA operatives tried to assassinate the RPM-M Front Secretary in Lanao (Mindanao). His wife felt the danger and he escaped (but was killed later). Unfortunately, the Regional Commander of the Revolutionary People's Army (RPM-M/RPA) happened to visit his comrade precisely at that time. He was immediately killed, while trying to speak to the NPAs (who he knew

personally). The NPA operatives did not have to ask for new instructions: he was listed in the Order of Battle, so he could be murdered without further formalities.

Those who are branded “counter-revolutionaries” are, let’s say, part of the CPP “hate list”, not necessarily of the NPA “hit list”. But the difference between the “hate” and the “hit” lists is blurred, because the “hate list” is used as a threat. Charges are the same and one never knows if and when she or he will be transferred by the CPP leadership into the NPA “hit list”. Thus, the Ang Bayan “diagram of counterrevolutionaries” names together activists who are in both: no difference is made.

5. We are confronted with cold-blooded murders, often planned during months. People are killed while trying to speak and reason out with their former comrades. They are shot right in front of their families, including in front of their young children. Their daughter, son-in-law or driver may be gunned down together with them: they are viewed as simple “collateral damages” by the CPP-NPA-NDF. Is it a crime deserving capital punishment for a 19 year-old student to have fallen in love with the wrong daughter? Or to be the daughter of the wrong father?

A whole community can be affected by continuous harassments and threats as is the case in the Bondoc Peninsula (Quezon Province), where peasant leaders have been assassinated both by the landlords’ goons and the NPA. Families had to leave their homes and seek security elsewhere. Nelia Bitong, wife of farmer leader Alberto Bitong, died of heart attack due to successive threats of the NPA to her husband. Children of affected families are suffering from trauma and some were forced to stop schooling in the process (from a report by the Task Force Bondoc Peninsula).

6. As explained in my previous papers, charges against “opponents” are fabricated by the CPP-NDF with often no concern for credibility. It is again the case today, Walden Bello being presented as a “ring-leader”, as a staunch supporter of the WTO and imperialism, as a “highly paid”

“special anti-communist agent” of the US and Filipino governments, engaged hand-in-hand with the military in “psy-war operations” and whose ambition is nothing less than the total destruction of the people and revolutionary movement in the Philippines.

Today’s charges against Walden Bello are good examples of how the NDF “justice system” operates. Many other activists have been slandered in similar ways by the CPP-NPA-NDF. The day the CPP leadership chooses to do so, political charges become a “criminal” case, which can lead to capital punishment. People condemned have no possibility to defend themselves. There is no independent due process whatsoever. Once sentenced, activists can be summarily killed anytime. Death sentences are politically motivated, even if the charges are on “criminal” grounds.

7. The data provided here show that the CPP-NPA-NDF policy of death threats and assassinations began twelve years ago, and that things are getting worse. It is unacceptable to see how victims are turned into culprits by pro-CPP networks. Threatened activists and relatives of victims are not playing in the hand of imperialism because they defend themselves! It is the CPP-NPA-NDF which is playing in the hand of reaction: Its policy of assassination creates a favourable situation for any kind of provocation from agents of the military and police. It divides and paralyses the popular forces. It discredits the revolutionary project and socialist alternative.

Sources of information

For those who want more data and elements of analysis, I’ll refer to the main three papers I have previously written on this matter: “After Kintanar, the killings continue. The post-1992 CPP assassination policy in the Philippines”, 4 July 2003. “The post-1992 Communist Party of the Philippines and its policy of ‘death condemnations’”. A response to the July 26, 2003 document of the National Democratic Front (based on CPP-NDF’s own statements and documents”, 6 October 2003. “In solidarity with the Filipino progressive

and revolutionary movements threatened by the CPP. A new Letter of Concern”, January 18, 2005.

I have used here two main sources of information.

1. The first and most important one are various documents and statements of the CPP-NPA-NDF itself, of its spokespersons (Gregorio “Roger” Rosal...) and leaders as its chair, Jose Maria Sison, or Fidel Agcaoili and Louis Jalandoni.

I shall refer to the “diagram” of “counter-revolutionary groups” prepared by the CPP International Department and published in the February 7, 2004 issue of Ang Bayan. In particular, I shall often note the link between individuals and organisations indicated into this diagram because it brings to light the overall policy of threat of the CPP-NPA-NDF. But I want to stress that such links are not necessarily true: some are in fact fabricated by the CPP. Individuals named are not necessarily members (or not any more members) of the parties they are associated with in Ang Bayan’s diagram.

Legal organisations belonging to the “Reaffirm” bloc can be used as “fronts” by the CPP-NPA-NDF to convey threats. This has recently and most notably been the case with Ibon.

Ibon issued on January 18, 2005 a letter signed by Rosario Bella Guzman and circulated by Antonio “Tony” Tujan which contains such threats against Walden Bello and Focus on the one hand, and against Manjette Lopez on the other. To quote it: “For his security, we urge Walden Bello and Focus to desist from being used by the Tabara and Lopez factions”. Ibon tells Walden that there is indeed a security risk for him to pursue his political fight. And Manjette Lopez is denounced as a “faction” leader, singled out and associated with Arturo Tabara who has already been assassinated by the NPA (while she does not belong to the same organisation or political current as Tabara). The threat is very grave and it is intolerable to see an organisation like Ibon conveying it.

2. The other Left organisations in the

Philippines and progressive individuals who can testify to the reality of the CPP-NPA-NDF policy of threats are my second main source of information.

3. I sometimes used as a complementary source of information articles published in the press. I have NOT used governmental or other similar sources.

I/ PEOPLE KILLED

The following data are presented from the most recent to the oldest ones. Names are not always given for security reasons.

* Arturo Tabara, chairman of the RPM-P/RPA-ABB (named AB "diagram"). Killed September 26, 2004 in Metro-Manila. Stephen Ong, student, 19 years-old boyfriend of Tabara's daughter, was gunned down too.

* Daniel Batoy, senior RPA-ABB Commander, shot in August 22, 2004 in Makato, Aklan. His daughter was also assassinated, together with him.

* Lito Bayudang, local farmer-leader and district officer of Akbayan, killed May 6, 2004 in Nueva Ecija.

* Donie Valencia, 22 years old, unarmed organizer of the MLPP/RHB. Killed in Bataan few days after being abducted June 11, 2003.

* Florente "Boy" Ocmen, section chairperson of Akbayan at the municipal level in Jabonga, Agusan del Norte. Killed May 28, 2003.

* Reymundo "Teteng" Tejeno, peasant leader from Unorka. Killed February 4, 2003 in the Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon Province.

* Romulo "Rolly" Kintanar, former member of the CPP Politburo and head of the NPA. Killed January 23, 2003 in a Quezon City (Manila) restaurant.

* Felimon "Popoy" Lagman (identified in AB "diagram" as PMP-BMP-Sanlakas). Killed in Metro-Manila, February 6, 2001. Some suspect the NPA of this murder but the CPP denies any responsibility.

* RPM-M Party's Front Secretary: he

was the one targeted by the NPA, April 8, 2001. He was later killed, May 9, 2001, in an encounter with the Philippine Military because the NPA set him up (contacting the Military and informing them of the RPA unit's position).

* Regional Commander of the Revolutionary People's Army (RPM-M/RPA) killed April 8, 2001 in Lanao (Mindanao). The NPA operatives were targeting the RPM-M Front Secretary who escaped. The NPA instead murdered the Regional Commander who happened to visit his comrade.

* MLPP members in Central Luzon. MLPP members began to be ambushed in February 2000. In December 2000, this organisation has suffered eleven casualties (four wounded and seven dead). Bartolome Quizon, member of the Executive Committee who had been a leading cadre of the CPP for 30 years, was killed in front of his family on December 2, 2000. At that point in time, the MLPP eventually decided to launch "defensive counter-operations". End of August 2002, a dozen of MLPP members had been killed, about fifteen wounded and some eight NPAs were probably also killed during the 2002 encounters.

* Conrado Balweg, former CPP-NPA in the Cordillera, head of the CPLA. Killed December 31, 1999.

* Eduardo Borromeo, close friend of Leopoldo Mabilangan. Killed in 1997.

* Leopoldo "ka Hector" Mabilangan, former head of the Quezon-based Banahaw Command. Killed April 3, 1994.

II/ PEOPLE HUNTED DOWN

Continuous attempts of assassination on:

Tito dela Cruz, identified as MLPP in AB "diagram".

Ric Reyes, chair of Akbayan (sentenced to death in 1993, named in AB "diagram").

Caridad Pascual, identified as MLPP in AB "diagram".

Ike de los Reyes, identified as RPM-M

in AB "diagram" as RPM-M.

Series of attempts of assassination on:

Regional Military Cadre of the Revolutionary People's Army (RPM-M) in the City of Iligan.

Dioscoro Tejeno, peasant leader from the Bondoc Peninsula.

Attempt murder of a Front Cadre of the RPM-M, end of November 2004. He was only wounded.

Alberto Bitong, farmer leader, survived a failed ambush March 29, 2004 in Bondoc Peninsula.

Felizardo Benitez, farmer-leader, escaped with his family an attack in January 2004 in Bondoc Peninsula. His two month-old baby died from exposure to elements in the evacuation. After escaping the NPA, Felizardo Benitez was assassinated by the local landlords March 20, 2004 (two other peasant-leaders belonging to the same movements have been murdered by the landlords and one by the NPA).

Because of the way they have been associated with Arturo Tabara, one can fear for:

Nilo dela Cruz, associated to Tabara and identified as RPM-P in AB "diagram".

Manjette Lopez, associated to Tabara in Ibon's letter, identified as PPD and PMP-merger in AB "diagram".

III/ ORGANISATIONS AND PEOPLE THREATENED

Persons who have been labelled "counter-revolutionaries", "agents" or "criminals", which is to be considered a credible threat in the framework of the CPP overall policy. There are many others threatened without being mentioned in the CPP publications or statements, or who are mentioned only in regional and local publications I had no access to.

Names are given here by alphabetic order. Full names of organisations are given below those of individuals.

A. INDIVIDUALS

The CPP leadership began to

denounce as “criminals” and “counter-revolutionaries” many of former members of its party after the 1992 crisis. In 1993, a first set of death sentences were publicly announced. The leaders of all the main oppositions were then condemned: Ricardo Reyes (today hunted down), Romulo Kintanar (killed in 2003) and Benjie de Vera from Mindanao; Arturo Tabara (killed in 2003) from the Visayas; Popoy Lagman (killed in 2001) from Manila-Rizal (the Capital Region). Some others were similarly sentenced, secretly or publicly as Joel Rocamora (then a fellow of the Amsterdam based Transnational Institute).

In addition to those already mentioned, here are some of the persons who have been recently labelled “counterrevolutionaries” by the CPP. Anyone familiar with the Philippines knows that most of them are dedicated activists.

Walden Bello, chair Emeritus of Akbayan! (named both in AB “diagram” and Ibon’s letter).

Efren Binalla, farmer-leader, Bondoc Peninsula.

Sixto Carlos, Akbayan’s officer.

Argee Esquejo, farmer-leader, Nueva Ecija.

Robert “Bobby” Garcia, who wrote an in depth testimony of the 1980s’ paranoid purges in the CPP.

Edwin Igay and Dindo Diaz, unarmed young organizers of the MLPP-RBH in Bataan, were abducted June 11, 2003 and received death threats before being released (Donie Valencia, who was abducted with them, was actually assassinated).

Miel Laurenaria, identified as MLPP/RHB by the CPP.
Sonny Melencio, named in AB

“diagram”.

Boy Morales, named in AB “diagram”.

Lidy Nacpil, Jubilee South, named in AB “diagram”.

Nathan Quimpo, Akbayan.

Manuel Quiambao Pena, Akbayan.
Loretta Ann P. “Etta” Rosales, first Akbayan representative in the Congress (named in AB “diagram”).

Joel Rocamora, Transnational Institute, IPD (sentenced to death in 1993).

Gani Serrano, PRRM, named in AB “diagram”.

Ben Sumog-Oy, Akbayan (General Santos City, Mindanao)

B. ORGANISATIONS

Most of the organisations mentioned here are named in the December 7, 2004 Ang Bayan “diagram”. Some do not exist anymore, having merged with others. Focus is named in Ibon’s letter and various individual statements.

Akbayan! (Citizen Action Party)

AK: Alab Katipunan

ABB “bloc”: Alex Boncayao Brigade “bloc”

Bisig (component of Akbayan)

BMP: Solidarity of Filipino Workers (trade-union center)

CPLA: Cordillera People’s Liberation Army

Empowerment (peasant NGO, Nueva Ecija)

Focus on the Global South

IPD: Institute for Popular Democracy

KMPB: Peasant Movement of the Bondoc Peninsula.

Makammasa: Federation of small farmers (Bondoc Peninsula).

MLPP/RHB: Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines/Revolutionary People’s Army.

Padayon (component of Akbayan)

Pandayan (component of Akbayan)

Peace Foundation (Bondoc Peninsula)

PKP: the “old” Communist Party of the Philippines

PopDems: Popular Democrats

PPD: Proletarian Democratic Party (joined PMP-merger)

RGK: Revolutionary Communist Group

PMP: Workers Party of the Philippines (later PMP “merger”).

RPM-M/RPA: Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao / Revolutionary People’s Army

RPM-P/RPA-ABB: Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines / Revolutionary Proletarian Army / Alex Boncayao Brigade

Sanlakas (coalition of mass organizations)

Siglaya

SMB (peasant association, Nueva Ecija)

SocDems

SPP: Socialist Party of Labour (joined PMP-merger)

Task Force Bondoc Peninsula

Unorka

The (weak) arguments of the governmentalist left

11 March 2005, by **João Machado**

We mean by “governmentalist left” those sectors which formulate significant criticisms of the Lula government while continuing to defend it, and who, when they can, participate in this government and are preparing to support it in the 2006 elections. This term does not then apply to everyone who remains inside the PT or inside other parties like the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB).



Joao Machado

Thus we will analyze here the arguments used to justify participation in the Lula government and not those employed to justify participation in the Workers' Party (or in the PCdoB), with the exception of those that justify belonging to those parties in order to defend governmental participation. We will not formulate any critique here of those who defend membership of the PT or PCdoB without deducing from this a defence of the Lula government.

The strengthening of the social-liberal character of the Lula government

Now in the third year of its term in office, the Lula government leaves us in no doubt of its general social liberal and thus conservative orientation. Three linked processes, still underway, confirm and consolidate this characteristic.

First there is the strengthening of the position of finance minister Palocci and all the explicitly neoliberal sectors of the government. These sectors have been strengthened in the government's internal debate by the expansion of the Brazilian economy in 2004.

It is true that this expansion was not sufficient to increase substantially the level of employment. It has only compensated for the growth of unemployment in 2003, leaving the Lula government at level zero in this area, whereas it had promised the creation of ten million new jobs. And this expansion has in no way allowed the reversal of the huge concentration of income.

It is also true that the basic explanation of the expansion is not to be found in the policies followed by Palocci. The year 2004 was a year of significant growth of the world economy and in particular that of the so-called “emergent countries”. Brazil was moreover among the “emergent countries” which has least benefited from this growth. And more significantly still, Latin American countries which have adopted economic policies much less submissive than those of Brazil, like Venezuela or Argentina, have experienced stronger growth.

It is true finally that the economic policy implemented has already begun to slow expansion. The rise in interest rates and in the exchange rate of the Real have already begun to have negative effects (since September 2004 industry has not experienced any growth) and the perspectives for 2005 are for a reversal of the tendency, independently of the international conjuncture.

None of this worries Lula and his government and the very modest economic results are seen as proof of the genius of Palaccio and the other declared neoliberals responsible for economic policy.

The second process underway is the erosion of policies which can be seen as or used to be seen as breaking with the general framework.

Since the beginning of the government the sector in which the general neoliberal orientation was least prominent was that of international relations. It never amounted to a

complete rupture, for part of Brazil's foreign policy is under the control of the Finance ministry and the Central Bank. Nonetheless it is true that foreign minister Itamaraty has resisted (and, it seems, continues to resist) the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), or at least the US version of this project, and opposed the imperialist countries at the inter-ministerial meeting of the WTO at Cancun in 2003 and so on.

But in the course of recent months the negative signs have multiplied in this sector also. In the WTO negotiations Brazil has adopted a position of collaboration with the US. [1]

In the Mercosur negotiations with the European Union - which happily have not ended up in agreement - Brazilian diplomacy adopted an approach of collaboration with the US, accepting measures that it had rejected in the framework of discussions on the FTAA. [2] That said, the most negative act of the Lula government's foreign policy is the maintenance of Brazilian troops in Haiti, in close collaboration with the US government.

The third negative process underway concerns the changes already made or anticipated in the composition of the government - all for the worst.

The departure of Carlos Lessa from the presidency of the National Bank of Social and Economic Development [3] means the suppression of the sole focus of resistance to neoliberal economic policies inside the government (the other governmental personalities in this sector who were not or did not appear to be neoliberals, like the former minister and current president of the BNDES, Mantega, are already subject, broadly, to the fundamentally neoliberal orientation of economic policy).

Other members of the government who were more resistant to neoliberalism or to conservative policies in general have also left the government. A departure as significant as that of the economist Lessa is expected: that of Marina

Silva, environment minister, who has suffered a series of defeats in struggling to make the Lula government respect its ecological commitments (she has shown signs that she will no longer resist and if she remains minister she will appear as completely demoralized in the eyes of environmental sectors).

Finally, the ministerial reform which is expected shortly will strengthen the weight of the conservative sectors in the government, with the entry of the most right wing Brazilian party, the "Progressive Party" (PP) of Paulo Maluf.

To conclude this chapter, note that it is every day harder to hide the fact that the Lula government is a conservative government, occupying the same political space as that of its predecessor Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC). To avoid any misunderstanding, this does not mean that the Lula government is strictly identical to that of FHC, but the differences between the two are relatively secondary and it belongs to the same political camp as the former government, essentially defending the same class interests.

The initial arguments of the governmentalist left

The globally conservative and social liberal character of the Lula government was clear before it even took office - at least from the announcement of its composition, with the tucano-neoliberal [4] team at the Central Bank and the strong presence at the Finance Ministry of people having the same profile.

Nonetheless a great part of the Brazilian left was not prepared to come to this conclusion. This was even true of that part of the left which was still guided by a socialist project (a great part of the Brazilian left, and in particular the leadership of the PT "majority camp", had long since abandoned a socialist perspective).

For the left which did not wish or was

not ready to conclude what reality already indicated, it was indispensable to build an argument to justify its position - that of the defence of the government, including participation in it. It should be stressed that most of those who have presented this argument believed in it and that in general it was not a case of bad faith. On the other hand it is clear that we were faced with a case of wishful thinking in the extreme.

The main arguments of the governmentalist left could be grouped under five themes:

1. The Lula government is the fruit of two decades of accumulation of forces of the left and the Brazilian social movements; in 2002 the Brazilian left and the people won the greatest victory of their history.
2. The defeat of the Lula government (and the PT) would be a historic defeat for the whole of the Brazilian left - which would not recover from it for some decades. It is important to note that in this case, what is called "the defeat of the Lula government and the PT" is the abandonment of a left project and not what Lula himself and the "majority camp of the PT" saw as a defeat. The two things are however very different.
3. The first steps of this government did not correspond to its "real character"; they only signaled a "transition" to a real PT government.
4. Although its economic policy (or its macro-economic policy for those who wish to reduce the critique still further) is neoliberal and there was obviously a strong neoliberal presence inside the government, this was only part of the story. The government is "the object of a dispute". Moreover the PT is also the object of a dispute and the two disputes are linked.
5. If there is a strong presence of neoliberal policies, there is another side to the government which does good things and should not be ignored.

Another argument that is sometimes put forward is that the relationship of forces, Brazilian and international, would not allow the government to go beyond what it was doing. This argument cannot be analyzed here, since it implies a position of little or no criticism of the Lula government and is thus outside of the camp that

we refer to here as "the left".

All these arguments are fragile and sometimes logically incoherent. For example, to say that the Brazilian left could not recover for decades after the defeat of the Lula government (in the sense of the characterization of it as a left project) might or might not prove true (for my part I don't share this viewpoint), but it in no way clarifies the character of this government. Nonetheless our objective is not to discuss or to criticize these arguments as many others have already done so (for example the authors of the text "The Brazilian left at the crossroads", published in IV, November 2004).

Curiously the governmentalist left has been little concerned by the thorny problem of the constitution of a "basic alliance" which includes a great part of the Brazilian right. In general it has been little spoken of. And nobody has sought to explain how a government whose basic alliance was to this point conservative could be left, or favorable to the left, or at least merit being supported and defended by sectors of the left.

The arguments of the governmentalist left now

Having presented the initial argument of the governmentalist left we can pass to the central theme of this article which is the current argument of this left.

What remains today of the initial arguments summed up here?

Let's begin with the third, concerning the "transition".

This argument no longer plays any role today and nobody serious could defend it. However an argument presented currently can be considered as a variant. It is argued that the Lula government acts in very difficult conditions, that the relationship of forces is still favorable to conservatism, big capital and so on.

This is the central argument of the recent "Letter to members of the PT",

approved by the majority of the leaderships of the Socialist Democracy Tendency and the Left Articulation: "The federal government headed by our comrade Lula works under very hard conditions. A lot of time and conflict will be necessary to repair the damage done to the country by a decade of neo-liberal hegemony and two decades of military rule. A lot of firmness in strategy and tactical flexibility will be necessary to survive and overcome the threats posed by American imperialism. A lot of struggle both in the political and ideological arenas will be necessary to change a balance of forces which still favors conservatism and continuity. A lot of political, administrative and technical ability will be necessary to face the difficulties inherent to the government of a country like Brazil". [5]

Instead then of speaking of a "transition" as first stage of the government, we should speak today of a historic process of indefinite duration.

If this was true - which remains to be proved - we should then take an interest in the role played by the government in this relationship of forces. Has it contributed to changing it in favour of the popular sectors or has it done the contrary? If it is difficult to find examples where the Lula government has contributed to improving the relationship of forces in favour of the popular sectors, examples of situations where it has assumed the offensive against the popular sectors and allied itself to the dominant classes and the right are many and obvious.

It is convenient to note that this argument implies a significant reduction of the tenor of the critiques addressed to the Lula government (in comparison with the critiques formulated by the same people in the past). To stress the difficulty of the Lula government's tasks constitutes a step in the direction of the general justification of his policy. In adopting this argument sectors like the majority of the leadership of the Socialist Democracy Tendency and the Left Articulation Tendency place themselves at the limit of this governmentalist left. One more step in this direction and it will be more

precise to characterize them simply as "governmentalist". Nonetheless, as their justification of the Lula government is still incomplete, it is convenient to consider them as part of the "governmentalist left".

That said, this argument is linked to a new group of arguments which represent the axis of defence of the "governmentalist left" that we will analyze below.

Let's move on to the fourth theme, that concerning "the government (or the PT) as object of a dispute of orientation". It is clear that this argument - which was perhaps the most important in the months following its initial formation - has lost nearly all its force. But it survives still in a residual manner. We will see how this argument reappears, in a certain way, in examining further the new line of the argument. The victory of the PT left at Fortaleza is sometimes cited in its favour - but it is hard to say that this victory compensates for all the other defeats suffered by the PT left. On the other hand this argument can be reinterpreted so as to claim that it is possible to improve aspects of the government's policy, even if a general dispute on its orientation is no longer possible. That obviously leads to legitimating a general orientation in exchange for some crumbs.

An argument which stands up a little better is the first, that the "Lula government is the result of an accumulation of forces of the popular movement over two decades", that is an argument stressing the identification of the left and the people with Lula and his government (or with the PT). We still find people who forcefully defend the idea that "Lula's victory was the biggest historic victory for the workers and the popular classes" or who say - to justify the fact that they remain inside the PT and the government - that the "PT is the heir of big struggles" without examining seriously the role of the PT today.

The axis of the argument has however undergone an inflexion. We hear less talk of a "great victory" represented by the election of Lula and more of the fact that "popular hope is still alive". The weight of the PT and particularly Lula inside the popular sectors is stressed and it is pointed out that "the

majority of left activists are still linked to the PT". What is never discussed is whether the influence of Lula or the PT strengthens or weakens the socialist cause and accordingly whether it should be supported or fought.

When they speak of the identification of the popular sectors with Lula and (in a more limited way) with his government, the question is never posed as to whether Lula and his government have acted in their favour, what interests the Lula government has essentially defended. This is, however, the decisive question, that of the practical action of the Lula government. It is more important to know whether Lula identifies in practice with the popular interests than whether the people identify with him.

Another fairly curious variant of this line of argument recognizes that the Lula government is bad, while saying that we have not been able to obtain a better government. No need to comment.

A particularly strange version of the argument on the identification of the PT and the workers was presented in the article by Valter Pomar published in the journal "Socialist Democracy" (in August 2004). For him "the PT still channels the interests of the workers and cannot cease to do so".

This leader of Left Articulation, who has become the main ideologue of the governmentalist left, claims that "the PT only represents an "interest" for the sectors of the dominant classes if it is capable of channeling the workers on the political and electoral terrain". So the PT will keep these links. Without entering into discussion on whether this corresponds to reality, it is hard to understand how such a reasoning can be used as an argument in favour of left activists staying inside the PT (and thus inside the Lula government).

What is the socialist left doing in a party which serves the dominant classes?

Another argument which, after some redefinition, still has a certain weight is that "the defeat of the Lula government will be a historic defeat of

the Brazilian left". The contention is that the real polarization of Brazilian society today is around the axis PT (left) - PSDB (right). Thus there is no space for a conflict between the more radical left and the Lula government as well as the traditional right. The (traditional) right would be the main beneficiary from the defeat of the Lula government.

From this one passes to the attack against the alternatives to the PT, who are supposedly playing the game of the right.

Yet the very announcement of the argument destroys it. When Valter Pomar, in the article already quoted, says that it "is not possible to impose simultaneously a defeat on the Lula government and the traditional right", he recognizes, almost explicitly, that the Lula government represents a "non-traditional right". Would it not then be more correct to say that those who support this new right are playing the game of the right?

What's more, the numerous alliances of the PT with the PSDB and PFL, like the fact that all these parties are allies in imposing pensions reform, approving public-private partnership *6, defending neoliberal economic policies and so on show that the conflict between the PT and PSDB is similar to the conflict between the Democrats and Republicans in the US, a political rivalry without polarized class projects.

Finally the argument that "this government does good things" still survives, but even though it was initially the weakest of all the arguments mentioned it has been still further weakened.

"Continental war of position" and new lines of argument

It should however be remarked that a new line of argument is being developed by the governmentalist left and that it is progressively taking the place of the preceding arguments. Its essence is to withdraw Lula's

government from the centre of the analysis. Coming from those who wish to argue in favour of participation in this government, it is a fairly comical ruse.

One of the ways of expressing it is to argue that "it is not the government which is at the centre of the struggle, but society, mobilizations, and so on". Or that the most important thing is "to put the working class in movement". This reasoning sometimes seeks to make a "left" critique of the alternatives being built, and especially the PSoL (it should be said that all those who use this argument are not part of the "governmentalist left" and some don't in any way defend the Lula government). In one way this argument is linked to the claim that the relationship of forces is unfavorable, in the context of a more left wing strategic vision.

The big problem of this line of reasoning is that it abandons the terrain of debate on the nature of the Lula government. Whether or not it is at the centre of the struggle, what role does it play there? Does it favour the socialist project or not? Does it help or hinder the mobilization of the working class? To strengthen the evasive character of this argument, it is sometimes combined with affirmations which, in reality, have no relation with the Lula government, as in the (correct) assessment that "the process of the struggles in Latin America has not been defeated".

The reference to the Latin American political process opens, moreover, the way to another way of arguing. The claim is made that the Lula government (and the Brazilian political process) should be understood in the framework of the process underway throughout Latin America, where we will have a prolonged struggle against US imperialism, a struggle in which the Chavez government and the most combative social movements will be the most advanced actors, where the Cuban government will occupy also an important and positive role, while the Kirchner and Lula governments will play an ambiguous role.

The reference to the process of anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America

certainly constitutes the strongest and most correct point of this argument. But the manner of inserting the Lula (or Kirchner) government in the argument seems a little caricatured, on the one hand the Gramscian idea of the "war of position", with a reprise of some of the worst consequences drawn from it a long time ago, on the other the conception of the state developed by Poulantzas in his last works - the state as a "social relationship", internally traversed by class struggle, that could gradually be appropriated.

This reasoning also involves the ideas of "transitional government" and above all a "government in dispute", while giving the impression that it should not be accorded a disproportionate importance.

The goal of this article is not to discuss this vision of the Latin American political process. It is no longer necessary to insist here on the fact that the Lula government does not occupy any ambiguous place in the Brazilian and continental political process, since we have already said it. I just want to stress a decisive point: even if we do not want to place the Lula government at the centre of the analysis, if we discuss from its character and if we ask ourselves if it is correct to participate in it (and thus accept its discipline, like the PT, PCdoB and other parties) we cannot then flee from the simple and essential questions: What is the character of this government? What fundamental class interests has it defended? What is its role; in favour of what social sectors does it act? Is it correct (and legitimate) that socialist activists subordinate their line of action to the demands of the Lula government (for example voting for its counter-reforms, wages policy, budgets etc, voting which is obligatory to stay in this government)? Is it possible to defend all the interests of the exploited and oppressed sectors in accepting subordination to this government? And so on.

When we analyze the question from this viewpoint, it is hard not to conclude that the new arguments of the "governmentalist left" avoid the questions that need to be answered if we are seriously concerned about our

place in the Brazilian (and Latin American) political process.

Conclusion

The life of the governmentalist left is not easy, in particular the life of its rational arguments. Taken together, in the light of reason, its arguments are very weak.

At the beginning of this article it was

said that the argument of the governmentalist left is a particular case of believing in what one wants to believe in - but that it did not amount to bad faith. Shouldn't we conclude that we now have to resort to pure bad faith to justify a presence in the government? Or at least a predominant dose of bad faith?

** João Machado is one of the founders and national leaders of the*

Workers' Party (PT). He is also one of the founders of the Socialist Democracy Tendency and a member of the Fourth International's International Committee. Following the expulsion of Senator Heloísa Helena (also a member of the Fourth International's International Committee) and federal deputies Babá, João Fontes and Luciana Genro from the PT, he left the PT to help build the Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSoL).

Crisis of the Workers' Party and divisions of the left

11 March 2005, by **Jan Malewski**

At the 5th World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre in January 2005 the crisis within the PT opened up again, highlighting the divisions among its left activists, who, while sharing a general criticism of the policies followed for two years by the Lula government, have drawn different conclusions.



Before the WSF, in December 2004, a meeting of the left of the PT was held in São Paulo at the initiative of the two principal historical left tendencies, Socialist Democracy (DS) and Left Articulation (AE). This PT left comprises militants who, while criticizing government policy as well as the submission of the party to the government, believe their struggle is located inside the PT and its government.

These militants, with other internal currents of the PT, have published a "Letter to Members of the PT", widely circulated during the WSF and organized a debate between party activists on economic alternatives. [6]

Two other initiatives had a significant media impact during the WSF.

More than 100 historic PT militants made a public proclamation "Time for a break", calling on party activists to resign collectively. This proclamation, initiated by the economist Plínio de Arruda Sampaio Jr., a founder of the PT and a "legendary historical militant" according to the press, and by Jorge Luís Martins, a member of the National Executive Commission of the CUT trade union federation, was signed by intellectuals, leaders of trade-unions and left organizations and social movements connected to liberation theology. They announced that they expected 4-500 PT militants to join them over the following weeks.

Questioned by the press, Jorge Martins explained that over the last two years the group thought it was able to turn the government to the left, "but we lost all the battles". "The pensions reform imposes more sacrifices on the workers, the laws on bankruptcy put an end to risk for capitalists and the high budget surplus deprives the government of the capacity to invest". Other initiatives, such as labour reform, are "more than obvious" signs that the Lula government looks to further deepen the model implemented by the former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), Martins concluded.

For Sampaio Jr. the party "sank in an irreversible way" after it came to power. "Internal democracy [within the PT] does not function, the struggle is useless", he said. Questioned on the prospects for regroupment, Sampaio Jr. claimed to fight for "the unity of the left" and that he does not plan to join a party in the short run, although he felt close to the new PSoL. Some of the signatories of the proclamation had however already joined the PSoL.

At the same time more than 350 activists, independents and supporters of the Left Articulation, Socialist Forum and Socialist Unity Movement from all over the country published a proclamation announcing that they considered themselves "dissidents" within the PT and constituted a "public faction".

"The objective [of the PT] consisted in accumulating forces to establish a democratic and popular government of an anti-monopolistic, anti-imperialist and anti-latifundist nature" says their proclamation "This government was to apply major reforms, aimed at satisfying the interests and needs of the great majority of the population, making possible a revolutionary rupture and the beginning of socialist construction, our strategic objective. Major

deformations accumulated over the years. Little by little the struggle for spaces in the state apparatus became much more essential than the organization of direct social and working class struggles.

"Social activists were absorbed by the party machines, governmental administration, parliament and even by an institutionalization of the trade unions which ended in the transformation of what was a tactic into a strategic objective in itself... The election of Lula in 2002 was the climax of the strategic project of the PT - to be able to carry out popular democratic reforms through the federal government- and the climax of its conservative inflection which transformed governability and the possibility of maintaining oneself in the space occupied into an end in itself. Arriving in power with an ambiguous program, which promised changes to the people and the maintenance of contracts to the markets, Lula felt strong enough to ensure the continuity of the economic

policy of FHC in a conjuncture of decline of popular struggles. This attitude gave a new breath to neoliberalism in Brazil. The Chavez government, in Venezuela, which rested on a popular organization much weaker than what existed in Brazil, showed that it was possible to confront imperialism and the dominant classes."

This group, joined by former Constituent Assembly deputy Plânio de Arruda Sampaio (the father of the aforementioned economist and also a founder of the PT), said he will no longer respect party discipline and will oppose "radically the policies of the Lula government which attack the rights of the workers (such as trade-union, labour and university reforms)" and that he will decide whether to leave the party at a national meeting next July.

Finally, in a text entitled "The star [7] will shine never again" 50 militants of the Socialist Democracy Tendency announced that they will leave the PT

and join the PsoL. According to them, "the PT is no longer a socialist party"" it is a "party dominated by the bureaucracy and by corruption"" and it no longer represents the social movements, having been "transformed into an electoral and institutional party" which is "a transmission belt of the Lula government."

They consider that "the PT left limits itself to being an "authentic" wing of the party and its membership of PT is only a factor of confusion for the workers and social movements"" and that "the PT will never be again what it was during the 1980s". "We have left the PT and we remain within Socialist Democracy, because we will never agree to mix things which are so different": "We continue the DS, fighting to rebuild it as a current upholding the traditions and the programmatic heritage of the Fourth International".

**Jan Malewski is editor of Inprecor and a member of the Fourth International's Executive Bureau.*

What the White House Has in Store

5 March 2005, by David Finkel

To understand these realities, and the social relations behind them, is to comprehend why capitalism absolutely has got to go. That's true regardless of which particular political party or bought-and-paid-for clique happens to be in charge of administering it at any given time.

But there are some specific features of the Bush Two regime that deserve analysis as it launches its second term. Bush's inaugural address was remarkable for pure dishonesty: a celebration of spreading something called "freedom" throughout the world, in which the word "Iraq" was never mentioned.

The Iraq adventure, as the Bush gang knew very well, was by now a war which the great majority of the U.S. public heartily wish had never happened, and which the American people want to end yesterday if not sooner. It was a different story, of course, by the time of the February 2 State of the Empire address. In the afterglow of the Iraq election, nicely timed three days earlier, there was plenty to say about the democratic blessings the war has bestowed upon the grateful Iraqi people.

Schlockfest

What a heroic demonstration it was. Lawmakers bravely dipping their fingers in symbolic purple ink. A Marine's parents presenting their

dead son's dog tags to an actual Iraqi voter (a woman active in Republican party politics, whose father according to some accounts died in an abortive anti-Saddam coup attempt encouraged and then abandoned by the CIA).

Administrations of earlier decades might have been embarrassed to stage such a shlockfest (even Leni Reifenstahl probably would have been ashamed to film this Triumph of the Shill). But credit Bush and his handlers with one thing: They cannot be shamed by anything, not mythical WMDs, not Abu Ghraib, not 100,000 dead Iraqis or 1400 dead and over 10,000 seriously wounded U.S. soldiers and top officers' admissions that the insurgency is growing, or the depletion of the National Guard and open descriptions of the military



reserves as a "broken force."

Nothing embarrasses these guys. Alberto Gonzalez as Attorney- General, a man whose license to practice law (forget holding public office) should be revoked over the torture memos? Donald Rumsfeld on TV telling us he'd offered to resign over Abu Ghraib, a story he ought to be telling to a war crimes tribunal?

An administration that won't allow military coffins to be filmed coming off the ships — would they be squeamish about exploiting a dead serviceman to promote the new Iraqi democracy? Are you kidding? What's New? But there's more, of course: Bush Two is concerned not only with freedom throughout the rest of the world, but equally with building an Ownership Society at home. If the former means endless war, the latter means a future of permanent stress and insecurity for working Americans, beginning with the death-by-privatization of social security.

This is only the leading edge of a budget full of brutalities. The deficit projections (\$390 billion for fiscal year 2006) are fictional, as they don't include costs of the Iraq and Afghan wars, or last year's Medicaid bill, or missile defense, or permanent tax cuts for the rich. But what's there is clear enough: military spending for FY 2006 (not counting the aforementioned really existing wars) topping \$419 billion, a 4.8% increase on FY 2005 and 41% since 2001 for the world's only superpower; savage cuts for everything else.

Federal funding for vocational, anti-drug and literacy programs: gone. Health and Human Services: down one percent. Housing and urban development: down 11.2 percent. Labor Department: down four percent. Food stamps: cut by \$1.1 billion. That will cut 300,000 people from the food stamp program. (For numerous details see "BushBudget, All Guns, No Butter," www.laborresearch.org/story2.php/375).

The fact that Bush's attack on social security is based on the most fantastic lies should not, by now, surprise anyone. But this fraud by now has

been demonstrated exhaustively not only in the radical but the mainstream press. It's not news; nor is the fact that the Bush gang invents crises that don't exist (Iraqi WMDs) and pretends that actual crises aren't for real (catastrophic climate change).

Attack on working class

The frontal assault on the well-being of working class America continues a three-decade trend. Since the early 1970s, capital has been engaged in a near-permanent "employers' offensive." Sometimes this has been carried out by stealth, by chipping away at the more vulnerable layers of the population, or by gradual methods. There were also dramatic moments, as when Ronald Reagan in 1981 seized the opportunity to crush the air traffic controllers' union PATCO, with its relatively well-paid and mostly white membership.

This greatly accelerated the use of strikebreaking by "permanent replacement workers," the imposition of concessionary contracts, and increasingly vicious methods to prevent union organizing. We saw the tragic culmination of this process in the bitter 1990s defeats in the Illinois "war zone" and the Detroit newspaper strike.

By various methods, this offensive has successfully prevented real wages from rising since 1973 even as productivity greatly increased, restoring the global competitive position of U.S. capital. Slowly but surely, former secure and well-paid layers were transferred to the ranks of the working poor and insecure. Workers' power and rights on the job were generally eroded but sometimes outright smashed; the plagues of Wal-Mart and non-union trucking weakened the bargaining strength of key retail and transport unions; an increasingly reactionary labor law climate deprived individual workers of protection from arbitrary discipline even as it made every strike a war for union survival.

This downward spiral has proceeded apace under Democratic and

Republican administrations, generally faster with Republicans in power. But while almost all sectors of working people were hit, those who have suffered the most were the lower paid, poorly organized workers, disproportionately drawn from people of color and immigrant communities.

Up to now, for example, probably the most shocking assault on entitlements was the wholesale dismantling of welfare, in a bipartisan operation by the Clinton presidency and the Republican Congress. Here above all it was the poor and vulnerable, the insecure and underemployed, over whose bodies corporate America walked on Bill Clinton's "bridge to the 21st century." Social security is different.

Here is the first full-scale open assault on a universal ("middle class," in American lingo) entitlement, formerly untouchable precisely because everyone benefits from it. If social security can be "reformed," that is to say, bled to death to enrich Wall Street brokerages via privatization, then everything is up for grabs. The right wing will have made giant steps toward their utopian society, in which each individual's survival depends on screwing others. Social security is under attack not because it is a failed program or in crisis, but because it is a success: Social security has dramatically reduced old-age extreme poverty. Privatize it, and old-age extreme poverty will return just as surely as child malnutrition, which was largely wiped out in America by the food stamp program, has come back with the demise of welfare.

The rest of the Bush program is cut from the same cloth. Take care of your own old age, or die in poverty; provide your own health insurance, or choose between death and bankruptcy if you get sick; don't expect compensation for asbestos exposure on the job. That's if you work for a living; for the wealthy and their retinue it's No corporate lobbyist, military contractor or right-wing talk pundit Left Behind — an inaugural ball that never ends.

The Opposition and Resistance

When Bush stated that in 2018 Social Security starts paying out more than it takes in — some imminent crisis, as if there weren't a huge savings built in just for the purpose! — some of the Democrats actually booed, a marked departure from the bleating normally heard from that quarter. Make no mistake:

The Democratic party's rhetorical defense of Social Security remains to be tested and may well crumble under pressure. But the fact that the Democrats have noticed the popular anger and fear over Social Security indicates how deep the outrage really is. Social security privatization, in fact, can be defeated — and with this, a big part of the right-wing offensive against civil rights and reproductive freedom can also be blunted — but only if powerful movements are mounted that don't put any trust in the Democrats. True, the Democrats may have also belatedly noticed that they could have won the election by actually opposing Bush's wretched war.

An unprecedented number of Senators voted against confirming the appointments of "Torture Boy" Gonzalez and Condoleezza Rice. The election of Howard Dean to head the Democratic National Committee by no means signals a "move to the left," but may indicate some understanding that simply following the Republicans rightward will lead to political extinction. Edward Kennedy explicitly likened the Iraq war to Vietnam, a previously taboo topic, and called for expedited withdrawal. (John Kerry immediately dissociated himself from this stance and insisted U.S. troops must remain, confirming once and for all that he is incapable of learning

anything from recent experience, but has forgotten everything he knew thirty years ago.)

While the Democrats try to figure out whether they want to be an opposition or return to their accustomed mode of fetch, roll over and play dead, the antiwar movement needs to rebuild itself and become a force of real resistance. The March 19-20 antiwar actions — especially, in our view, the East Coast mobilization in Fayetteville, North Carolina and march on Fort Bragg — are a vital beginning.

Only a movement of antiwar resistance that gives voice to the resentment of tens of millions of Americans against the hideous waste of life and resources in this war, and the lies on which it was based from the beginning, can force any Congressional debate on ending it. Even more: The administration's overt threats against Syria, and barely-concealed U.S.-Israeli plans to bomb Iran, require the most rapid possible reconstruction of the international antiwar movement. Unless the people of America and the world are back in the streets, even those European governments who realize that launching a still wider war would be insane will not openly challenge Bush again.

Iraq Election

After the Iraq Election To accomplish this, the movement must focus like a laser beam on the demand "Bring the Troops Home Now!" This is all the more true in the wake of the January 30 Iraq election. Undoubtedly this election's relative success provides a short-term boost for the Bush regime, but this must be kept in perspective. This direct national election for a Constitutional assembly was decidedly not what the occupiers initially envisioned.

It was imposed on them, first and foremost, because the Shia leadership rejected the U.S. scheme: indirect elections, a Constitution to be dictated by U.S. authorities to carefully selected Iraqis, political parties organized under U.S. oversight, assuring that the fundamental issues (like privatizing Iraqi oil, health care and everything else) would be decided on the American model. Once forced to accept a national election, naturally the occupiers took credit for it. But it is up to the Iraqi people to decide the meaning of this election and the legitimacy of the bodies arising from it.

Clearly there were millions who saw the vote as a giant step toward empowering their communities and getting foreign troops out of their country, while millions of others felt it was a fraud. The distant third-place showing by the slate of the U.S.-appointed prime minister Allawi suggests what Iraqi voters think of the occupation. Be all that as it may, the crucial point for the antiwar movement must be that elections held under conditions of occupation do not legitimize the occupation.

Here is the Bush gang's latest lie: Iraqis voting for their representatives proves that "we liberated Iraq" after all. The fact is that this war for oil and empire remains a crime against humanity as it was from the beginning. Among both Iraqis and Americans, the main reason this election is seen as a success is the belief that it will lead in short order to getting U.S. troops out of the Iraqi quagmire. Both there and here, those hopes will be quickly disappointed and the crisis will return with full force. That reality — and the presence in the United States of real grassroots resistance, not just the tame Democratic opposition — is what's required to blow up the Bush Two agenda.

Women's Global Charter for Humanity

1 March 2005, by **World March of Women**



In 2005, this charter will be circulated around the world, handed from country to country by women involved in action for its adoption. The list of countries, along with a map, is impressive. The Charter will end its global trip on 17 October 2005 in Burkina Faso with a welcome by the women of Burkina Faso and an international delegation. On the same day, there will be actions at noon in every country around the world that the Charter has traversed - all in support of actions and affirmations that Another World IS Possible.

Further information from [World March of Women](#)

Women's Global Charter for Humanity

FINAL VERSION - *Adopted on December 10, 2004, in Kigali (Rwanda)*

Preamble

We women have been marching a long time to denounce and demand an end to the oppression of women and end the domination, exploitation, egotism and unbridled quest for profit breeding injustice, war, conquest and violence.

Our feminist struggles and those of our foremothers on every continent have forged new freedoms for us, our daughters and sons, and all the young girls and boys who will walk the earth after us.

We are building a world where diversity is considered an asset and individuality a source of richness;

where dialogue flourishes and where writing, song and dreams can flower. In this world, human beings are considered one of the most precious sources of wealth. Equality, freedom, solidarity, justice, and peace are its driving force. We have the power to create this world.

We represent over half of humanity. We give life, we work, love, create, struggle, and have fun. We currently accomplish most of the work essential to life and the continued survival of humankind. Yet our place in society continues to be undervalued.

The World March of Women, of which we are a part, views patriarchy as the system oppressing women and capitalism as the system that enables a minority to exploit the vast majority of women and men.

These systems reinforce one another. They are rooted in, and work hand in hand with, racism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, colonialism, imperialism, slavery, and forced labour. They breed manifold forms of fundamentalism that prevent women and men from being free. They generate poverty and exclusion, violate the rights of human beings, particularly women's rights, and imperil humanity and the planet.

We reject this world!

We propose to build another world where exploitation, oppression, intolerance and exclusion no longer exist, and where integrity, diversity and the rights and freedoms of all are respected.

This Charter is based on the values of equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.

EQUALITY

Affirmation 1. All human beings and peoples are equal in all domains and all societies. They have equal access to wealth, to land, decent employment, means of production, adequate housing, a quality education,

occupational training, justice, a healthy, nutritious and sufficient diet, physical and mental health services, old age security, a healthy environment, property, political and decision-making functions, energy, drinking water, clean air, means of transportation, technical knowledge and skills, information, means of communication, recreation, culture, rest, technology, and the fruit of scientific progress.

Affirmation 2. No human condition or condition of life justifies discrimination.

Affirmation 3. No custom, tradition, religion, ideology, economic system or policy justifies the inferiorization of any person or authorizes actions that undermine human dignity, and physical and psychological integrity.

Affirmation 4. Women are full-fledged human beings and citizens before being spouses, companions, wives, mothers and workers.

Affirmation 5. All unpaid, so-called feminine tasks related to supporting life and social maintenance (household labour, education, caring of children and intimates, etc.) are economic activities that create wealth and that should be valued and shared.

Affirmation 6. Trade among countries is equitable and does not harm peoples' development.

Affirmation 7. Every person has access to a job with fair remuneration, in safe and sanitary conditions, and in which their dignity is respected.

FREEDOM

Affirmation 1. All human beings live free of all forms of violence. No human being is the property of another. No person may be held in slavery, forced to marry, subjected to forced labour, trafficked, sexually exploited.

Affirmation 2. All individuals enjoy collective and individual freedoms that guarantee their dignity, in particular:

freedom of thought, conscience, belief and religion; freedom of expression and opinion; to express one's sexuality in a free and responsible manner and choose the person with whom to share one's life; freedom to vote, be elected and participate in political life; freedom to associate, meet, unionize and demonstrate; freedom to choose one's residence and civil status; freedom to choose one's courses of study and choose one's profession and exercise it; freedom to move and to be in charge of one's person and goods; freedom to choose one's language of communication while respecting minority languages and a society's choices concerning the language spoken at home and in the workplace, and to be informed, learn, discuss and gain access to information technologies.

Affirmation 3. Freedoms are exercised with tolerance and mutual respect and within a democratic and participatory framework, democratically determined by the society. They involve responsibilities and obligations towards the community.

Affirmation 4. Women are free to make decisions about their body, fertility and sexuality. They have the choice about whether they will have children.

Affirmation 5. Democracy is rooted in freedom and equality.

SOLIDARITY

Affirmation 1. International solidarity among individuals and peoples is promoted free of any form of manipulation or influence.

Affirmation 2. All human beings are interdependent. They share the responsibility and the intention to live together and build a society that is generous, just and egalitarian, based on human rights; a society free of oppression, exclusion, discrimination, intolerance and violence.

Affirmation 3. Natural resources and the goods and services necessary for all persons to live are quality public goods and services to which every individual has equal and fair access.

Affirmation 4. Natural resources are administrated by the peoples living in

the area, in a manner that is respectful of the environment and promotes its preservation and sustainability.

Affirmation 5. A society's economy serves the women and men composing that society. It is based on the production and exchange of socially useful wealth distributed among all people, the priority of satisfying the collective needs, eliminating poverty and ensuring the balance of collective and individual interests. It ensures food sovereignty. It opposes the exclusive quest for profit to the detriment of social usefulness, and the private accumulation of the means of production, wealth, capital, land, and decision-making power by a few groups and individuals.

Affirmation 6. The contribution of every person to society is acknowledged and paves the way to social rights, regardless of the function held by that person.

Affirmation 7. Genetic modification is controlled. There are no patents on life or the human genome. Human cloning is prohibited.

JUSTICE

Affirmation 1. All human beings regardless of their country of origin, nationality and place of residence are considered to be full-fledged citizens, with fair and equal entitlement to human rights (social, economic, political, civil, cultural rights, sexual, reproductive and environmental rights), within an egalitarian, fair and genuinely democratic framework.

Affirmation 2. Social justice is based on the equitable redistribution of wealth to eliminate poverty, limit wealth acquisition, and satisfy essential needs to improve the well-being of all people.

Affirmation 3. The physical and moral integrity of every person is protected. Torture and humiliating and degrading treatment are forbidden. Sexual violence, rape, female genital mutilation, violence against women, sex trafficking and trafficking of human beings in general are considered crimes against the person and crimes against humanity.

Affirmation 4. An accessible, egalitarian, effective and independent judiciary is put in place.

Affirmation 5. Every individual benefits from social protection guaranteeing her or him access to care, decent housing, education, information and security in old age. Every individual has sufficient income to live in dignity.

Affirmation 6. Health and social services are public, accessible, quality and free of charge; this includes all treatments, and services for all pandemic diseases, particularly HIV.

PEACE

Affirmation 1. All human beings live in a peaceful world. Peace is achieved principally as a result of: equality between women and men, social, economic, political, legal and cultural equality, rights protection, and eradication of poverty, ensuring that all people live in dignity and free of violence, and that everyone has employment, enough resources to feed, house, clothe and educate themselves, is protected in old age, and has access to health care.

Affirmation 2. Tolerance, dialogue and respect for diversity are foundations of peace.

Affirmation 3. All forms of domination, exploitation and exclusion, of one person over another, one group over another, of a minority over a majority, of a majority over a minority, or of one nation over another, are excluded.

Affirmation 4. All human beings have the right to live in a world free of war and armed conflict, foreign occupation and military bases. No one has the right to decide on the life or death of individuals and peoples.

Affirmation 5. No custom, tradition, ideology, religion, political or economic system justifies the use of violence.

Affirmation 6. Armed and unarmed conflicts between countries, communities and peoples are resolved through negotiations, which bring about peaceful, just and fair solutions at the national, regional and international levels.

CALL

This Women's Global Charter for Humanity calls on women and men and all oppressed peoples and groups of the planet to proclaim, individually and collectively, their power to transform the world and radically change social structures with a view to developing relationships based on equality, peace, freedom, solidarity and justice.

It calls on all social movements and all forces in society to take action so that the values promoted in this Charter can be effectively implemented and political decision-makers adopt the measures necessary for their implementation.

It is a call to action to change the world. The need is urgent!

No aspect of this Charter may be interpreted or utilized to express

opinions or conduct activities that contravene the Charter's spirit. The values defended in it form a whole. They are of equal importance, interdependent, and indivisible, and the order they appear in the Charter is interchangeable.

What is the World March of Women?

The World March of Women is a movement composed of women's groups of diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, political and class backgrounds, and different ages and sexual orientation. Far from dividing us, this diversity unites us in greater, more far-reaching solidarity.

In 2000, as part of the World March of Women, we wrote a political platform containing 17 practical demands for the elimination of poverty throughout the world, wealth sharing, the eradication of violence against women and the respect of women's physical

and moral integrity. We transmitted these demands to the leaders of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and United Nations. We received not even one concrete response. We also transmitted these demands to elected officials and leaders in our countries.

Ever since, we have ceaselessly continued to defend our demands. We are proposing alternatives to build another world. We are active in the world's social movements and in our societies. We are furthering the thinking about women's place in the world and the place we should be occupying.

With this Women's Global Charter for Humanity and our upcoming actions, we reaffirm that another world is possible, a world filled with hope and life that is truly a fine place to live. We proclaim our love of the world, its diversity and its beauty.

The Charter - another way to "march"

1 March 2005, by World March of Women

It also contains a series of denunciations of the world in which we live, drawing on the 17 demands of the World March of Women.

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity was adopted on December 10, 2004, in Kigali, Rwanda, by the majority of delegates attending the 5th International Meeting of the World March of Women. It reflects the diverse character of the women's groups composing the World March of Women. It contains a series of affirmations these groups agree are essential conditions for the construction of a world founded on equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.

The Charter's content may not be amended, unlike this supporting document, which each group is free to use according to its needs.

1. Why a Women's Global Charter for Humanity?

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity is an initiative of the World March of Women. The March encourages numerous groups that, while not yet members, defend the same values and are acting to transform the world in which we live, to join our movement.

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity describes the world that women of the World March of Women are in the process of building. It follows in the wake of actions led by countless women over history who have fought oppression, inequality, exploitation and discrimination.

With this Charter, women of the World March of Women are carrying on the actions we began in 1998 to eliminate poverty and violence against women

around the globe. The conditions necessary to reach these goals are expressed in the 17 demands adopted by the March (revisited in 2001). They have been circulated in 163 countries and territories by the roughly 6000 groups that participate in the World March of Women. As a proposal for another world, the Charter is another way to carry on the March.

2. What Distinguishes the Charter from Other Similar Documents

Many international instruments enshrine human rights, in particular women's rights. These include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Employment of Women Before and After Childbirth, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the International

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the women's rights Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

These documents do not, however, question the roots of exploitation and oppression. They do not denounce capitalism and patriarchy. They do not ensure the construction of a new social project that will guarantee the planet's survival ecologically, economically, politically, socially and culturally.

This is why we need a Charter that offers a radical critique of the causes of this oppression, exploitation, violence and destruction.

3. Women denounce

Women are not men's equals when it comes to access to wealth, land, the means of production, goods, education, occupational training, health, housing, food, employment and technology. Nor are they equal regarding issues like pay, safety, rights protection, social protection, information, recognition of their human dignity, and the choice of a partner. Numerous girls and women are married and remarried against their will and at an extremely young age. Many women do not have the right to travel freely, possess identity papers, exercise control over their reproductive health, express an opinion, take legal action, inherit, or take part in public and political life. They are targets for violence, subjected to genital mutilation, victims of "honour crimes," rape, acid attacks, and burned just for being women, and often they have no redress or means to counter this violence.

One of the main foundations of patriarchy and capitalism is the existence of a malleable, underpaid female workforce that is often obliged to endure slavery-like conditions. These systems are also rooted in the assurance that women will do the essential work of social reproduction like educating children, caring for

intimates, subsistence agriculture, housework, cooking, maintaining clothes, etc., for free.

For many generations now, women have denounced the patriarchal system that assigns them inferior status in society, where they are dominated, excluded, marginalized and treated as an object rather than a person.

Women also denounce capitalism, which oppresses the majority of women and men in the world, and racism, which generates intolerable inequality. Economic and market globalization accentuate existing inequalities. Humanity does not lack for resources or wealth production; rather, we are suffering a serious problem of universal access, responsible management and equitable distribution of these resources and wealth. While a handful of speculators and businessmen around the world become ever richer, the number of the poor and excluded with no access to goods and services essential to the exercise of their human rights, steadily rises.

This is why women of the World March of Women denounce:

1. Transnational corporations, giant landowners, banks and financial power holders whose sole objective is to become richer. Through their speculation and continuous quest to increase production and consumption, they wreak destruction on local organizations, small entrepreneurs and small commercial and rural enterprises. They impose difficult working conditions, trample social and union rights, and exploit adults and children; women are over-represented in these worker categories. Their policy destroys the

balance between humans and the earth and results in the depletion of natural resources, an energy crisis and environmental destruction.

2. International financial organizations' (World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) imposition on poor countries of structural adjustment programs and other measures that result in cuts to public services, spiralling debt and relentless impoverishment.
3. The impoverishment of countries, leading to the development of mafias that exploit people and force them to work in despicable, inhuman conditions as extreme as slavery, prostitution and sex trafficking. Millions of women are recruited in this way into networks rife with violence.
4. Wars and armed conflict that profit the arms industry, decimate civilian populations, breed impoverishment and injury, and generate hate and terrorism. Women and children form the majority of the victims: sexual violence, forced abortion and sterilization, forcible recruitment into armies or militias, forced displacements etc. The consequences on their physical and mental health are acute (HIV, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases,

numerous and long-lasting injuries).

5. All forms of violence against women. This violence is physical and psychological in form. It exists everywhere on the planet: in intimate relationships, the family, school, the workplace, in public, etc. Violence against women is devastating and can cause mutilation and death.
6. Men who refuse to renounce their privilege, exercising control and power over women in private and public.
7. All forms of religious fundamentalism, which prevents women from exercising freedom and full control of their bodies and sexuality and making decisions about their lives. This is a dangerous development of intolerance in the face of diverse opinions and forms of cultural, sexual and religious expression.
8. Governments and parliaments of States, to the extent that they abandon their responsibilities to women and men citizens and when they take the form of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships.
9. The scandalous institutionalized

corruption in which wealth is hidden in tax havens and banking secrecy, constituting legalized theft.

10. The UN's inability to establish egalitarian and peaceful relationships between countries and peoples and to promote viable development. It suffers from a lack of financial and political resources. The structure of the Security Council—where five rich countries have the right to veto—undermines its proper functioning and often results in unjust decisions.

4. Women are building

The world women want to build is a world based on the rule of law and democracy.

A democracy should serve all women and men living in the territory covered by the State. In this State, women and men citizens enjoy genuine political equality, participate in collective decisions and exercise a true degree of control over how such collective choices will be implemented.

A State subject to the rule of law should represent everyone's interests. It is responsible for ensuring that each member of society has genuine, equal and free access to services like education and health care and has decent housing and nutritious food. It institutes specific measures to improve the status of the most marginalized, discriminated against and poorest members of society. It works to ensure collective security, social cohesion, equality and

solidarity.

In this State women and men citizens are free and autonomous and as such are responsible for their actions as individuals, as families, as a couple and as members of society. Living together implies complying with the rules a society collectively formulates, to the extent that such rules protect the well-being of all. This is also true of international relations, where all peoples should be able to independently determine their own destiny.

In this society, women are full citizens, holding their own identity papers. If they so choose they have the right to use their own name; choose their nationality; and transmit it to their children, whatever their social or civil status or country of birth—and this, in the respect of every individual and the rules collectively determined by the society

The Charter repeatedly declares that only a society that is viable in the long term and that respects the environment and natural resources is capable of ensuring the well-being of its inhabitants today and in the future. In this respect, many groups refer to their opposition to the use of genetically modified organisms in agriculture and fish-farming, and to the introduction of other elements into the food chain. We nevertheless support the use of controlled genetic manipulation in the service of human beings, especially women, with a view to improving health and treating genetically-based illnesses.

The Charter does not describe how to build this new world. It is a sketch of our utopia. It is being constructed now, and has been for a long time, in every struggle to change this world and in every corner of the planet. The Charter serves as a reference point. It is up to each of us to take it and use it where we live.

Demands to make this world possible

1 March 2005, by **World March of Women**

The World March of Women's conditions and demands to make this world possible

The Women's Global Charter sets out, in the form of five values and 31 affirmations, the world women want to build. These affirmations might appear utopian to some. We know that many conditions must be put in place for these affirmations to become a reality. So we added this document, which contains the conditions on which women participating in the March were consulted during the drafting of the Charter. The list is far from complete and every woman must adapt it to the situation in her country.

This text continues in the same vein as the 17 world demands that served as the political platform of the World March of Women in 2000 and enriched discussions about the conditions necessary to enable construction of the world the Charter describes. The 17 demands follow the conditions in this document.

1. For identical or equivalent work, women receive remuneration equal to that of men and enjoy similar rights and benefits.
2. Measures are adopted to eliminate gender inequality among children and adults.
3. Household labour, education, and caring of children and intimates is shared equally among women and men. Those who carry out this work benefit from social rights.
4. Spouses are equal within

the couple and the family, regardless of the form of union. No family model has more value than any other.

5. Women possess their own identity papers.
6. Women have equal access to property, land and credit, regardless of their civil status.
7. Women and men are responsible for contraception. They have access to reliable and impartial information about contraception and how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, and to a free, safe and quality health system.
8. Women have the right and power not to comply with patriarchal social and cultural imperatives that impose a model of behaviour requiring them to be pretty, submissive, silent and industrious.
9. A constitutional, non-denominational and democratic State is created within the framework of a truly representative, participative, gender-representative, non-discriminatory, peaceful democracy, characterized by cooperation, freedom and public control of the common wealth.
10. Biological and cultural diversity is maintained as a social good. Traditional medicine is recognized

and valued in every society. The knowledge in this domain of women of all ages, peasant women and indigenous peoples, and of all other communities and populations is recognized and valued.

11. Measures are adopted enabling women and men to balance their paid work with family, social, political and cultural responsibilities. The principle of equal opportunity is a foundation stone. 12. Workers have the right to associate, organize and unionize.
12. Provisions are established to eliminate tax evasion, tax havens and fraud.
13. Every individual has access to social security through universal public programs.
14. When rights are violated, every measure is taken to expose rights violations and effectively ensure reparation and compensation for the wrongs inflicted on individuals or communities.
15. Persons who violate others' rights are responsible for their actions. No one benefits from impunity.
16. Effective means for combating corruption and arbitrary actions are established.

17. Individuals escaping from persecutions and violence, especially women escaping sexual violence and any other form of violence, have the right to asylum in a safe country.
18. Social movements organize, express their views and take action with complete freedom and without fear of repression.
19. Legislation is passed and effectively implemented prohibiting and condemning all forms of violence, particularly violence that specifically targets women, whether it is private or public in character, or occurs in peacetime or wartime. Rape is recognized as a weapon and a war crime.
20. All women and men benefit from educational and training programs that promote a culture of peace, non-violence and conflict prevention and challenge the legitimacy of attitudes that are warlike, male supremacist, dominating, exploitive or competitive in nature. Hateful and degrading representations of women and men are excluded from all means of communication.
21. Military research is abandoned in favour of civilian-oriented research. The arms industry is dismantled and converted for use in health, employment and educational programs.

When there are signs of impending war or armed conflict, peaceful methods are employed to prevent them. If a war or armed conflict is already underway, peaceful methods are used to resolve it. Women are actively involved in this process, in social reconstruction, and in creating a State that will ensure peace.

22. Women have equal representation in a global democratic system where people are represented in an egalitarian manner, which genuinely defends everyone's interests, establishes peace and eradicates poverty and violence. This body guarantees peoples' sovereignty and their self-determination; it protects their territories from occupation and safeguards their natural wealth. This system operates with transparency and its activities are controlled by the members of the societies that created it.

DEMANDS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

adopted in 1998 and revisited in 2001

TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

P-1 That all States adopt a legal framework and strategies aimed at eliminating poverty. A legal framework is an "umbrella" law with a broad scope that provides general guidelines, affirms principles and sets goals. This

legal framework must be the basis for other laws that a government would want to put forth on the same subject, specifically the elimination of poverty. The term "legal framework" may vary according to the country. In some Latin American countries, for example, the term "national agenda" is used.

This legal framework must include measures to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of women through the exercise of their rights. It must include provisions for adopting laws, programs, action plans, and national projects specifically to ensure that women suffer no discrimination in their rights, and that they have access to the following:

Basic resources

Safe water

Production and distribution of food to ensure food security for the population

Decent housing

Basic and reproductive health services

Social protection

Life-long income security

Culture

An end to the process of homogenization of cultures

Citizenship

Recognition of citizenship through access to relevant documents (identity card)

Equal participation in political decision-making bodies

Natural and economic resources

Ownership of family assets and the equitable distribution of inheritances

Credit

Education resources

Literacy

Vocational training

Scientific and technological knowledge

Equality in the workplace

Pay equity and equality at the national and international levels

A minimum social wage

Statutory protection for work in the home and in the informal sectors of the economy

Unionization and freedom of association

Decision-making positions

The respect of labour standards (in all workplaces including free-trade zones) as adopted by the International Labour Office

Equality in task sharing

States must develop incentives to promote the sharing of family responsibilities (education and care of children and domestic tasks) and must provide concrete support to families such as daycare adapted to parents' work schedules, community kitchens, programs to assist children with their schoolwork, and so on. States must therefore take all possible steps to end patriarchal values and sensitize the society towards democratization of the family structure.

Women also demand that there be an end to the process of homogenization of culture and the marketing and commercialization of women in the media to suit the needs of the market. They insist that States and international organizations take measures to counter and prevent corruption.

All acts, legislation, regulations and positions taken by governments will be assessed in the light of indicators such as:

- Human Poverty Index (HPI), put forth in the Human Development Report (1997)
- Human Development Index, put forth by the United Nations Development Programme;
- Gender-related development index (including an indicator on the representation of women in positions

of power), proposed in the Human Development Report (1995)

- Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning rights of Indigenous peoples

P-2 The urgent implementation of measures such as:

The Tobin Tax; revenue from the tax would be paid into a special fund:

- earmarked for social development;
- managed democratically by the international community as a whole;
- according to criteria respecting fundamental human rights and democracy;
- with equal representation of women and men;
- to which women (who represent 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty) would have preferred access.

The investment of 0.7% of the rich countries' gross national product (GNP) in aid for developing countries;

The adequate financing and democratization of United Nations programs that are essential to defend women's and children's fundamental rights, UNIFEM (UN Women's Programme), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (UN children's fund);

An end to structural adjustment programs;

An end to cutbacks in social budgets and public services;

The rejection of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

P-3 Cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries, taking into account the principles of responsibility, transparency of information and accountability.

We demand the immediate cancellation of the debt of the 53 poorest countries on the planet, in support of the objectives of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

In the longer term, we demand the cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor the debt

write-off, ensuring that this money is employed to eliminate poverty and to further the well-being of people most affected by structural adjustment programs, the majority of whom are women and girls.

P-4 The implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and the recipients of international aid.

In this scheme, 20% of the sum contributed by the donor country must be allocated to social development and 20% of the receiving government's spending must be used for social programs.

P-5 A non-monolithic world political organization, with authority over the economy and egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth (ensuring parity between poor countries and rich countries) and equal representation of women and men.

Economic issues

The World March expects to contribute to setting up a world economic system that is fair, participatory and socially cohesive. It puts forth a more structural demand for a Council for Economic and Financial Security to take charge of:

- redefining the rules of a new world financial system geared toward a fair and equitable sharing of the planet's wealth, toward social justice and the improved well-being of the world population, specifically for women who make up more than half of this population;
- exercising political control over financial markets;
- "disarming" markets, preventing them from damaging societies and systematically creating instability, insecurity and inequality;
- ensuring diligent regulation and monitoring of economic, financial and commercial organizations;
- exercising democratic control over commercial trade or, in other terms, applying "zero tolerance" on the criminal tendencies of the economy.

The Council's membership is not yet defined and must be debated at the

international level. We do, however, put forth a few general guidelines in the Council's makeup that are part of the strict minimum: the Council's membership must include representatives from civil society (NGOs, unions, etc.), ensure parity between men and women and reflect parity between countries from the North and South.

Among the conditions for achieving this goal, the World March's demands for the immediate future are:

- the elimination of all tax havens (there are about forty havens including Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, etc.) whose very existence constitutes a form of legalized theft by allowing financiers, companies, political leaders, etc. to hide "their" money and to avoid paying taxes and obeying the laws and regulations of States;
- the end of banking secrecy, an anti-democratic practice that constitutes another form of legalized theft;
- the redistribution of wealth currently monopolized by the seven richest industrialized countries.

Legal issues

The World March considers that the elimination of poverty is not merely a goal to reach but a right that must be implemented immediately. This is the source of our demand for a protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

P-6 That the embargoes and blockades-principally affecting women and children-imposed by the major powers on many countries, be lifted.

We reaffirm our commitment to peace and to the protection of the democratic and autonomous operation of nation-states.

TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

V-1 That governments claiming to be defenders of human rights condemn any authority-political, religious, economic or cultural-that controls women and girls, and denounce any regime that violates

their fundamental rights.

V-2 That States recognize, in their statutes and actions, that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, cultural practice or political power.

Therefore, all states must recognize a woman's right to determine her own destiny, and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function (right to abortion and contraception, freedom from forced sterilization, and the right to have children).

V-3 That States implement action plans, effective policies and programs equipped with adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women.

These action plans must include the following elements in particular: prevention, public education, legal action, "treatment" of attackers, research and statistics on violence against women, assistance to and protection of victims, campaigns against pornography, procuring, and sexual assault, including child rape, non-sexist education, easier access to the criminal justice system, training programs for judges and police.

V-4 That the United Nations bring extraordinary pressure to bear on member states to ratify without reservation and implement the conventions and covenants relating to the rights of women and children,

in particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers.

That States harmonize their national laws with these different international instruments in addition to the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Cairo and Vienna Declarations, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

V-5 That, as soon as possible, protocols be adopted (and implementation mechanisms be established):

- to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These protocols will permit individuals and groups to file complaints against a State. They constitute a means of exerting international pressure to force States to implement the rights mentioned in these pacts and conventions. Genuine sanctions against non-compliant States should be adopted.

V-6 That mechanisms be established to implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, taking into account recent relevant documents

such as the two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (1996) concerning trafficking in women and girls and violence against migrant women. There will be an addition calling on States to ratify the Convention of December 2000 on transnational organized crime, in particular the two additional Protocols on the trafficking in persons.

V-7 That States recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and conform in particular to the provisions, especially those that define rape and sexual abuse as war crimes and crimes against.

V-8 That all States adopt and implement disarmament policies with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons. That all countries ratify the Convention Against Land Mines.

That the United Nations end all

forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation, assure the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and bring pressure to bear on governments to enforce the observance of human rights and to resolve conflicts.

V-9 That the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and sexual violence be adopted as soon possible.

V-10 That, based on the principle

of equality of all persons, the United Nations and States of the international community recognize formally that a person's sexual orientation shall not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in the following international instruments:

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

V-11 That the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation be adopted as soon as possible.

Demands V-10 and V-11 were not unanimously adopted by the women attending the meeting in 1998 where we adopted our world platform for the 2000 actions. Some national coordinating bodies therefore did not incorporate these demands in their actions. They are nevertheless an integral part of the world platform.

Women and the European Constitution

1 March 2005, by ATTAC France Women, Feminist Assembly of Madrid

Women and the European Constitution

(a new framework to consolidate old inequalities)

January 2005 - FEMINIST ASSEMBLY OF MADRID



The first thing that merits our attention in the document that is proposed as the European Constitution is the insistence on attributing this project to the will of the citizens. It is as if we had all occupied the streets to demand a Constitution from our rulers.

Nothing is further from reality. The Constitutional Treaty is not the fruit of a democratic and constituent process, but rather responds to the interests of the elites of European productive and financial capital. These interests have, moreover, been linked to the

European Project since its birth. This is even more the case now that the Constitution promotes the legal adoption (and deepening) of the neo-liberal economic framework that is especially harmful to women. This constitution will also be practically impossible to reform (Art. IV-443) and political changes that could take place in a member state of the EU could not alter its framework, even if adopted by popular will (Art. I-5)

Beyond the rhetoric that is used, the policies that the Constitution tries to legitimate, represent for women the increasing insecurity of living conditions, a drastic curtailment of liberties, the deepening of inequalities and a guarantee of continuity of patriarchal social organization. This manifests itself in various aspects that we will now develop.

Increasing insecurity of living conditions

The European Constitution (EC) recognizes that people have "the freedom to seek employment, to work" (Art. II-75). On the one hand this formulation ignores the fact that women do not have access to

employment in a situation of equality with respect to men. On the other it ignores all the domestic labour and care work that they do, almost exclusively, and the importance of the carrying out of these tasks, since they are absolutely necessary for the functioning of society.

As far as (wage-earning) work is concerned the numbers speak for themselves. Within the EU women constitute the group that is most likely to be unemployed, undertake insecure work and to have low wages. It could be said that in Europe poverty and social exclusion are fundamentally feminine. However the Constitution does not consider changing this situation as a high-priority objective, although it affects at least half of the population.

Rather it aggravates it, because besides strengthening the sexual division of labour that has historically existed in the EU, the social cuts that derive from its application will destroy jobs in the public sector to which women have greater access.

The Constitution also recognizes an "open market economy with free

competition" (Art. III-177 and 178). The door is thus opened to privatization of the public services, which are referred to as "services of general economic interest" (Art. III-122). This supposes that the systems of social protection and services like pensions, education and health, will function under the logic of private profit.

Access to these services will depend therefore on spending power and will lose its universal character. The state will have nothing to do with groups with lesser access to money, among them women, leaving them to their fate in the jungle of competitiveness. In addition the increase in military expenditure anticipated in the Constitution (Art. I-41.3) will contribute to greater cuts in social expenditure.

Nevertheless the vacuum created by the lack of social protection will not eliminate necessities and, these will continue to have to be covered (people will continue being born, aging and becoming ill). This work will increasingly fall to families. So it is not unimportant that the Constitution includes "the right to marry and the right to found a family" as referents of social organization (Art. II-69).

Probably, in a not very distant future, the family nuclei will be asked to take responsibility for managing and satisfying alone the necessities that today, rightly or wrongly, are provided by the state. The logic of care and human well-being has always been in contradiction with the logic of the market. Primacy is accorded to the latter in this Constitution and the consequent cuts in social benefits will also affect women because of the role socially assigned to us inside and outside of the ambit of the family.

"Social Europe" falters

The Constitution poses a clear threat to the social rights won in Europe in recent decades. The "Welfare State" is faltering when it should be being developed. In general the policies that the Constitution includes favor a calculated regression in social terms and a form of empowering individualization in relation to more associative or communitarian

structures. They also endanger the gains that the feminist movement has made in the European space, especially if we consider the real difficulties that women find in existing societies in exerting rights such as divorce and abortion.

The "formal equality" that apparently functions in the states of the Union often prevents perception of the power relation affecting women and which for example are expressed in low participation in public life, insufficient economic autonomy and the lack of social recognition of the activities that are culturally assigned to them.

One of the clearest manifestations of this reality is found in male violence. This constitutes one of the most relevant problems raised in the EU (more than 20% of women in Europe undergo some type of such mistreatment at least once in their lives). Nevertheless the Constitution does not approach the causes of this violence, in fact it treats it as domestic violence. It limits itself to considering victims, susceptible and weak subjects of support and "protectionist" measures (Declaration relative to Art. III-116).

This constitutional rhetoric about "no discrimination because of sex" is also hollow when, it rests on an increasingly militarized Europe and reinforces the family structure. If the first strengthens the values of machismo and the violent solution of conflicts, the second constitutes the framework where at present more deaths and aggressions are perpetrated against women.

In contrast to the right to marriage, the right to divorce is not recognized. But an express mention allows Malta to maintain the prohibition of abortion, even before possible modifications of the constitutional text (Protocol 7). In all the states of the Union restrictive legal measures exist in relation to abortion. But in some, like Poland or Ireland these measures make it practically impossible. Protocol 7 of the Constitution supposes in addition an ominous legal reference, an express negation of the right of women to decide on their sexuality and on maternity.

The erosion of human rights and liberties, which especially affects the more stigmatized and unprotected groups like prostitutes and women immigrants, is reinforced in the Constitution. Citizenship of the Union appears associated with the nationality of a member state (Art. I.10). This implies, for example, that an immigrant, who is not recognized as a citizen, will not have, among other rights, "freedom to seek employment". This will worsen still more the working conditions of these women in Europe (deregulated jobs involving maximum exploitation).

The freedom enjoyed by capital and commodity circulation will not be enjoyed by people. The concept of citizenship is reduced to that of voters and consumers. The most elementary rights are in danger since the Union will only adhere to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms when it does not modify the competences of the Union as defined in the Constitution (I-9 Article). It should not be forgotten that the states will respect the principle of an economy of open market and of free competition (Article III-178). That amounts to saying we must eliminate everything that hinders the functioning of the market. We fear that feminist demands will present a hindrance to the achievement of the true objectives of the Union.

The role of the church

The threats to the rights and liberties won by women, which can be seen in the articles commented on, are seriously reinforced by the role of the Churches.

To our great surprise and stupefaction Article I.51 lays down without ambiguity that "recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches". The preamble to the rough draft already recognized the "European spiritual heritage". This is a heritage that in the history of the continent has involved a great number of deaths and tortures in the name of religious wars, Crusades and "witch hunts". In addition this article evokes for us the

Franco dictatorship and the support and connivance that it obtained from the Church. According to article I-52, "the Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches". This means that the EU will not interfere in an agreement that a government has agreed with the Holy See, although this affects, for example, human rights or the rights of women.

The principle of secularism is therefore excluded from the European legal framework. On the contrary it is an attempt to institutionalize the interference of the Churches in public questions, putting them at least on the same level as the representative organizations of civil society, to be consulted on the policies of the Union (Art. I-47).

For women this runs against the right to decide on our lives, equality between the sexes, divorce, abortion, contraception (including the condom in the fight against the AIDS), the rights of homosexuals and lesbians, and means a grotesque rolling back of the liberties conquered by the feminist movement and other social movements. Also we should not forget that the strongly fundamentalist Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy justifies without ambiguity the submission of women to men as something natural. To accept that these religious institutions are legitimized to interfere in public life is an insult to the most elementary principles of equality and secularism.

In reality, the European Constitution represents the legal norm that the European Project needs to strengthen its present position. It tries to legitimize itself "in name of the citizens of Europe" and to thus give a green light to the consolidation of a social and political system that guarantees economic profit and the accumulation of capital, all governed by the supreme logic of competitiveness. From this point of view the stubborn defence of institutions and values that perpetuate the subordination of women to men is understandable, since this is perfectly functional to its intentions.

The European Constitution, in spite of its rhetoric, very seriously threatens

the social conquests that the feminist movement has made all over Europe. The struggle of women has little by little been able to politicize the private space bursting into the arena of the public. This politicization and sharpening of conflicts that already exists in societies and families, as far as the division of labour and the right to time for enjoyment and personal development are concerned, can only deepen the rejection of this Project.

From a feminist position we call on women who live in the territory of the Union to face together this injustice which hinders the advance of the social and individual rights of women. Feminism is and has been a movement of considerable social implantation in Europe. It is ever more urgent to undertake this task and as always together we will be able to do it.

Women: ATTAC France statement

For women's rights, for equality, NO to this Europe

Those that support the European constitution argue that Europe represents an opportunity for women. But who can believe this when they see concretely how neoliberal policies implement European directives on equality between men and women?

The European neo-liberal conception of equality between men and women is one of regression!

- In the name of this equality night work has been extended to women, whereas progress would have involved restricting it for everybody, allowing it only for public service tasks where a permanent watch is socially necessary.
- In the name of this "equality" we see

challenges to the pensions regime and the family allowances accorded to women as compensation (albeit insufficient) for parental tasks, 80% of which they remain responsible for!

- In the name of equality a European Directive is prepared authorising higher payments for contributions for old-age and supplementary sickness for women because they present a greater "risk" in living longer (this already exists in certain European states)!

The Constitution brings nothing new to women's rights... on the contrary:

- There are no rights to contraception, abortion, sexual orientation of one's choice, to divorce, to live without violence, or the right of asylum on the basis of violence or persecution
- The principle of secularism disappears, opening the door to the retrograde pressure of the churches
- Immigrant women will be still subject to the oppressive traditions of their country through codes of personal status

Laws and Directives imposing equality already exist. But what do they amount to in reality? The average wage of women in Europe still only represents 75% of that of men. Their rate of unemployment is higher by 2% than that of men. And these gaps are not really closing! It is necessary now to translate these laws into reality. But the Constitution envisages no such approach - very much the contrary.

...it means the aggravation of neoliberal policies whose consequences women are already suffering!

Increases in insecurity, small jobs, and delocalisation, the challenging of social minima and public services, the development of prostitution, which is only seen as a very profitable potential market! The right to employment disappears along with the "right to a decent standard of living", which is nonetheless essential for women who make up the majority of those in insecure employment.

Only a social Europe where fundamental rights and public services will be superior values to those of competition can guarantee the rights

won by women and push equality forward.

David Mandel's 'Labour After Communism'

26 February 2005, by John Riddell

David Mandel's 'Labour After Communism' breaks the silence. Co-founder of the School for Workers Democracy, which conducts rank-and-file labour education in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, Mandel shares his unrivaled knowledge of the union movement in these countries, drawing on innumerable discussions with workers and worker activists.

Shock Therapy

Mandel shows us a Russian working class as devastated by economic collapse and the fierce onslaught of bosses and government—a class still groping to find the path to an effective response.



The "shock therapy" applied in Russia after 1991 led not to a capitalist flowering but to a social catastrophe whose depth and duration is without parallel in any industrialized society. Mandel marshals the key statistics: industrial production down 55%, capital investment down 80%, research and development down 90%.

Only the resource sector has been integrated into the world market, he notes. Elsewhere, investment is practically nil and the human capital necessary to revive industry has been dispersed.

During the last few years, Russia has experienced a slow economic recovery, but Mandel questions whether it is sustainable.

Russia's present social order, vividly portrayed by Mandel, lacks the mainspring of a capitalist economy: profitable private investment in the

production of goods and services. Instead, the Russian "bourgeoisie" is "essentially [a] rent-seeking class, intimately linked both to the corrupt state administration and to the criminal underworld." Indeed, as the recent jailing of Khodorkovsky, the oil baron, demonstrates, "in Russia, the state appoints the millionaires and billionaires."

The scale of personal wealth is greater, but otherwise, all this is reminiscent of the Stalin-to-Brezhnev era. So too is Mandel's statement that "to workers, the new bourgeoisie is not a class of wealth-generating 'captains of industry' but a gang of rapacious pillager."

Mandel does not attempt to characterize Russian society today. But it appears that some of the barriers to capitalist restoration erected by Russia's 1917 October revolution have survived, even if in highly distorted form.

Labour's Decline

The economic collapse after 1991 shattered the labour activism of the final Soviet years. Suddenly workers faced mass unemployment, a 2/3rds fall in real wages, and a decline in living conditions so stark that male life expectancy decreased five years. Workers were hampered by the consciousness inherited from the Soviet era, which in Mandel's view was marked by submissiveness, cynicism, and "a weakly developed sense of dignity." Nor could they, during the years of "Neo-Liberalism" triumphant, draw inspiration from the example of labour upsurges in other countries. As a result, Mandel says, the work force is deeply demoralized.

Under these conditions, it is not

surprising that labour activism has followed a downward curve over the last 13 years. Nonetheless, Mandel argues that in factories where workers have found a way to fight back, they have won significant gains.

The same lesson can be drawn from his detailed discussion of conditions in Ukraine and Belarus. His Ukrainian examples show that the socialist consciousness of even isolated individual militants has a great impact. Belarus provides a "control," where shock therapy was not applied, the Soviet-era economy is still largely intact, and investment and production levels have been largely maintained.

Focusing on the auto industry, where international outreach by the Canadian Autoworkers provided him with a wealth of contacts and information, Mandel points out that militant workers in Russia have very rarely been able to utilize the structures of their official trade unions for resistance. These unions found it easy, in the early nineties, to transfer loyalty from the Communist Party to their factory administrations, and function in most respects as company unions.

Mandel's vivid anecdotes show how the ideology of "social partnership" with the employers works its way through all levels of the union, eliminating it as a vehicle for shop-floor resistance. For the North American reader, this portrayal awakens a bitter reflection: In the weaker sectors of our labour movement, things are not much better. And even our strongest private sector unions see no alternative to going cap in hand to the government, asking for subsidies to the employers.

Yet there is a difference, and it is decisive. North American employers'

offer of "social partnership" is patently insincere: they aim to be rid of the unions, and unions that wish to survive must find a way to resist. The Russian ruling elite, however, is too weak to do without its union prop, which has given "social partnership" a shabby stability.

Independent Unionism

Mandel draws hope from the survival, under the most difficult circumstances, of Russia's independent union movement, whose guiding principle is not social partnership but working-class

independence.

Denied any legal rights or standing, constantly harassed by the bosses, official unions, and legal authorities, the independent unions have eked out an existence as minority currents made up of the boldest and most committed workers. Mandel profiles one of the most successful of these ventures-Edinstvo (Unity), which counts about 3,000 members among the 100,000 workers in the world's largest auto factory, in Togliatti. Through difficult years it has known ups and downs. But it has been sustained, Mandel tells us, because "its members are convinced of a basic conflict of interests separating them, as workers, from management and

they believe that they can defend themselves through independent organization."

The gains have been tangible: wages, for example, are twice as high in the Togliatti complex as in Russia's other major auto factory of this type.

Edinstvo and the other independent unions lack a vision of an alternative, socialist society. Nonetheless, Mandel sees in it a beacon of hope: "Edinstvo has a deeply committed leadership that lives and breathes union and that has refused to let the daily grind of union work stop it from thinking strategically."

Buy the book from amazon.com

Whither Iraq?

26 February 2005, by Gilbert Achcar

The frenzied rhythm of their standing ovations equaled indeed the most intensive aerobics. As for seeking an Oscar award, it was a total failure, the scriptwriters of the Bush administration being better at soap operas than at good quality movies, and Bush himself being a pitiful actor, even by Ronald Reagan's easy-to-match standard.

The hypocrisy was at its highest: as was predictable and predicted, George W. Bush tried to present the Iraqi elections as a great feat of democracy for which his administration could claim the main credit. On TV screens, the public could see an Iraqi woman standing up in front of the two chambers of Congress and raising her purple finger — the forefinger in her case, whereas the Iraqi people had indeed raised their middle fingers at their occupiers, to borrow Naomi Klein's joke in her excellent piece ("Getting the Purple Finger," *The Nation*, Feb. 10, 2005).

In the next few days, the US mainstream media themselves could not hide the fact that the US had actually suffered a real defeat with the election. Not only had this election been imposed on the occupiers by the mass street pressure of the Iraqi population, after several months of heated confrontation between US Proconsul Paul Bremer and Shia Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani; but the latter managed to frustrate all attempts by Washington's new Proconsul John Negroponte to form a single slate of all the participants in the post-invasion US-appointed Iraqi "Governing Councils."

Washington's and London's stooges were rejected, and Iyad Allawi, as well as al-Yawar, Pachachi, etc., had no choice but to wage campaigns on their own, while the Ayatollah sponsored a United Iraqi Alliance (UIA, its commonly used denomination in English) friendly to Iran, including the key Shia Islamic fundamentalist forces as well as a variety of other Shia and non-Shia groups.

Despite the heavy-handed US interference in the electoral

campaign, and the strong financial and political backing by Washington and London, their stooge Allawi was severely defeated, getting less than 14% of the votes — and this despite the non-participation in the voting of an important part of the Iraqi population, most of them very much opposed to everything he represents.

The remarkable and impressive mass mobilization among Shias and Kurds in the safest provinces of the country (on this, see the appendix below) led to a sweeping victory of the UIA with 48% of the total vote cast followed by the Kurdish Alliance with 26%, Allawi's list coming a distant third with only little over half the votes of the Kurdish slate. (A fast spreading rumor says that the US got the proportion of votes won by the UIA depressed from 60% to less than 50% in order to prevent them from deciding the fate of the country.)

Washington's vain hope that Allawi's slate, along with other pro-occupation forces, could get a number of seats allowing them to perpetuate the puppet regime with the support of Kurdish members of the elected



Assembly was shattered. Even though the UIA does not command the two-thirds of seats required for key decisions — this according to the Bremer-devised Transitional Administrative Law, which is contested by the UIA and which Ayatollah al-Sistani vetoed when Washington tried to inscribe it in the UN resolution calling for the election — it is by far the main pillar of the new Assembly, with more than half its seats.

Washington stands now hoping that it will be able to break the Shia coalition, through its stooge Allawi, by resorting to all kind of dirty means from threats to bribery. The trial of strength between al-Sistani and the occupiers is far from finished. Whatever the developments in the near future in this Iraqi drama, full of coups de théâtre and backstage maneuvering, two issues should be already very clear.

WASHINGTON'S ATTITUDE ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF ITS FORCES

It was absolutely obvious to all observers that the great majority of Arab voters — and therefore the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi population, taking into account the dominant mood of those who didn't vote — were and are opposed to the occupation. Actually, it did not escape most observers' attention that the vast majority of Arab voters considered their vote to be a political means to get rid of the occupation. This mood was so compelling that almost all Arab Iraqi slates included the withdrawal of foreign troops as a central item of their program. Even Allawi's list did so! (Their banners stated in Arabic: Vote for Allawi's slate if you want a strong Iraq free of foreign troops.)

The UIA's electoral program called very explicitly for negotiations with the occupation forces in order to set a timetable for their withdrawal. This very same demand has become the central requisite of the political forces that are staunchest in their opposition to the occupation: the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars (or Council of Muslim Ulema) and Moqtada al-Sadr's Current. The two entered an informal alliance to press

this demand on the majority of the elected Assembly.

It is to this same demand again that George W. Bush referred explicitly when he declared in his State of the Union address:

"We will not set an artificial timetable for leaving Iraq, because that would embolden the terrorists and make them believe they can wait us out. We are in Iraq to achieve a result: A country that is democratic, representative of all its people, at peace with its neighbors and able to defend itself. And when that result is achieved, our men and women serving in Iraq will return home with the honor they have earned."

The choice of words was quite precise and meaningful: "We will not set an artificial timetable" meant no timetable at all, since any timetable can only be "artificial," whereas the "natural" deadline that Bush hinted at — "We are in Iraq to achieve a result... And when that result is achieved..." — amounts to saying that Washington will decide unilaterally if and when it will withdraw its troops. The "result" to be achieved hints at the fact that the new Assembly and future government of Iraq are not yet "representative of all its people."

A "democratic" Iraq means, for Bush, a country that is not ruled by an Iran-like regime combining Islamic fundamentalism, a measure of parliamentarianism and hostility to US domination (though Washington is perfectly happy with the Saudi combination of servility to the US and extreme fundamentalism — certainly the most undemocratic and anti-women regime on earth). An Iraq "at peace with its neighbors" could only mean, in Bush's mouth, an Iraqi government at peace with Israel, along with the Jordanian and Saudi kingdoms, with the Iranian and Syrian neighbors "pacified" according to Washington's standard. Finally, an Iraq "able to defend itself" means that Washington will not withdraw (partially) from the country before it is assured that it is under the control of armed forces that are as much dependent on Washington as their Saudi and Jordanian counterparts are.

This section of Bush's State of the Union address, with its stress on the "result" versus the "timetable," was echoing very clearly the warning formulated publicly a few days earlier by two senior veterans of the Republican foreign policy establishment, Henry Kissinger and George Shultz. They had published together an article in the Washington Post on January 25, on the eve of the Iraqi election — the title of which was: "Results, Not Timetables, Matter in Iraq"!

It is worth quoting at length due to its blunt expression of the real strategic considerations guiding Washington:

"The essential prerequisite for an acceptable exit strategy is a sustainable outcome, not an arbitrary time limit. For the outcome in Iraq will shape the next decade of American foreign policy. A debacle would usher in a series of convulsions in the region as radicals and fundamentalists moved for dominance, with the wind seemingly at their backs. Wherever there are significant Muslim populations, radical elements would be emboldened. As the rest of the world related to this reality, its sense of direction would be impaired by the demonstration of American confusion in Iraq.

"If a democratic process is to unify Iraq peacefully, a great deal depends on how the Shiite majority defines majority rule. So far the subtle Shiite leaders, hardened by having survived decades of Saddam Hussein's tyranny, have been ambiguous about their goals. They have insisted on early elections — indeed, the date of Jan. 30 was established on the basis of a near-ultimatum by the most eminent Shiite leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The Shiites have also urged voting procedures based on national candidate lists, which work against federal and regional political institutions. Recent Shiite pronouncements have affirmed the goal of a secular state but have left open the interpretation of majority rule. An absolutist application of majority rule would make it difficult to achieve political legitimacy. ...

"The reaction to intransigent Sunni brutality and the relative Shiite quiet

must not tempt us into identifying Iraqi legitimacy with unchecked Shiite rule. The American experience with Shiite theocracy in Iran since 1979 does not inspire confidence in our ability to forecast Shiite evolution or the prospects of a Shiite-dominated bloc extending to the Mediterranean. ...

"The Constituent Assembly emerging from the elections will be sovereign to some extent. But the United States' continuing leverage should be focused on four key objectives: (1) to prevent any group from using the political process to establish the kind of dominance previously enjoyed by the Sunnis; (2) to prevent any areas from slipping into Taliban conditions as havens and recruitment centers for terrorists; (3) to keep Shiite government from turning into a theocracy, Iranian or indigenous; (4) to leave scope for regional autonomy within the Iraqi democratic process."

What Kissinger, Shultz and company are clearly advocating, and what the Bush administration is acting on, is that Washington must prevent the "Shia" majority — meaning any Iraqi majority hostile to Washington — from ruling Iraq. It must remain in control of the land, by playing on the rivalries between Shia and Sunnis as well as between Arabs and Kurds, according to the famous imperial motto of "divide and rule."

The stakes here are all the more crucial for US imperialist interests, in that:

1) A full political defeat in Iraq — i.e. losing control over the country and being compelled to leave it — will have worse consequences than Vietnam with regard to US imperial credibility, its ability to intervene militarily, as well as US economic and political world hegemony. Due to the oil factor, the strategic importance of Iraq and the Arab-Persian Gulf area is far higher than whatever was at stake in Vietnam and the whole of Indochina.

2) Iraq is part of a regional, mainly Shia, "crescent of crisis" in Washington's — and Israel's — strategic view, which stretches from Lebanon, where it is represented by

the Hizbullah in alliance with Syrian hegemony, to the Alawite-dominated regime in Syria (the Alawites are an offspring of Shiism), to pro-Iranian Shia forces in Iraq, to the mullahs' regime in Tehran.

Washington has set itself as a priority the subversion of this reshaped and refocused version of the "axis of evil." Its attitude to the events in Lebanon, as well as its increasing threats against Damascus and Tehran, indicate the context in which it envisages its role in Iraq. In light of all that, there should be no illusion whatsoever about the present US administration's willingness to get out of Iraq. British military sources' affirmation in late January that Washington and London were devising "an exit strategy, but without a public timetable" are pure disinformation meant at appeasing a public opinion increasingly opposed to prolonging the occupation.

THE NEXT IRAQI GOVERNMENT AND THE OCCUPATION

The discussion in Iraq among political forces of the popular majority is between those calling for a withdrawal of foreign troops in the medium-term and those calling for their withdrawal in the short-term. It is clear that the dominant fractions in the UIA, probably backed on this issue too by Ayatollah al-Sistani, belong to the first camp. They believe — no doubt, genuinely for most of them — that they could take advantage of the continued presence of occupation forces in order to build-up armed forces under their own control and thus create conditions for a smooth withdrawal of foreign troops. This view has been expressed by the UIA's candidate for the key post of prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

It is a deadly wrong view. On the one hand, experience has shown in an indisputable way that the longer the occupation lingers, the more the situation in Iraq deteriorates. The occupation breeds chaos more

effectively than any other factor or force, be it foreign or local. The reason for that is quite simple: the occupation is deeply hated by the great majority of Arab Iraqis, a hatred that is aggravated day after day by the clumsiness and brutality of the occupiers. The withdrawal of the foreign troops, on the contrary, is the prerequisite for security and order to prevail and for the effective building of a new Iraqi state.

On the other hand, the occupiers can be legitimately suspected of fostering forms of chaos and violence, as well as ethnic and sectarian rifts, in order to perpetuate and legitimate the occupation. They are actually accused of behaving in this way by the great majority of the Iraqi people. Most Iraqis believe that Washington is deliberately sowing the seeds of civil strife between them, by playing each community against the others. They are convinced that Washington is purposely letting terrorist groups, like Zarqawi's and other fanatics, organize their barbaric activities in order to discredit the legitimate resistance and to foster forms of chaos that are used as pretexts for the indefinite prolongation of the occupation.

This is one reason, incidentally, why the staunchest anti-occupation political forces, i.e. the already mentioned alliance between the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars and Moqtada al-Sadr's Current, have repeatedly called for a clear distinction to be drawn between the legitimate resistance against occupation forces and what they call "terrorism," putting rightly under this label those who resort to violence against innocent civilians, whether Iraqis or foreigners, and of course to sectarian attacks.

Washington's Machiavellian practices have reached a new degree with the contacts it has recently undertaken with the Baathist wing of the resistance, i.e. the network left over by the Baathist dictatorship with huge amounts of money and vast quantities of weapons. This section of the resistance to the US occupation — most loathed by the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people because it strives not to liberate the country, but to re-establish its unbearable

tyrannical oppression — is now negotiating some kind of deal with Washington.

This development is perfectly in line with the shift in Washington's plans in Iraq that was illustrated by the replacement of Chalabi with Allawi. The former set himself up as the champion of "de-Baathification" and played a key role in Bremer's decision to dissolve the apparatuses of the Baathist dictatorship — thus opening the way to one of two outcomes: chaos and prolonged US occupation, or the building of a new state based on majority rule. The latter advocated, before the invasion and after, a collaboration between Washington and major sections of the Baathist apparatuses (on this, see my article "Bush's Cakewalk into the Iraqi Quagmire" posted on May 5, 2004 on CounterPunch).

When Bremer got rid of Chalabi and designated Allawi as head of the puppet regime, the latter started reintegrating former major Baathists in the new Iraqi government and armed forces, thus infuriating the key Shia forces coalesced in the UIA. The Shia fundamentalist forces possessing militias, i.e. the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Al-Daawa Party and al-Sadr's Current, want to purge the new Iraqi armed forces of reintegrated high-ranking Baathists and merge their own militias into them — a nightmarish scenario for Washington. It is clear that Washington will try to veto any control of these parties on the "power ministries" and the armed forces and repressive apparatuses.

Faced with the prospect of a clash with the Shia majority, Washington is determined to use any means necessary to counter that threat, including an "anti-Iranian" alliance with the Baathists. After all, had not Washington already entered for many years an alliance with Saddam Hussein himself against the Iranian regime?

All these developments stress one more time the necessity for the anti-imperialist left abroad to be very discerning in its attitude to the very complex Iraqi situation, and to avoid pitfalls such as an unqualified support

to the Iraqi resistance without the necessary distinctions, and the simplistic belief that the only legitimate or effective form of struggle is the armed one.

The Shia-Sunni anti-occupation alliance of the Association of Muslim Scholars and al-Sadr's Current is perfectly right in its insistence on the withdrawal of foreign troops as the central demand and necessity in the present situation in Iraq. They are the political mediation between the pressure of the legitimate armed resistance to the occupation and the anti-occupation political pressure expressed by the population and the representatives of its majority. The combination of these two pressures is crucial for the liberation of Iraq.

This anti-occupation alliance is right on the national issue. It doesn't mean however that they are "progressive" forces. Moqtada al-Sadr's Current in particular is a fiercely fundamentalist tendency, deeply reactionary on many social, cultural and gender issues. It is only a testimony to the historical failure of the left in that part of the world — the glaring defeat of the Iraqi Communist Party in the elections is a clear illustration — that religious forces, including various brands of fundamentalists, are dominant in the peoples' struggle against foreign and local oppression. Fortunately, the very heterogeneity of Iraqi society imposes clear limits on any project to impose an Islamic fundamentalist rule in the country.

THE TASK OF THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

Notwithstanding the position that the next Iraqi government will express on the issue of the occupation, the antiwar movement abroad must definitely increase, more than ever, its pressure around the demand of the immediate and total withdrawal of occupation troops from Iraq. This is actually not only in the best interest of the Iraqi people, but even in the interest of the majority of the new Assembly itself and its representation in government.

The fact is that this majority will be confronted sooner or later with US pressures of all kind (on this, see the articles by Milan Rai, "How Washington Plans To Dominate The New Iraqi National Assembly," posted on Electronic Iraq, Feb. 16, 2005 and the one by Jaafar al-Ahmar, in Arabic, "Interior and Defense will determine the influence of the UIA and al-Jaafari's success in resisting US pressure," published in Al-Hayat, Feb. 24, 2005). It will have to face squarely the fact that Washington does not want to contemplate any pre-set schedule for the withdrawal, let alone the prospect of a total withdrawal of its troops from Iraq. The Bush administration is building a military infrastructure for the stationing of US troops in Iraq — in the strategic area of the oil fields mainly — for an indefinite period. That the continued presence of US troops for the last 60 years in both Germany and Japan is often given as a model by pundits of the Bush administration is eloquent in this regard.

Therefore, the Iraqi people, and its majority representatives, stand only to gain from the most powerful pressure exerted by the antiwar movement abroad for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of occupation troops from Iraq. It is for this very reason that it is very important that the forthcoming international day of mobilization against the occupation of Iraq on 19 March be successful.

The antiwar movement should also start planning for the perspective of a protracted struggle to end the occupation of Iraq and to prevent new military adventures against Iran, Syria or whichever country Washington will threaten tomorrow. This entails setting a calendar of mobilizations in order to put the movement in the long haul perspective, instead of setting each time one single appointment and leaving the future of the mobilizations undecided.

The global antiwar movement did it once. It can do it again: We shall overcome.

February 24, 2005

Appendix: On the January 30 election

Given the nature of the prevailing security conditions in Iraq, and the non-participation of important areas of the country, the turnout of close to 60% of eligible voters was truly extraordinary! Since the food-rationing lists were used as lists of voters, one can assume that the given number of eligible voters was equal to the potential one, if not in excess (much more in any case than the number of registered voters which is used as a criterion in most elections).

Such a participation rate of 60% — in a country where, due to the imposed curfew, voters had often to walk very long distances to get to the polling stations, and where several terrorist groups had threatened to kill would-be voters through snipers, car-bombs or suicide-attacks, and to murder anyone seen with a purple finger — was a remarkable achievement. It was a powerful testimony to the thirst for democracy of a people that has been subjected for several decades to one

of the most brutal regimes in the world, and in particular, among the most oppressed sections of this people, which formed between them the overwhelming majority.

Beginning the day after the Iraqi elections, there has been an incredibly wide use of the same single article in the New York Times on the 1967 election in South Vietnam (Peter Grose, "U.S. Encouraged by Vietnam Vote: Officials Cite 83% Turnout Despite Vietcong Terror," September 4, 1967). Countless commentaries have quoted this same article, which started: "United States officials were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout in South Vietnam's presidential election despite a Vietcong terrorist campaign to disrupt the voting."

This analogy is completely false and misleading. To measure the huge difference between the two situations, searchers of the NYT archive could have read, for instance, the article titled "Senators Deplore 'Fraud' In Vote Drive in Vietnam," by Hedrick Smith in the New York Times dated August 12, 1967 — three weeks before the election and Grose's article.

It began: "A dozen Senators from both [US ruling] parties charged today that

the South Vietnamese Presidential election campaign was being turned into a 'fraud,' 'farce' and 'charade' by the ruling military junta."

And right these Senators were! It is possible to prove indisputably, from now available sources like CIA documents, that the 1967 Vietnamese elections were rigged, imposed by Washington on reluctant US stooges, Thieu and Ky, and designed to give a veneer of legitimacy to their dictatorial puppet regime hated by the great majority of the Vietnamese people.

To draw an analogy with the Iraqi elections imposed on Washington by the Iraqi masses, where the chief US stooge was defeated and which were won by a slate led by the best friends of Washington's worst enemy in the region, defies elementary logic.

Does one also need to mention the huge difference between the Vietnamese resistance and those forces that tried to prevent the elections in Iraq by an unprecedented terrorist campaign directed against the voters themselves?

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