



*No to the imperialist
intervention
in Colombia!
Unity and struggle
to prevent
imperialist aggression!*

**World Congress of the IWL-FI:
a step forward**

*International
Courier*



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World Congress of the IWL-FI: a step forward

This issue of the *International Courier* is dedicated fundamentally to the Extraordinary World Congress of the IWL-FI, which took place between the 17th and 24th of July. This event is an important landmark for us, because it denotes the end of one phase and the beginning of a new one. The previous congresses have been strongly affected by the struggle in defence of the principles and the traditions of the Third and Fourth Internationals. Let it suffice to remember that in these last years the debates in the IWL hinged round such issues as whether it was or was not necessary to defend state companies against the privatising attack, whether one should or should not take part in the trade unions, whether the dictatorship of the proletariat was still part of our programme and finally, the VI World Congress had to pronounce itself explicitly on whether the IWL was to continue being a democratically centralised organisation, for even that was being challenged. This was so for during all these years the main task has been to struggle against liquidationist revisionism that had settled inside the IWL.

The revisionist trend was defeated in the VI Congress (December 1997) and this triumph allowed for a qualitatively different reality to show up. The fact that revisionism was not there allowed us to develop a rich political discussion on the most important events of the class struggle, essentially on the reorganisation of the workers' movement, its expression within the revolutionary Marxism, and about our policy for the building of our parties.

Among other things there was an interesting debate on the Balkan War and the conclusions it leads us to as regarding the world situation. This discussion, which we shall illustrate with a series of transcriptions of contributions, led to an ample majority vote for both, the IWL policy during the war and also for the text "*Conclusions on the World Situation as from the NATO war against Yugoslavia*" presented by the International Secretariat.

This document, enriched by the discussion during the Congress, poses that we are witnessing an imperialistic exploiting and re-

colonising offensive expressed on the economic, political and military level, which demands that we emphasise the anti-imperialistic aspects of our programme. But this offensive is not carried out by a vigorous imperialism in ascent. Nor is it exerted upon a defeated mass movement. Quite to the contrary, it takes place in the midst of the crisis of neoliberal models, of a deep economic crisis of capitalism, and with a mass movement that energetically challenges these attacks.

The war in Yugoslavia was an expression of this reality. Just as Colombia is today. It is there, as we shall illustrate through the various articles concerning this issue, that the above mentioned elements – imperialist offensive, response of the mass movement, instability and also the issue of power – become explicit. But it is substantially Colombia that demands – as it is said in the IWL call – an urgent need to press for the most ample unity of action against the American intervention.

The other great topic that ran through the whole Congress was the process of reorganisation of the workers' movement and its repercussion on revolutionary Marxism and on the process of rebuilding of the IV International. It was here, too, that the new reality of the IWL became evident.

On one hand, this showed through the discussion on the different countries and parties. The discussion on Russia, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina proved that evidenced that we have a great number of problems posed, that our leaderships are weak in relation to the task at hand, that mistakes have been committed and many others will most certainly be committed. But this discussion also evidenced that in all our parties battles are fought to get out of the marginalization and try and find the best way of taking root in the process of reorganisation, of finding bridges that may allow us to carry a revolutionary programme into the masses of the toiling and oppressed people.

On the other hand this new phase of the IWL also showed through the better conditions for advancing with the strategic task of rebuilding the IV

International. These better conditions are reflected not only in the progress of KOORKOM – enriched now through the participation of the Workers International of England and Namibia and of the Revolutionary League of the Socialist Iranians – but also in the new relations established and deepened as from the political agreements reached about the war. This is the case of the comrades of Trotskyist International Opposition of Italy and the USA and of the Labour Party of Pakistan who were guests at the Congress. Their presence not only allowed us to enrich our work but also to gain access to political reports on the building process in regions that has so far been totally unknown to us, as is the case of Pakistan. Nor was the presence of Left Articulation of Brazil – a trend within the PT that has been acting together with PSTU and other forces of the Opposition Block of the CUT – of a minor importance.

All this shows that there are concrete possibilities of advancing towards the construction of the IV International. But it also points out the new contradictions and challenges. On one hand, at KOORKOM level, there is the need to reach a higher degree of accuracy in the definition of agreements and differences to check whether there are real conditions for moving towards a new, democratically centralised organisation that would provide a higher international framework. On the other hand, where new relationships are concerned, we must get to know each other better at the three levels that we have always claimed to be important: joint participation in class struggle, programme discussion and loyalty among revolutionary organisations. These tasks will demand great efforts, but the aim makes them worthwhile. Imperialist offensive, constantly increasing conflicts, the accrual of economic, social and political crises, all this makes the advancing towards the building of a world revolutionary leadership more necessary than ever. No other task equals this one in importance. And today the IWL-FI is much better fitted to carry out what was voted in the V Congress of 1994: put all our militants, our cadres, our theoretical, programme and political heritage to serve the cause of the rebuilding of the IV International.



Controversy about the war in Yugoslavia: Important lessons for the struggle of the world working class against imperialism

The comrade in charge of the opening and the closure of this issue was Caps, from the Spanish PRT and member of the IS of IWL. That is why the first part of this article is based on his contribution. Further on we shall publish extracts from different contributions delivered to the Congress and related to the issue of the war. Unfortunately – due to

space limitations – we shall not be able to publish all the contribution in full in this number. On the other hand, and due to the need to publish this issue as soon as possible, there has been no time for the authors of the contributions to check the extracts. The editing team of the Courier, however, has made every effort to represent the viewpoints

expressed in the Congress as faithfully as possible. The majority at the Congress passed the document round which the controversy hinges – with some amendments. Those who wish to be acquainted with the full document may do so by contacting us at our Internet address: www.litci.com.

“The Balkan War proves how complex the world problems are”

(Extracts of the contribution by Caps, of the IS and of PRT of Spain)

After 78 days of bombing (officially 27 410 bombs were thrown according to NATO data), the situation of the Balkans resembles the havoc caused by the II World War. Just to give you an idea, it has been estimated that it would take 40 years of work to return to the economic growth previous to the war (with the level of IBP growth of today) without the alleged foreign “aid”. The plain fact is that the troops from the imperialist countries (under the cloak of UNO and NATO) occupy Bosnia, Albany, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia not to mention the use of bases and territories in Hungary, Albania and Bulgaria. The balance sheet of the war is: an allegedly humanitarian action was undertaken and now, as a result of it, where there was a country there is a heap of rubble, and where there was an oppressed nation there is an imperialist military enclave. This is a balance sheet of 78 days of intervention. This is the sorrowful expression of a victory of imperialism.

It is a sinister euphemism to call what has happened a “war”. A war implies that there are casualties in both bands. But in this war all those killed in action belonged to one band only, for the NATO did not lose a single man. This is an important element to take into account when defining the nature of this war.

The nature of the war

The Balkan was hook the entire Europe and it is there where all the pressure and all the tensions are most felt. What is the first task for a revolutionary when class struggle is exacerbated to such an extent? The first thing is to define the central problem, the nature of this war. This is a central problem for it has divided and unified the workers’ movement throughout history. Wars have always been known to divide sides. The analysis of the nature of this war has divided some trends and caused others to come nearer to each other.

The IWL has pointed out that were up against an imperialist aggression; that his was the essence, the nature of this war. But this was just a first definition. It is an aggression mounted on top of a previous war, the war that the Milosevic regime was waging on the Kosovo people. To make it more understandable we used the figure of the two wars. One of them was essentially an imperialist aggression, but it stemmed out of a previous aggression, the aggression of Kosovo by Serbia.

That gave rise to the IWL policy of posing first the demands Stop the Bombing and Out with NATO. From that resolutely anti-imperialist standpoint we then demanded the withdrawal of the Serbian troops from Kosovo and the right of self-

determination of the Kosovar people. This guideline was absolutely correct and allowed the IWL to pass the test of facts. It allowed us to hit the target of the central problem and there we took our stand in the war. Our small European sections took active part in the struggle against the war fulfilling the first task which it was their duty as internationalists to fulfil: to be the spearhead of the denunciation and confrontation of the aggressive countries. We were even active driving for demonstrations against the war. For example, the British comrades were apt of the anti-NATO demonstrations, and stemming out of the unitary impulse of the battle against the NATO, they gave rise to a block of twelve organisations. And for this block the first keyword was the struggle against the NATO, but starting from the defence of the people of Kosovo and their right to self-determination. The same policy was carried out in Spain. We published a manifesto signed by many trade union leaders and well known people. This gave rise to demonstration and to a unitary movement against the war. The Portuguese comrades formed part of the Left Block, which held important demonstrations.

The first element of any balance sheet after a war is to define what the political standpoint of our International had been, its position,

and the definition of the nature of the war. This has not been in the least bit easy. From the point of view of the organisation who claim to be Trotskyist, the USEC – for example – had for a long time been part of the struggle against the NATO intervention. In the end, however, they wound up by signing the “Paris Manifesto”, signed and promoted by left intellectuals, who propose that NATO should withdraw from the Balkans so that the NATO troops may occupy the region. A good part of the anti-war movement signed this manifesto, but fortunately not everybody did. Among those who didn't is the USEC from Great Britain.

Controversy inside the IWL

In spite of the fact that this policy armed our parties and our International, it has been challenged here, at this Congress. Different opinions converged to say that it was a wrong policy. We must discuss calmly if we want to know if these objections were right or not.

For example, some comrades from Argentina pose a clear criticism – and this is the great virtue of their standpoint – that the main guideline actually was to confront imperialism. They say, however, that it was necessary to point out clearly that there was only one trench, that our conception of the two wars was all wrong and that this error is partly due to wrong reasoning and partly with a political position. In short, what the comrades say is that this is due to the fact that we have failed at defining which one was the fundamental contradiction, and which were the secondary ones. In their opinion, once the NATO attack begins, the demand for self-determination becomes secondary, and the policy of demanding weapons for the KLA makes the imperialist aggression easier.

This reasoning about the fundamental contradiction and the secondary ones is very old in the Marxist movement. It was produced by a notable character, Althusser. He wrote comprehensively about what he called “The over-determined Contradictions”. Althusser was a great

admirer of Mao Tse Tung. He would always present Mao's writings on contradictions as a proof of the fact that the Chinese leader was a genius. Althusser pointed out that since there were antagonistic contradictions and those that were not antagonistic, it was necessary to see which one was antagonistic and which was not, and became secondary. This was, in his opinion, the great example of Mao Tse



The NATO “peace” in Kosovo

Tung's master-mind policy in China when he had to stand face to face with Japanese imperialism.

This conception of the theory of the over-determined contradictions is not just any old thing. It was a decisive policy used by European reformist trends when the battle against fascism and nazism was being fought. The reformists used to say that anybody who went on strike or stood up against the government was guilty of counterrevolutionary activity and was making things easier for the enemy. The great task was to see which was the central contradiction. The answer was: the first thing is to confront fascism, and make no mistakes about that.

This type of logic unavoidably leads to conclusion in the sphere of the politics and the programme. From the practical point of view, it was correct to say that during the war the main contradiction was the

confrontation with imperialism. And yet, the struggle of the people of Kosovo against the Serb aggression may have been the second, the third or the 15th contradiction, but its collocation did not make it disappear. These are the facts, and any policy that overlooks them in the name of the central contradiction actually disdains the mass murder of the Kosovar people that was being committed by the Serb regime.

I want to give an example for you to see how important this is. There is a saying in my country that any great lie, if it is to fulfil its aim, must be accompanied by a dose of truth. The social democrats who were the spearhead of the NATO aggression – for this was a war of the Third Way – used a dose of truth (that there was mass slaughter in Kosovo) to sell a great lie (that the intervention was to defend the Kosovars). But we cannot fight the lies denying the dose of truth. In this way, not only we would not nullify the lie, but also we would make the enemy's argument easy. The argument the comrades used was the very same one that all the Stalinist trends used to say

that any criticism to Milosevic was a capitulation to NATO. In Spain they went as far as attacking our rallies accusing us of being “agents of only one thought”. Some Stalinist went as far as saying publicly that what was happening in Kosovo was like the false image of a bird that appeared soiled in oil and that later on it was proved that this image had nothing to do with the war. The oil covering the dying birds had come from a shipwreck. They went as far as saying that what was happening in Kosovo was like the image of those birds: something created to produce confusion.

The controversy with the Argentine comrades hinges round that fact that - even if they do defend the Kosovars' right to self-determination – they see it as something that becomes a secondary contradiction. To defend this in the midst of the confrontation with imperialism, or to

pose “Weapons for the KLA” would make imperialist policy easier. When we are at war, however, things are solved with weapons. Consequently, if we are for self-determination, we must have weapons to reach it. The issue of the weapons defines the policy.

The truth is that the discussion has a lot to do with logical reasoning, which not only leads to political confusion, but also has connotations in the realm of the programme. The reasoning goes like this: when the imperialist aggression begins, the central contradiction is between imperialism and Serbia, who had been attacked. This type of reasoning is very wrong. This may be the form in which the contradiction is manifested. And yet, in terms of revolutionary policy, the central contradiction – from our point of view – is always the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie, no matter how it may manifest itself. And this is the heart of the matter. For even though one might ask, “But isn’t imperialism attacking the highest exponent of the bourgeoisie?” We would answer, “That is right, but we do not believe that Serbia is the expression of the proletariat defending itself.”

So, what’s the problem? Unfortunately, this is the kind of reasoning we have been discussing for quite a while now. It goes as follows: Is the right to national self-determination part of a class problem, or is it not? Is there any chance at all to unify the Balkan working class omitting the right to self-determination? This separation that is being made has a lot to do with a way of reasoning that establishes the self-determination, the anti-colonial struggle, as a merely bourgeois democratic task. Nowadays, however, the democratic tasks are part of the proletarian tasks. There is no chance at all to unify the Balkan working class setting aside the right to self-determination, because all the struggle of the working class is drenched through with this problem.

To say that we wish to confront imperialism setting aside national self-determination is to pose correctly that we want to confront imperialism but as from a national Serb focus and not from a class approach. To skip this means to have an anti-imperialist

standpoint, but from a nationalist focus; in this case it would be the Great Serbia focus. This problem has an enormous validity for as soon as the imperialist recolonising offensive gains strength, there will be more abuse of sovereignty, and national rights will acquire decisive weight. We insist on this concept which we have repeatedly posed to the TBI – a trend that split away from the IWL some years ago: there is no class programme without national self-determination. And we did not invent this; Trotsky did. A class programme without national self-determination does not deserve the name of a class programme.

KLA, a problem for imperialism

Imperialism has a problem now: how to disarm the guerrilla. Unfortunately I think the comrades from the Argentine Liaison Committee echo the most regrettable statements made about the KLA. Imperialism has spilt bucketfuls of shit against the KLA. They say, among other things, that it is a guerrilla sponsored by the drug dealers. I sounds funny. We’ve not seen guerrillas financed by bank loans to be paid on accessible monthly instalments. Normally they get their weapons as best they can. Now, just look at the KLA. They got a million pieces of weaponry from the Albanian arsenals of the April ’97 revolution. That is how the mass ELK force got armed. Because a 20 000 strong force in Kosovo is like having a 1.6 million strong guerrilla in Brazil. I wonder what the Brazilians would think of a guerrilla like that. That is to say, and we shall now turn to that point, that the present-day KLA leadership can uphold a pro-imperialist stand point, because a great part of the internal opposition has been knocked off, and is still being knocked off. This is a crucial problem, because we believe that the IWL declaration stems out of criterion of defining the nature of the war as being an imperialist aggression, and yet faced the war from a class approach, from the position of being for class independence. To make an abstraction of the right to self-determination is a mistake that leads to facing the issue from the reactionary focus of Great Serbia nationalism.

Was it necessary, in Serbia, to be in the military camp of Milosevic?

Criticism pours in also from elsewhere. There are comrades who declare that the demand of weapons for Serbia was the same as arming Milosevic, and that this was wrong, because Milosevic was a murderer. This is one of the central criticisms made – among others – by comrade Rob from Great Britain. This position received a lot of support in Europe. But, confronted with an imperialist aggression, we defend the right of the assailed country to defend itself, independently from the regime they have.

This has been our standpoint in the Falklands, in Iraq, and now it is our standpoint in this aggression. We might discuss the way to pose this demand, how to best articulate the policy, whether we should demand that the Belgrade regime withdraw its troops from Kosovo and concentrate it against imperialism. But this is not the issue here. It is whether we should demand weapons for Serbia or not. This was the challenged item of the IWL declaration. And it may suit us to clarify what follows essentially for the benefit of us, the European Trotskyists. Milosevic is a murderer and a mass murderer at that, but he makes a very poor showing when compared to any of the European imperialisms. I shall not stop to analyse the CV of the British or the Spanish imperialism, but don’t you think I am exaggerating here. This simple truth must be explained to everybody in Europe.

This way of thinking, which focuses the conflict as from an analysis and a policy that begins and finishes in Kosovo is absolutely wrong from our point of view. In a way we see it as a unilaterality that resembles very much the unilaterality we discussed above. Independently from the regime it may have, the right of the Serbs as a nation to self-determination is undeniable and our unmistakable position with respect to the aggression has to be viewed from that angle. It has a lot to do with the same way of thinking we have seen above. We must pose our anti-imperialist position from the position of class independence. Otherwise we shall be posing an anti-imperialist battle from a national approach, in this case of the Kosovar



nationalism. There is another discussion we have to have, and it is vital for our policy. There are those activists in Europe who say that you cannot demand weapons for Serbia, because Serb workers are all a pack of murderers.

The nature of the war revisited

Coming back to the controversy on the nature of the war, it might be a good idea to identify such differences as there, knowing that they are not necessarily insoluble differences. Some comrades insist on discussing the cause of the NATO intervention and say that it serves the purpose of avoiding the reactionary triumph of the Kosovars. The imperialist intervention would aim at putting the Kosovars on the “righteous path”. That is why they believe that the IS take a centrist standpoint.

What is the conflict we have with this opinion? Why do we say that in this discussion there are actually three positions? If we reason that the NATO intervention was meant to avoid the reactionary triumph of the Kosovars, then we disagree on the nature of the war. If it is true that the imperialist aggression was aimed at preventing this reactionary triumph, all the main guideline of the IWL was wrong. We would have to say that Rob was right when he posed that it was wrong to demand weapons for Serbia. Because if the nature of the war is linked to the Kosovar revolution, there is no valid tactical demand that can prevent the weakening of the main enemy of that revolution. We then should not have said no to NATO. We might have alerted the Kosovar masses not to be

mistaken; not to take them as liberators... but in no way we should have defending the demand of weapons for Serbia.

If this reasoning is correct, then there are things that are incomprehensible. For example: if the guideline of the NATO intervention was to prevent the Kosovar revolution, why did the NATO turn down Milosevic’s proposal that UNO and Russian troops should be admitted? Because that is what Milosevic wanted to sign in Rambouillet. If the guideline of the NATO intervention was to prevent the Kosovar revolution, we can’t understand the reason for insisting on the bombing. They could have destroyed the Zastava factory once, but they bombed it four times! To cow down Milosevic, it would have been enough to bomb four or five bridges over the Danube. And yet, they have left the Danube practically bridge-less for only two of them remain.

So what is wrong about this reasoning? Actually, imperialism did have a policy to prevent a revolution of the Kosovar masses. The name of this policy was Rambouillet Agreements. Imperialism imposed its discipline on the Kosovar leaders and forced them to sign the Rambouillet Agreement. Only that the KLA leadership has changed. The Demanci team had to resign and was replaced by the now present Thaci team. Imperialism had won the KLA leaders over for this policy. The problem is that the change is, and that is what the Rambouillet Agreements required, that the troops settled in the entire Yugoslavia, not only in Kosovo. If the essence of the intervention was to prevent the Kosovar revolution, why

did the imperialism turn down Milosevic’s offer? The Stalinists got tired of repeating over and over again in all their speeches, “Just look at those rascals! Milosevic said he would accept the UNO troops and they turned him down. Milosevic said he would accept the Russian troops and they turned him down”. This was the Stalinists’ message and from their point of view, they were right. So this issue of the nature of the war is very important, because the controversy we have with the comrades is that they make an analysis from which the point of inflection – the Rambouillet agreements – just disappears. That is why their analysis of the war resembles so much the one of Bosnia, that they wind up with what - in our opinion - is a wrong conclusion, for they are two wars of different characteristics.

We may be wrong at that, but there are some contradictions that are hard to explain. From the point of view of agitation, why emphasise independence so much? Why emphasise the beginning and the end of the war in Kosovo? Anybody can understand that for a Trotskyist self-determination and independence are neither antagonistic nor very different. The Kosovars have already made up their minds about independence quite a while ago. But placing self-determination rather than independence in the centre of the agitation has a lot to do with who the addressee of the demand is. Self-determination, posed in those terms, has a lot to do with the attempt at reaching an agreement between the workers of the Balkans around a democratic principle which - to the best understanding of the Kosovars – should be exerted through independence.

This is the difference between a policy for all the workers and a policy that begins and finishes in Kosovo. This is the heart of the matter of what we are discussing. That is why our latest declaration begins with out of the Balkans with the NATO and we mean Kosovo and Serbia. It is impossible to articulate a revolutionary policy unless we make it clear that it is the Balkans and not merely Kosovo. In our opinion, the comrades’ error consists in the fact that they do confront imperialism, but from a nationalist approach. In this case it is the Kosovar nationalism.

From the practical point of view, this where the importance of confronting imperialism from the logic of class position lies.

Let us see a last example just to clarify the differences. Comrade Esther, from Spain, informed about two activities. One is an aid convoy for the Kosovars; the other is an attempt at contacting trade union activists in Kosovo. We must by all means try and do our best to contact trade union activists, but the convoy is quite another thing. First of all, because in the imperialist countries there is a mass media campaign of the great social and political organisations, of the multinationals and others where help for the Kosovar victims of the aggression is being raised and the mass murder committed by Milosevic is still being exposed. But for the Serbs there is not even a bunch of bananas, not one peso, not a piece of bread. And that in spite of the fact that for seventy-two days they have been suffering barbarous bombing raids and millions died because of that. We are not going to give the least help for the capitalist reconstruction of Kosovo, in the "reconstruction of the Balkans". It is a serious political problem. Let them not count on our help. No convoys.

Apart from that, if it is a question of helping the victims of an aggression, why is there no convoy for Serbia?

If it is a question of contacting trade union activists, there is no need for a convoy. There are other mechanisms. This problem has a lot to do with a wrong conception that the comrades have. It means we have different ideas of the nature of the war, and that is where the practical differences come from.

The lessons of the war have to be clear. There is no military explanation for the imperialists' victory. The explanation of the imperialists' victory lies in the politics, because this was the war of the Third way, which – through the social democratic governments – safeguarded for the benefit of imperialism all the paralysis and the confusion among the workers.

They put a social democrat as secretary general of the NATO, they had their most recalcitrant element, Tony Blair, supporting the land attack, and – as I mentioned above, it was the social democracy that used this dose of truth in order to get away with a big lie. All those who were leading this war are the great ideologists of the Third Way. Imperialism won the war due to social democracy, due to the faithless role played by Milosevic



(who with his ethnic cleansing furnished them with an excuse for the intervention) and to the leaders of the KLA who capitulated to imperialism and gave them a cloak to hide behind.

A recolonising offensive

Another element the IWL thesis insist on very much is regarding the war is that we are facing a recolonising offensive. We use this category, because unlike what some opinions express, recolonisation is not an economic concept. It has a lot to do with an economic, political and military problem. And that is the key issue of this category, that is why it is totalling. We have sufficient data to see how in this period of time the recolonising offensive was manifested. In Latin America we can personally see how countries are plundered and given away at dumping prices. There has also been important headway made by imperialism along the path of recolonising the East of Europe.

The war has proved this to be true in the Balkan area. In Russia the IBP (Internal Brute Product) of the year before this reached 1.1% of the world IBP, lower than that of the countries of North Africa and Middle East.

Part of this recolonising offensive in the centre of Europe was expressed in the recent World Forum. They propose a stability plan for the centre and south-east of Europe. Among other proposals there is the one of creating a Customs Union for the Balkans which would be ruled and accompanied by provisional administrations in Kosovo and would come together with suppression of local currency, which is to be replaced by the Deutsche Mark as monetary reference. These are some of the plans. Expressions of it can be found all over the place. For example Albania, which is now an immense military base where all the operations for the centre of the Balkans were prepared.

The Thesis points out to the deeper structural causes for this recolonising offensive. And they quote somebody who is very well known: George Soros. He has been saying that the development of a global economy does not coincide with the development of a global society. The basic unit of political and social life is still a State-Nation. He says something that we have been insisting on for quite a long time now. The central contradiction of this epoch is between the international development of economy and the national States. This central contradiction, says Soros, has been a source of permanent crisis. You just can't advance unless you overcome this contradiction. And what does he propose to do about it? He poses that, inasmuch as there are collective interests that spread beyond the national frontiers, the sovereignty of the states should be subordinate to international law. In other words: the policy is categorical and the message

is clear. National interests must be subordinate to international interests. What do these words mean if they are uttered by an imperialist? It means that smaller national states will have to subordinate themselves to bigger national states. This item is therefore of essential import for us.

Transformation in the institutions of domination

The thesis points out to the fact that within this recolonising offensive there is a transformation affecting the institutions of imperialism. This war takes place during the 50th anniversary of the NATO and if the '91 Gulf war was a dress rehearsal, now this issue gained the status of something that is not only de facto, but also accorded by right. It is formalised in a solemn declaration that explains the new role of the NATO. This seems very important to us for it is closely linked to the changes that have been taking place lately. The NATO is an institution that reflected the entire post-war period, all the "order" of Yalta and Postdam, the same as such institutions as the Security Council with China's and Russia's right to veto. Russia actually used this right 77 times between 1945 and 1955.

This "order" now needs to be modified, for the recolonising offensive, the need to centralise capitals, the role of semicolonies that is kept in store for China and Russia do not match with the maintenance of countries with such special categories vetoing in the Security Council. For years now the USA have been questioning the NATO overtly. They questioned the Secretary General, they questioned the funds, they acted in the Iraq war without bothering to consult the UNO, something they repeated now in Yugoslavia. This is an important element for, as a minimum, it modifies the role of the institutions of the imperial domination, that is to say – taking the word very relatively and in inverted commas – its regime. The role of the G7 as an organism of control and domination, and the role of NATO as the military arm of the economic, political and military centralisation acquire an enormous importance in this period of time.

Changes in the co-relation of forces?

That generates another discussion: can we say that there has been a change in the world co-relation of forces? I believe that some categories have been misused, and that this generates more confusion. Some comrades associate victories or defeats with changes in the co-relation of forces. But this mechanism does not work automatically.

Victories are victories and defeats are defeats, and it does not suit us to underestimate them. For example, the victory of imperialism has its consequences: it makes Schröder and Blair more assertive about the plans the threats to carry out in Europe. It has its consequences, because military bases have mushroomed all over the centre of Europe. However, it does not seem correct to infer from this that the co-relation of forces has been modified. Nothing surpasses watching reality, and from there we learn that this is not the way things are; there has been no modification in the co-relation of forces. What elements does reality show? Eleven days of general strike in Ecuador, students' uprising in Iran, Colombian guerrilla 25km away from Bogota, the situation of the Mexican university students' strike, the riots breaking out in the whole area about the war between Pakistan and India about Kashmir, the South African miners' protest against the privatisation of the mines.

All these facts do not point out to a modification in the co-relation of forces; even in the Balkans themselves, the situation has not yet been closed. What the end of the war caused in the first place was a frontal contradiction between the KLA forces and the Kosovar people, who are still armed, against the NATO. And as for Serbia – you may see the latest events – there is a whole process of struggles that puts the demand of Down with Milosevic on the agenda. There is also a crisis in the regime, a segment of the armed forces (the soldiers) demonstrate in the streets, for they have not been paid since the bombing raids began. There is also an opposition process, which we are trying to define more accurately for the IWL declaration to see how we work out a policy there.

Our policy

An anti-imperialist guideline means that we have to confront this recolonising counteroffensive from every angle: economically, with its increase of super-exploitation; politically, because of the violation of national sovereignty; in the military field, against the interventions. This will be on the agenda. That is why I believe that there are two examples of how to face the struggle against the handing-over governments and simultaneously turn these battles into anti-imperialist battles. This is the impulse given by the PSTU to struggles demanding Out with FHC and the IMF quite similar to the demand of the Russian comrades who demand Down with Yeltsin and the IMF. This is meant to link the struggle against the governments with all their plans of super-exploitation and giving away of the country to the struggle against imperialism.

As for the Balkans, there isn't the slightest chance of confronting imperialism if it is not from the angle of a policy for the working class. There is no battle for the independence of Kosovo unless you confront the NATO, nor can there be a battle against NATO without retaking the links with the working class of the Balkans as a whole. That is why we pay close attention to the contribution of the Serb representative at the latest European trade union congress. A representative of the Serb trade union took the floor and said he was deeply moved to see that old friends whom he thought to be dead were still alive. He then added that this happened to workers because we tend to lose our identity as workers, and we allow ourselves to be divided into ethnic groups or religious groups. Of course this message may have various interpretations. The fact remains, however, that it is an important "bridge" and this fact should remain part of our political profile, of how to re-compose the struggle for the unity of the workers in the Balkans in order to confront imperialism

“The struggle against imperialism must be in the centre of our policy”

Extracts from the contribution by Juan Giglio from the Liaison Committee (CS/PT/GOP) of Argentina. Corrected by the author.

The merit of Caps' contribution is that it has clearly defined the controversies existing in the International, though in my opinion, there are two and not three. I am convinced that the difference between the standpoint of the British comrades and the standpoint defended by the International Leadership and is just a nuance. On one hand there is the position by Caps and the majority, on the other hand there is the position that we defend. They are two different points of view.

The one who has a contradiction is Caps, for he starts by defending the position presented by Horacio, which is the same one that I defend and which is: place “Recolonisation” and the imperialist offensive in the centre. Contradictorily, however, he does not make his policy hinge round the battle against imperialism, but around the problem of self-determination.

In his contribution, Caps – who quotes Mao, Althusser and others manipulates a bit in order to conceal the reality, saying that we negate the entirety of the contradictions that exist in reality.

We do not negate the, what we do is to arrange the policy round the most important one, which is – to our best understanding – the struggle against imperialism. In his report, Caps and the comrades from PRT arrange it around the other contradiction, which they actually define as the most important, Self-determination.

For example: in the materials from the III Congress of the PRT they always talk about self-determination. Whether they talk of the Basque issue or of the Balkans, the centre is Self-determination. And when I read the materials I find that for the election of 13th of June (against the governments, against the war and against the unemployment and precarious labour) they still put Self-determination in the centre instead of putting NATO there.

Going deeper into the subject, I wonder, what is the political meaning of that? Perhaps our criticism is all nonsense, and we attribute a greater value to one thing and not to the other, when finally we all say the same thing, for we all say “Out with NATO” and for the “Self-determination”.

But the problem is in the weight we attribute to each demand. That is why I

can see a great problem in the policy of the PRT, which Caps defends, and it is that they do not pose the battle against the NATO bases in his country. Caps will have to explain to us why they do not do it.

I think this demand does not exist because the centre of his policy is not there... because it is not arranged round what we believe to be the main contradiction, and which means to put imperialism in the centre. All this happens in spite of the fact that Caps keeps on saying that they take up this “Recolonisation” question.

In the documents and materials of PRT, I have been trying to find even if it were no more than a simple demand against the NATO bases, and I have found nothing. And I ask myself, where from is the imperialist aggression mounted? This imperialism of the Third way leading, where does it send the planes from if it is not from the NATO bases in Europe? There are many places where we do not exist, but what about Spain? What are we doing there? That is why I am going to request from the Spanish comrades to be consistent with what they say and do (about this thing of the recolonising offensive). Because being consistent means to have a consistent and consequent anti-imperialist policy (Which does not mean negating self-determination).

I have a feeling that this contradiction, which comrade Caps cannot solve, forces him to attribute such great weight to the Self-determination issue, is also linked to the position they take with respect to the “Lizarrá Pact” (an agreement through which Spain “dampened ETA’s powder”, forcing them not to raise in arms any more in defence of their national demands)

This pact (this pact, which was signed in the midst of a low ebb and a withdrawal of struggles in Spain) is defended by the comrades of the Spanish PRT, because it has a couple of paragraphs talking about “Self-determination”, and for the comrades the issue of the “Self-determination” may be the engine that may generate great explosiveness in the class struggle in Spain.

This subject is very important for us, and that is why Caps needn't deform our standpoints, the way he did with

Horacio's contribution. We do not negate all contradictions, but when we centre in the re-colonisation issue, we centre in the struggle of one class against another class...

This is the great difference, and it is expressed in the politic. Now we understand why the Spanish comrades do not pose a campaign – or at least one demand – to say “out with the NATO bases from Spain” This difference is vital.

About the IWL policy, comrade Caps defends the policy of the International for Yugoslavia, saying that from the beginning “we took position in the struggle against NATO”. As we see it, this is not true, and the virtue of written things is that they can be shown.

I, the speaker, have written an enormous amount of letters to the IS requesting right from the beginning that they should rectify their policy (some of them are in the Discussion Bulletin) Since the 11th of March, '99, I criticised the International Courier demanding that they should stop putting the struggle for the Self-determination in the centre (not that we should abandon it), and that they should the struggle against the NATO intervention (“Out with the NATO from the Balkans”), for in the Courier last but one this demand did not exist. The intervention was already a concrete possibility, and apart from that, the UNO had settled there a long time before.

Consistently with this, we criticised the different declarations of the IWL, such as when we suggested that “Arms for the Kosovars” should be replaced (I shall later explain why) by “Arms for the Serbs”. This was never done.

In the first declaration of the IS of 28th of March '99 it is said, “No to the NATO intervention, no to imperialist aggression, no to the false peace of Rambouillet. Out with Milosevic from Kosovo. Self-determination for Kosovo; support the struggle of KLA, weapons for Kosovo.” There is only one demand of weapons and it is for the Kosovars.

And the, what happened to the next declaration? (the one where a demand of weapons for the arming of the Serbs begins to exist) ... The problem is in the arrangement of the demands: “No to the bombing raids, Out with NATO, no to the Peace Plans of the great powers, Out

with the Serbian troops and against the NATO intervention". In this declaration the issue of opposing the Serbian troops comes before being against the NATO intervention. And again, "Weapons for the Kosovars (after the question of the Self-determination)... and with a hierarchy greater than the request for material aid from Russia and China, which is quite rhetoric and has actually never been applied.

We are not against posing self-determination. We pose it in all our texts. What we do say is that in the middle of the aggression, it should be subordinate to beating imperialism in the war. That is why we say that we must demand from Milosevic – and the Serb people should demonstrate for this – that he should grant the self-determination! It's the best way to join the two nations against a common enemy!

At that time the IS sends us greetings to a rally we called in Argentina for May Day, saying... "the Serbian people are fighting a heroic battle against imperialism" and that Milosevic renders unity between the Serbs and the Kosovars impossible". But in the middle of the war we are not supposed to be making policy with characterisations, but we should start of the necessities of the masses, that is to say the need to join forces to confront imperialism!

With this policy, the comrades leave the task of challenging imperialism in the hands of revolutionaries, of the workers and of the exploited toiling masses in general, and it is them that we must address in the first place when we are talking about joining forces against the enemy.

And yet, here we defend the Falklands and the policy we had there. And in the Falklands, to be consistently in "the trenches of the attacked" meant simply being in the military trenches of Galtieri (which does not mean any political support). To lean on the contradiction generated by the imperialist attack and Milosevic's reaction – however limited and inconsistent it may be, and that was the

cause of the defeat – means not only "leaving the solution of the conflict in the hands of the toiling masses", but also beginning to have a policy of demands towards the real leadership of the process, towards Milosevic, about the steps to be taken from there on if we were to win.

With this IWL policy we never placed ourselves in Milosevic's "military trenches", because what we actually did was to make politics with characterisations, which is all the opposite to what we did in the Falklands, where we did have the guideline of staking everything on winning the war, beginning by really being in Galtieri's "military (not political) band. ...In those days, and in spite of the fact that Galtieri kept on killing comrades and activists, we had no qualms about – not "giving a shy support, or leave the solution of the conflict in the hands of the toiling masses – but of actually placing ourselves in Galtieri's military trench, no matter how inconsistent this murderer was.

The differences after the war

How is this controversy expressed now? I think that now we have more of them... For comrade Caps says that if before (the war) the demand of arms for the Kosovars was a revolutionary demand, now that the NATO "wishes to disarm the guerrilla", it is more revolutionary than ever.

To begin with, the comrades play down the defeat. We believe that the military victory of imperialism should not be underestimated. They invaded and occupied a territory and were applauded by the masses, and this generates enormous back ebb in the awareness of the workers. We do not say that it is a catastrophic defeat, nor that the world situation is to change because of it for in Ecuador and in other parts of the world there is still serious crisis, because we believe that we are in a terribly favourable stage... But what about the situation in Kosovo and the Balkans?

The majority comrades say that "in spite of the fact that there has been a defeat, there may be a leap in the reorganisation!" Definitely they are playing down the defeat for deep in their hearts they are consistent with their theory of "the two wars" ...in one sense, the defeat of Milosevic – in spite of having spelt a defeat of the masses – has also opened the possibility of a "leap in the re-organisation"...

We are consistent with the characterisation that there has been a defeat in the only war that there was, and that therefore the situation in Kosovo will be very bad for a long time. And that therefore, the KLA – who, together with Milosevic, are the great traitors – are already part of the government that has been set up in Kosovo together with NATO whom they back during the intervention. That is why, if we were in Kosovo, we would pose a programme strategically hinging round the need to confront the NATO/KLA government.

We say that now, in Yugoslavia, the main thing is to fight against Milosevic, taking advantage of the present day events, and that, on the other hand, we have an enemy – imperialism and their allies, the KLA, who now rule together, beyond any contradictions that they may have. The KLA has taken a political stand for NATO and that made the KLA-led Kosovar toiling masses should applaud the entrance of imperialism in Kosovo. The ELK policy is to co-govern with NATO, that is why we must have a strategy to confront this co-government. That is why now have as big a controversy as the one we had during the war... if the war led us to have two different policies, peace poses the same differences.

The item of placing imperialism and their recolonising offensive is very important, for – if badly used . it may pose errors that are even worse than those so far committed. This is further developed in Horacio's text on the Thesis.

"The concept of the two wars is wrong"

Extracts from the contribution by Rob Menzies of the International Socialist League of Great Britain

"I want to talk specifically about the question of the two wars. If we study the history of Yugoslavia, the revolutionary event of '85, we shall

see that it was something specific for fighting the Stalinist party. We think that the transformation in property will not take place without force

reaction. While in the rest of Europe the Stalinist regime fell like a castle of cards, in Yugoslavia this implied the use of violence. While bureaucracy

was trying to turn into a new capitalist class, the vehicle they used was exclusively ethnic. In Serbia it is Milosevic and in Croatia it is Tudman, but the process is the same.

In the late 90s, in the rest of Eastern Europe, Tudman was greeted as a liberal, and even if nationalisms appeared all over Yugoslavia, and manifested themselves in the most violent ways, the imperialists did their best not to stop that. This included the weapons embargo on Bosnia precisely when the Bosnians were the only ones that posed a multi-ethnic State.

The only reason for which imperialism attacks the Milosevic regime, is because the conflict threatened to extend. It was quite feasible that Albania could get in to defend their people in Kosovo. This might have caused Macedonia pronouncing itself on the Serbian side, which – in turn – would have implications in Turkey. The probability of extending the war and pressing a breach within NATO, Greece, Turkey frightened the imperialists.

The Kosovo fighter had a chance of obtaining weapons from Albania, and restoration of capitalism is not easy when workers are armed. What the imperialists really wanted was to prevent the conflict from extending and to take away the weapons from the workers who had them. From this point of view, Milosevic is till an imperialist tool in the region, and once he has been cornered against the wall, this or other nationalist chetnik will retake his role of imperialist agent in the region. That is why what is posed here is the defence of the Kosovar right to self-determination and weapons for the Kosovars while simultaneously opposing the NATO attack against the Serbian people.

About whether we are wrong to oppose arming Serbia, I must say that the Galtieri administration in Argentina was not a government of oppression against another nation with a right to self-determination. We must also say that, if weapons had been sent to Serbia, and since there was no revolutionary organisation demanding them, these weapons

would have most certainly been used to murder more Kosovars. So we would be in a ridiculous position of demanding arms for both sides.

On another, slightly different aspect, we do agree to what the IS say when they talk about recolonisation. Yet, the word in itself does not represent this precisely. In the first place, we do not think that imperialism would dare to revive the old colonial system the way it used to be. To do so might mean enormous people's reactions against imperialism. We have to ask ourselves – if a recolonisation is taking place, which are those places where the government is not in the hands of the local bourgeoisie, even those they may be deeply in the imperialist pocket. Which are the states that would be governed directly by imperialism, with imperialist soldiers, police and administrators. Perhaps in Kosovo right now.

What is probably really taking place now is an increase in the neocolonial offensive, using the same bourgeoisie to act directly in the name of imperialism and also from the

direct annexation of territories by imperial powers. So we have to define what we mean by recolonisation. I believe it might be better if we spoke about a neocolonial offensive.

Just a few words about the Third Way. It has been said that these are political steps to avoid social convulsions; in other words, concessions. We do not think this precise either, even though it might establish a floor for the salaries, which is so low that it is almost non-existent, while at the same time there are cuts in benefits and pensions and the health service is jeopardised.

The Third Way is nothing but the continuation of the attack on the working class and the historic conquests of the workers. From this point of view, the Third Way has the advantage that the relation between the social democratic leaders with the trade unions – the trade union bureaucrats – allows the governments of the so-called third Way to try and limit workers' resistance, making it go through a softening of the trade union bureaucrats.



Young people against NATO in Belgrad

“We believe that the recolonisation is being over-dimensioned”

Extracts from the contribution by Cuate from POS, Mexico

We think that, in general, the IS has responded correctly to the war issue politically and from the point of view of the programme. There have been, at the beginning some ups and downs, for it has been a very complex phenomenon, but we do not have any principled objections. That means that we are in this block that says that in these last weeks two wars have converged in Yugoslavia.

We do wish, however, to pose some critical opinions about the analyses made around the war. There is a new element to analyse, and that is the process of recolonisation or recolonising offensive. The process of recolonisation actually exists, and it is not merely an economic process – though this is its origin – but it also has its political and military dimension. This process has been part of the reality for several years now. What we do believe is that this aspect is super-dimensioned and that the war in Yugoslavia is defined incorrectly. For example: in Bulletin 11, where the IS declaration on the Balkans is, it is clearly stated that the nature of the war was a barbaric imperialist aggression in the service of recolonisation. We

believe this to be wrong and that it is important to discuss these questions of analysis and characterisation.

Here the war is seen as something that the NATO wanted in order to re-colonise, that is, as if it were an offensive war of the imperialists. And we believe that the origin was elsewhere. It was a war to avoid the triumph of the revolution for the national independence of the Kosovars. We think this was the origin of the war. From this point of view, it was a defensive war, to maintain the status quo and prevent a revolutionary triumph. I think that this part is lost essentially in the last part of the work of the comrades of IS, which is when they introduce the element of recolonisation. We do not mean that there is no process of re-colonisation, and that this is also the NATO policy in Yugoslavia. According to our analysis, what we have in the Balkans and what generated all this, is the fact that the powerful anti-Stalinist process which took place fundamentally from '89 till '91 has not concluded. This process continued in Serbia with the demonstrations of two years ago, and continued with the wars and the

national independence revolutions of the Slovenians, Croatians, Bosnians and now the Kosovars.

The problem is that a great revolution of national independence was growing. Suddenly a people's army appeared in Kosovo, armed itself fast, and what was originally a marginal group - (I believe that in '95 – '96 they were 60 militia men) – grew to have 20 000 fighters and a great support among the people and launched an insurrection. That is the fundamental thing. And Milosevic's war against this insurrection was a failure. He not only failed at stopping this process but also exacerbated it even more; and the NATO intervention was to stop that process.

So, as we can see the fundamental thing about the world process and also in Yugoslavia was not the recolonising offensive, but the class struggle crystallised as a national independence revolution that had the support of the people and was armed. This is the origin of the war.

“Confront the imperialist aggression with a class response”

Extracts from the contribution of Felipe from PRT, Spain

“Before the NATO intervention we had a war of national liberation in Kosovo where the Kosovar guerrilla, representing thousands of armed fighters, had managed to occupy as much as 60% of the territory. This situation threatened Milosevic and – in general – we had a total destabilisation in the Balkans region. Imperialism is forced to intervene militarily and they do so as part of a global recolonising offensive for the region. A global, political, economic and military offensive which entails the negation of the national rights of

the Kosovars, economic destruction of and the general re-colonisation that we can now see clearly in the very plans of reconstruction of the region.

The NATO war dots the i's and crosses the t's of what we call the new world order, where each force is meant to stay in its place. And yet the NATO war does not put an end to the war of national liberation. Quite to the contrary, it becomes more exacerbated, because Milosevic's response to imperialist aggression is to intensify the policy of ethnic cleansing. From this point of view, we

have to admit that there were two wars and we had to confront this situation with a class response, a response hinging round the guideline of struggle against the imperialist aggression, a response to the NATO invasion. This was the fundamental. But to this fundamental guideline we had to incorporate – as an absolutely necessary element – the struggle in defence of the national rights of the Kosovo people expressed in the demands “withdraw Milosevic's troops from Kosovo” and “defence of the self-determination of the Kosovar

people”.

When we are talking of a class response, it is because it is only as from there that we can pose the unity of the working class in the Balkans and the international unity of the working class to confront the imperialist offensive of the NATO. Comrade Juan Giglio tells us about one war, one trench, an in his transatlantic clairvoyance, when he lands in Kosovo, he has to tell us where he will situate himself. What would be consistent with his position is to shoot against the armed Kosovars who are fighting against the chetniks (ultra nationalist Serbian commandos). But it looks like the comrades do not believe that we have to be all that rough, and that it might be a good idea to propose to the Kosovars that they let the chetniks kill them out in the name of what would be a respectable anti-imperialist death.

What were we supposed to do about the 20 000 deserters from the

Yugoslav army who refused to take part in the ethnic cleansing? Were we to demand that they be shot immediately for splitting away from the anti-imperialist block? And if we went to the European workers' movement, in what way were we expected to pose a united front against the imperialist intervention if it was not demanding also the national right of the Kosovar people? In Spain we had some outstanding activity cornering the positions of the Stalinist – who, in general lines coincided with the comrades' outlook. And it was the only way we managed to make headway with a joint movement confronting imperialist aggression in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia.

But I think it is also important to analyse the other position. There is only one war, only one trench, and now we have the NATO and Milosevic against Kosovo and everything finishes in Kosovo.

This is a problem, for if we are consistent to the end, we might get as far as giving support to a manifesto

like the one we know – the Paris Manifesto – that justifies a humanitarian intervention of the NATO in the name of the right to self-determination. This last instance would be a lesser evil and it would go along the line of defence of Kosovo.

The important thing is that we have to analyse and take a standpoint with respect to the war is that we are facing a recolonising offensive that has different parts: Kosovo, Serbia and in general, the entire Balkan region. There are various questions that have to be responded. Is our main guideline Out with NATO or the independence of Kosovo? Do we exclude the pro-Milosevic trends out of the unity of action, or do we go together with them against the NATO? This is what we did in Spain. Are we or are we not in the military camp with Milosevic confronting the NATO? Do we or don't we raise the point that Russia should send weapons of the anti-aircraft type to repel the NATO attack?

“The right to national self-determination is a principle”

Extracts from the contribution by Martín Hernandez, of the IS and of the PSTU of Brazil

“I agree with one part of what Pablo (of the Liaison Committee) said about the importance of this discussion. He posed the case of Colombia and we might mention others. But it all has to do with the process of recolonisation we have been talking about. But there is another element that Pablo ought to have added, and he didn't. It is the following: these situations will be repeated for it is most likely that we shall be face with situations just as complex as this one or even more so. Pablo should not believe that in the forthcoming confrontations will be something simple, without contradictions: the revolution on this side and the counterrevolution on the other and full stop. This is because of several problems and fundamentally with the national problem.

The national problem, the right to self-determination, quoted by Moreno, is for us a question of principles. It will be intertwined in the wars; it will be like a constant, due to both, the recolonisation process and the restoration of capitalism. Just look at the East of Europe. And we shall see what will happen when the Chinese process

breaks out, how it will combine with all that. We had a controversy with the Russian comrades – it has been settled now – because there is a double national problem in Russia. Because Russia is being colonised – perhaps it already is a semi-colony), but at the same time Russia oppresses other nations. Just see the Chechenian experience. Russia is discussing now – never mind if they do it – to take the Kosovo experience and use it in Chechenia. And we cannot discard beforehand that there will be similar situations even if they do not reach the military plane.

That is why what you are proposing is a simplistic way out, that does not respond to reality and that is why you are politically disarmed. It is a simplistic way out to say: there are two sides, two military camps, and you are either here or there, and that is all there is to it. If only it were like that! There would not be so many discussions among us. The problem is that real life is not like that, so a revolutionary has to work with the tools he has and apply them to reality as it is. I am going to give an example of what Pablo is saying, “We are all for giving weapons to the Kosovars as long

as they use them against imperialism.” Perfect! How nice if it were like that, all together against imperialism! But is this real life?

When the Serbian commandos came to attack the villages, supposing we were there and had the weapons, would we be expected to embrace those who have come to kill us and so, arm in arm confront imperialism? Would this have been our policy? I'm afraid we wouldn't have much time to apply it. So a war is a fact of real life, it means a confrontation between two sectors, and the confrontation that existed in Kosovo was the confrontation between the Serbian troops and the Kosovar masses with their army, the KLA.

Was this the best possible situation for the revolutionaries? No, it wasn't! The best thing would have been all together now against imperialism. The masses with their organisations standing on one side, Milosevic and imperialism on the other. But, it this the way this war was?

I repeat, this national question and the right to self-determination that made Marxism split at the beginning of this century is now on the agenda in most

processes that we confront and that we are going to confront. So beware of these simplistic solutions that can only lead us to a blind alley.

The second problem is: are there two or three positions? It is very important that we should know this, not necessarily to overcome all the controversies posed to this congress, but at least so that we can identify them. Well, the answer to this question depends on the angle from which we focus the discussion. In a way, there is only one position. We can proclaim – and nobody will be against it – that we have all been against the intervention of the NATO, against the bombing raid, etc. Neither will anybody disagree with a statement saying we are all for self-determination of Kosovo and, for that matter, of any other oppressed nation in the world. So there is no discussion on this point.

And this is a much wider front, it crosses the frontiers of the IWL. The problem is that this front was affected when the concrete war broke out and when we had to design a policy for this concrete war, with its features which – whether we like it or not – every war has. We do not like this war, for it leaves no room for easy answers. If we look around and see in general all the policies that existed for this war – not at the level of social democracy or Stalinism, but within revolutionary Marxism – we shall see that there have been three quite clearly defined positions. And inside the IWL we also have three positions.

If we pay close attention to what is being discussed here, we shall see these three positions, and then you have the nuances. And those differences crop up when we have to give concrete answers to the problems posed by the war. For example, Juan Giglio, who says that there are two positions has not been listening carefully to the British comrades.

The British comrades are telling us that they disagree with the IS resolution, and I think it is great that they should say so, because the IS of the IWL upholds a position that is contrary to what they defend. That is what a debate is.

Which is the central aspect that the British comrades disagree with? And we discussed it in England. The comrades say, “In Serbia we cannot be in Milosevic’s military camp”. They say – and they have put it down in writing – that we could have been in that military camp if Milosevic were not a murderer.

They said here that any policy that reinforces that military camp (sending weapons, etc) would be ridiculous, for this aid would be used to slaughter Kosovar masses. This has nothing to do with our position.

Things must be clear, and I think it just great that Martin Ralph should say that he is against the second declaration of the IWL. We believe that the comrades have problem here. When the war becomes a fact, they say “we are against the bombing raid”. Yes, but they are not for defeating those who are bombing. Things are concrete. In Serbia, to refuse to demand weapons – be it for the government or for the masses – is the same as refusing to reinforce Yugoslavian military camp. And that means not to be for the defeat of the NATO forces by the Serbian army. Whether we like it or not, that is the way things are.

The comrades point out correctly that any policy of sending weapons might have meant that these very weapons could have been used to slaughter the Kosovars. They are right; this was the danger. But was it the main danger? No, it wasn’t. The main danger is that the NATO could win the war. And that is precisely what happened.

From this point of view – bearing in mind that the Falkland represented a different reality – it was an extremely serious mistake to have placed ourselves in the military camp of Galtieri. Because the weapons that we demanded could be used – and were used – not only workers in general, but also our own comrades who were in the military dictatorship’s jails and concentration camps. And what did we do? The comrades who were imprisoned volunteered to go and fight as part of the Argentine army against the British army. And if we had been in Serbia, we should have done the same. We should have volunteered, organise armed pickets and be in the army to confront the NATO. Demand arms from everybody: Russia, China, demand anti-aircraft weapons. Let the government say no. Let the government capitulate. But we would have carried out that policy. So there is a big controversy that we have with the comrades.

The second position in this controversy is the one sustained by the comrades from the Liaison Committee (CS/PT/GOP) from Argentina. They wished so hard to be consistently anti-imperialistic, that they got completely lost for they did not identify the two

wars. Analyse your policy. You got stuck with the policy of Stalinism on the Kosovo issue, and with the policy of imperialism after their victory. I am talking of the policy, not of the intentions. You got stuck with Stalinism for all the reason that the comrades have already mentioned and that you have not answered. You just say that you are in the military front with Milosevic and full stop. But Milosevic had two fronts. One of them was against the NATO, and here we agree. But 80% of his troops were in the occupation front in Kosovo, and you say that you were there in that front.

>From our point of view - a very progressive process took place at the end of the war. It was the desertion of those soldiers in the Serb Army who refused to go and fight in Kosovo. If we had been there, we would have been the champions of this process of desertion. We would summon the soldiers to turn their weapons against the NATO, but the mainline would still have been Out of Kosovo. And as things are concrete, there were militants in this military front confronting and killing Serb soldiers. There can be no doubt about the fact that we would have been on that side, killing Serbian soldiers arm in arm with the Kosovar people. We were not in the military camp of the Serbs, not in Kosovo.

We demanded weapons for Kosovo, and that was a battle aimed not only against Milosevic. It was – as we can see now – a battle against the imperialism, too. And why are you now stuck to the policy of imperialism? Imperialism has always been against the independence and – just as you were – they were against arming the Kosovars. But this was not all that clear at that moment. The problem is now, once the war is over. The great concern of imperialism is how to disarm the Kosovars. And what is your policy? It is hard just to shut up. All the world mass media are discussing this problem. And what do you say? We are consistent with our previous policy. We pose a very simple demand: “No to the disarmament”. Can you really say, “No to the disarmament”? How could that be, if you have always been against arming them in the first place?

“The war is an example of the process of imperialist recolonisation”

Extracts from the contribution by Zezoka, of the Editing Board of the International Courier and of the PSTU of Brazil

«I am going to refer to an issue that seems to me very important and decisive for the political armament of the International in the forthcoming period of time: the recolonisation and its consequences for our policy. To begin with I wish to point out that the main concern is not the words, but the attempt to describe an aspect of reality and to draw conclusions.

What we are saying in the text “Conclusions...” is that we must bear in mind that this discussion has a lot to do with previous works written on the crisis of neoliberalism and our political orientation and that the war proves these characterisations correct. Obviously, there have been new facts before the war, and that it is not only the war that proves that imperialism has made headway in the pillage. This was evident even at the beginning of imperialism. It is there among the five characteristics described by Lenin: the sharing out of the world by a handful of powers and great corporations, the pillage of the countries, of the raw materials, the looting of the markets.

The problem is that, precisely because of the nature of the world economic crisis – the crisis of neoliberalism, which is not only an economic crisis, but also political one – imperialism has redoubled its attacks; it has started to take steps to subjugate the nations. It is an international project to try and avoid that the crisis should penetrate the great imperialist centres, particularly the USA. Here is just some skim reading of Latin America. A lot is being said lately about “anchoring” the national currency to the dollar. Menem says that he will put an end to Argentine currency, that it has already been dollarised, so it is time just to take the step of beginning to use the dollar.

Bulgaria has already been “anchored” to the Deutsche Mark. Russia, who has so far been independent, is now a country-member of the IMF and its government, on the eve of the war



travelled to discuss with them what was to be done.

What the imperialist forums are now discussing is that the world should be divided into three areas, each one with its currency: gold, dollar and yen. The dollar would embody all Latin America. Gold would extend its rule up to Eastern Europe and the adjacent regions and the yen would stay in Asia. In other words: there is a policy being carried out that has advanced till it occupied areas previously not occupied, and has imposed a degree of submission on the non-imperialist countries that had been nowhere to be seen lately. This is what we give the name of recolonisation to. And I insist: this process is not only economic but also political and military.

So the, let us see if this process is real or not, and whether it is or it is not getting deeper and deeper. First, let us see the Balkans and, for accuracy's sake, I would like to make an adjustment here on the nature of the war for some comrades have challenge this part in Cap's report

here. It is obvious that this latest NATO intervention has plenty to do with preventing something that might have become to the armed struggle for self-determination and Milosevic's policy. But it would have been a partiality to say only that, because there is the question: what was the imperialists' plan when they decided to intervene? I don't mean to say, “when they unleashed the war”. What is written in the Rambouillet agreement? Let us remember that the war was unleashed when Milosevic refused to sign the Rambouillet agreement.

The agreement says, among other things, that Yugoslavia had to become a free territory for the UNO and NATO troops, and – what is

more – that no soldier who committed any crime could be tried by Yugoslavian tribunals. That is to say: had this protocol been, the occupation of the area by the NATO would have been accepted. There was an article in the newspaper El País, written by George Soros, the great imperialist investor. Its title is an eye-opener: “Open up the Balkans”. Open them up for whom? It is not only for the Kosovo occupation troops. It means to open the frontiers of these countries to economic investments ruled by the Deutsche Mark now and gold later on. Another proposal to safeguard free governments, free mass media, free access to products through putting an end to the Customs Offices. All this in exchange for an aid which would be used to rebuild a capitalism that has been half-wrecked in these countries.

Well, this is what we mean when we talk of recolonisation. We are working out a general characterisation, which does not mean that everything will be just the same, that Nicaragua would be the same as Russia, or that

China would be like Brazil. We are talking of an imperial policy that is being carried out internationally. That is why we are talking of Latin America, of Russia, of the Balkans. This does not mean that there are no contradictions inside imperialism or that now imperialism is all united. They are all united around one issue: they want to share out the world among them. But they do have a problem about deciding who keeps the lionine part of the treasure. There is no unified stand point on that between USA, Germany and Japan.

At the same time they were all intervening in the Balkan war, united round the NATO, their contradictions in the commercial terrain continued existing. The example of the banana has already been mentioned, and there is another, which is even political. The WOC – World Organisation of Commerce – so eagerly built as from the GATT and that is supposed now to renew its leadership, is in crisis because there is confrontation between the American candidate and the

candidate supported by part of Europe and Japan. One is a Thai, the other is from New Zealand. It is to see who will head the great gamble of the millennium that is being prepared for the end of the year and where millions are at stake. There is no unity about this at all. Quite the contrary is true. And the clashes seem likely to increase. This, however, does not eliminate the agreement they have about the Balkans, about the opening of Latin America, to bust the Customs barriers of peripheral countries, and so on.

It is important to remember the guideline to arrange our policy at international level and also in each one of the sections. It is not a coincidence that PSTU should have used the guideline of “Out with Cardoso, Out with the IMF”. It is because we are so fully aware of the role that Cardoso is playing as an agent of the IMF. Something similar is happening to the comrades in Russia, who in their latest texts link the “Out with Yeltsin” to “Out with IMF”. This anti-imperialist

guideline, just as the phenomenon it responds to, is not only economic and not only military. It may become manifest in some places as a guideline against a military intervention, as in Colombia, for example, where the DEA is already acting and it may appear any moment now in Brazil or in Argentina. The guideline is against the economic and political domination, against the agreements. In some other places it may be against commercial agreements, such as NAFTA. In other words, it is a comprehensive concern that is transformed into political orientation, evidently not to stay with anti-imperialism but to – stemming out of this guideline – build a transitional programme towards power. If we do not begin with this guideline, we shall miss the front row of the anti-imperialist battle and this place will be taken up by other forces. This term, therefore, responds to the necessity to have this political accuracy and this is why it is the first element of our political thesis.

“The contradiction between the internationalisation of the production and the national states is becoming more acute!”

Extracts from the contribution by Jonas Potyguar, from IS and from PSTU – Brazil

«I disagree with what comrade Rob Menzies said here about the concept of recolonisation. If I understood correctly, the comrade has said the following, that imperialism would not dare to revive the colonial order for fear of an all-out anti-colonial mass revolt. I think this assessment is all wrong because we are in the middle of a process that engulfs the two issues mentioned by Rob. I mean that we are in the middle of a process of recolonisation of a major part of the planet – principally the peripheral countries – and we are in the middle of a process of mass revolts which, to varying degrees respond to the attacks that come together with this recolonisation.

Afterwards the comrade says that this process of recolonisation could be found only in Kosovo, because in this case the foreign occupation troops were already there in the country. What

is interesting to see is the fact that this war in Yugoslavia has been worked with all the orientation that this recolonisation reflects. That is precisely why: it is a process in which the classes confront each other and the Yugoslavian war was a laboratory, it was part of this recolonisation process that comes from before.

It was in this war that – for the first time – the NATO appeared as an offensive force. For the first time, too, the ideology according to which the rights of the “international community” are superior to the rights of national sovereignty was put into practice. This process of recolonisation and the way it asserts itself in each situation is sketching the confrontations between classes and segments of classes. It is not yet a finished process.

The essential problem is linked to the central contradiction of our

imperialistic epoch: it is the contradiction between the internationalisation of the production and the frontiers of the national states. This contradiction cannot be solved within the framework of capitalism. That is because capitalism needs to have national states to safeguard and defend private property of the means of production. This is common knowledge, at least among revolutionary Marxists.

What is the new element of this old contradiction? There is a powerful internationalisation of the production that became known as “globalisation of economy” and, at the same time, the number of countries that control this imperialist process is decreasing. It is dominated by three great imperialist states – USA, Germany and Japan – which are, in their turn, to serve 200 great trans-national corporations, which dominate the world economy

and all the money in the world. And it is the money that makes the world go round.

These 200 great corporations come from suffering a process of crisis since 1968, which is when the post-war boom came to an end. Afterwards, in the 80s, there was “the crisis of the debts” in the peripheral countries, and this flowed into what is now known as “globalisation”. This means the subjugation of the world by these 200 corporations who buy or occupy all the spaces because of the degree of the world economic crisis. In our understanding “globalisation” is a synonym for recolonisation. This is to be understood not only as the loss of national sovereignty, but also a brutal exploitation of the labour force of the semicolonial countries – and even in their own countries – by imperialism, uneven commerce, control over the sources of financing. This is not a minor point since the “emerging countries” are busy searching all kinds of possible forms of incentive to lure foreign capitals. All this is a set of elements that form part of this process of recolonisation.

Which is the contradiction posed in this process? Imperialism and those 200 great corporations need to have a control, a better co-ordination of their international institutions such as the NATO, the UNO, the IMF, the WOC, etc. The problem is that the constitution of these international organisms, the internationalisation of these institutions happens in a very base, mean way, at the service of three imperialist states and of the great transnational corporations. Take the European Union, for example. The possibility of unifying Europe implies the subordination of the European continent to Germany. This creates contradictions and confrontations even with the other imperialist sectors.

The contradiction between the internationalisation of the production and the national boundaries, immerse in the different paces needed for the constitution of those international organisms, this is what will determine the dynamics of the world situation and exacerbate the class confrontations of the different sectors inside each class and make this fundamental contradiction of our times extremely

acute.

Just to get an idea of all this, it is enough to see what one of the commissions of the American Congress voted on the issue of dollarisation of the peripheral countries. This commission resolved that the dollarisation of the economy of peripheral countries was positive because it allowed for financial stabilisation of those countries, but it meant that three conditions had to be met. The first one is to totally abolish the national currency. You know that national currency is one of the symbols of sovereignty of a country. The second condition is that the country that accepts dollarisation cannot declare war on the USA. Clever guys, aren't they? They say, “I'm going to steal everything, but you cannot kill me”. The third condition is a constant supervision of the country that accepts dollarisation by the government of the USA. This is the colonisation of the peripheral countries, and this is what is being done. The process is not complete yet. We are half way through this attack, but Argentina is a good expression of this process of recolonisation.

This process of recolonisation is an extremely violent attack on practically all the countries of the world. This will intensify – it already is intensifying – the situation of class struggle and confrontations all over the world. It will emphasise wars, insurrections, uprisings, struggles, and general strikes. And these will not be simple struggles where it will be easy to identify: on this side we have the revolution, on that side we have the counterrevolution. Just have a look at the situation in Iran and how complicated the situation there is. They have a tough line sector – which in 1979 used to say “death to imperialism”), they have a pro-imperialist sector that is now governing and who pushes forward for the reforms and the opening towards the “west”. And then there are the students, who marched in supporting the pro-imperialist, pro-reforms sector but they wound up by splitting away from that sector for not giving support to their demands. Everything becomes very complex, because those colonising attacks generate complex

processes between the classes and inside the classes. Anyone, then, who may wish to find smooth paths for political orientation will be frustrated.

The comrade from the Dominican Republic is right when he says that we are lagging behind with the comprehension of this process. Where I do not agree with him is when he says that since there is a process of recolonisation, there is a process of defeat in the mass movement and of change in the co-relation of forces that favours imperialism. I do not agree with such mechanic and lineal approach that an advance in the recolonisation determines a relation of forces that is unfavourable for the mass movement, because loss of conquests does not determine the co-relation of forces. Argentina is being re-colonised in all its aspects and there is class struggle situation that is more favourable than before.

To sum it up, the discussion on the re-colonisation is decisive for practical purposes for the International and for each one of our sections. In the first place, because this issue is not yet part of the everyday experience of our countries. The conception that there is no chance at all to find a solution for the crises of our countries if it is not by breaking away from imperialism must be clearly understood and transformed into clear demands for agitation and propaganda.

Secondly, our parties must fight so that the working class should become the main axis of the leadership of these anti-imperialist processes, because this is the only way to make sure that these processes may lead to a breach from imperialism. This leadership will be obtained disputing it against nationalist, petty bourgeois, and guerrilla leaderships who will try and lead the movement astray.

And thirdly: no revolutionary organisation will turn into a mass leading organisation unless it acts as from this anti-imperialist guideline and linking other elements in order to become an international mass leadership.”

“The turn to the right by the leaders gives room for the building of revolutionary parties”

Extracts from a contribution by Ze Maria of the PSTU, Brazil

The first issue I wanted to refer to is the debate that took place during the International Conference of the PSTU. It has a lot to do with the consequences of the war on the world situation. The war ended with a very important victory of imperialism and the consequences of this fact affect not only the Balkan region, but also the rest of the world. And yet, in spite of the importance of the defeat, it did not generate a change in the relationship of forces that we had up to that moment.

The crisis of neoliberalism – which we have been analysing for some time now – and its consequences, not only keep on being there, for the victory of imperialism did not manage to reverse it, but it is getting worse. And this discussion is extremely important. It is linked to the re-composition of the workers’ movement that is taking place all over the world. The crisis is still there and two fundamental expressions. On the one hand, it is expressed inside the very gestation of the neo-liberal model, the economic crisis and the political consequences that this fact has generated, a crisis that has engulfed the Asiatic south-east, Russia, Brazil. This is the crisis that has caused an ever-increasing instability in the international economy.

On the other hand, it is also seen in the great strikes in France, ’95, in the intensification of the resistance struggles of the workers in the different regions of the planet that start taking place as from that fact; of the struggles of the workers who stand up against the consequences of the implantation of the neoliberal model all over the world. This means they stand up against what the IS calls re-colonisation. This re-colonisation has its economic, political and military aspects, as we have seen during the war. It also has its ideological aspect. As the crisis becomes deeper and deeper, the need to exploit increases. This in turn generates a reaction and causes struggles in all the regions of this planet.

I believe we have to go deeper into this discussion, because it will affect the building of our sections.

What is the situation that is emerging? We can see it not only in Europe but also in Asia with all the struggles that have taken place in Korea, Indonesia also in South Africa. The comrades inform about struggles against privatisation in Bolivia, Brazil and Germany. In other words: it is happening in diverse parts of the world. We can see the workers react

against concrete, those where the colonising offensive is crystallised in concrete aspects of people’s lives. And as the crisis of the neoliberal model gets worse, and as the struggles become more violent, we can see another trend: it is an ever increasing incorporation of leaders of the workers’ movement into the support for regimes established in those countries. Consequently, these leaders become more and more obviously the allies of the implantation of re-colonisation.

Here, in Brazil this has a very concrete and important expression: the integration of the leaders of the CUT and of the Metallurgic Trade Union in the ABC. Their participation with the main corporations of this planet – the car producing factories – to the implementation of the plans is a fact. This leaves plenty of room for us. This is very important, because the combination of these two elements – the intensification of the exploitation and that provokes workers’ uprisings, and the integration of the traditional leaderships – have made sectors of the workers to complete their experience with these organisations and with these leaderships, and that leaves an open space for the left.

This takes place as much in the trade union sphere as in the political one. The strengthening of a movement to the left of the traditional leaders that has been taking place lately in the CUT is an expression of that. The idea of taking part in the CTA is an old discussion we have had with the comrades from Argentina. There were thousand of representatives in this latest CTA congress of the CTA, and in spite of all the problems that CTA may have, it is an expression of this process of reorganisation. The movements of trade union re-composition that emerge in Europe – in Germany, in France, in Spain with the Critics of the Workers’ Commissions! – with all the deformations that these movements, and especially their leaders may have – they are also an expression of this re-composition.

I have been talking to comrade Namibia about South Africa. He told me that inasmuch as the COSATU was getting more and more integrated into the support for the CNA administration, the opposition segment inside the COSATU grew and became stronger. In the USA: the emergence of the labour party, with all its limitations, is also an expression at a political level of this process.

I should even say – taking things

in their due proportion – that KOORKOM and the development it has had, and the prospects it opens for the international retrenchment of revolutionary organisations also expresses the political aspect of this process. The crisis of the most traditional political apparatuses is just another proof of the same thing. The crisis of the Greens in Germany expresses the same thing. And not only the Greens, for in Germany there have also been segments of the PSD who marched against the NATO war, and the PSD is a ruling party there.

This is a decisive process. We shall only be able to make headway in the building of each one of our parties and of the International if we are capable of providing the right policy for this process of re-composition that is taking place in the trade unions and in the political aspect, if we know how to intervene presenting a programme and concrete policies for the confrontations that are taking place in all those countries. Another condition is that we must be able to produce effects in this process of re-composition at the two levels, the political and the trade-union level, if we know how to work with all our limitations but having a programme and an activity that might allow us to attract the most progressive sectors towards a consistently revolutionary policy. This should be the main concern for our parties and our International.

1 CC.OO. – Comisiones Obreras; Traditional central trade union confederation linked to the CP – Translator’s comment





Pakistan

Farooq Tariq:

“In general the awareness of the masses is against the system, but it is being pushed towards fundamentalism”

On the 21st of July, during the IWL-FI World Congress, Farooq Tariq, Secretary General of Labour Party of Pakistan delivered a comprehensive lecture about his country. He spoke about the war with India for Kashmir, of the historical incapacity of the bourgeoisie to solve the basic problems of the population and of the brutal oppression of women. Farooq also spoke about Pakistani political organisations and about his own party which, with a Trotskyist programme and policy, is growing within the workers’ class.

“To begin with, I’d like to thank the Congress for the opportunity of speaking about the situation in Pakistan and of all the southern region of Asia. As you know, Pakistan and India have been fighting each other for Kashmir for months now. Kashmir is a small region between the boundaries of the two countries. The population is 70% Muslim, 15% Hindu, and the rest is divided between Buddhists and other religions. It is fact that the Kashmir mass movement has been fighting for their national liberation and against both, India and Pakistan. In 1947, when both these countries achieved their independence from the British Empire, they forced Kashmir to be

either under the rule of India or of Pakistan. It seemed fitting that religious denomination should be decisive in this matter. As the majority was Muslim, they stayed in Pakistan. But the Hindu ruling class of Kashmir unilaterally declared that, in spite of all, Kashmir should be part of India. In 1948, the Pakistani army invaded the region in

order to drive it back to Pakistan.

After the invasion, there was an armistice and the region was divided between the Pakistani dominion and the Hindu dominion. In 1965 and in 1971 two more wars were fought between the countries. But it was not



till the 80s, when a mass movement in demand of national demands broke out, that the struggle for the liberation of Kashmir acquired a great importance. But the Pakistani ruling class has always been trying to transform this national liberation struggle into a religious struggle. Their effort gained new strength after the Taliban victory in Afghanistan in

1996.

The Taliban is a fundamentalist guerrilla who seized power and has been ruling Pakistan for four years. After their victory, some of its members and sympathisers went to Kashmir to try and lead the struggle

for their liberation. These are known as mujahidin. These Islamic militants have the support of the intelligence service of the Pakistani army. In these last ten years, the routine of their actions in Kashmir changed, and they would go in and out of the territory. On June 25th, 700 of

these guerrillas managed to occupy an area of 15 square km inside Kashmir. The Pakistani ruling class, seeing the difficult political situation in India – where the Prime Minister lost control of Parliament and his group is accused of corruption – decided to advance. In the latest elections in India, the Nationalist Party became majority

and, for the first time, seized the leadership of the country. They saw that the revitalising of nationalism in the country a good excuse to shift the situation at home to a war against the mujahidines in Kashmir. Between May 25th and June 11th, India lost 1 100 soldiers. 600 Pakistani military men and 400 mujahidines were also killed.

On July 11th, after meeting Clinton, the Pakistani Prime Minister declared a cease-fire. Both countries have been testing nuclear bombs: India did so on the 11/05/98 and Pakistan on the 28/05. But let us see the actual facts about the so-called “nuclear powers”.

Misery, high death rate and illiteracy

The per capita income in Pakistan is \$340 and in India 320. India is home to 22% of the world population, but it produces barely 1% of the world production. Life expectancy in this region of Asiatic Southeast, including Pakistan, is 48 years. Barely 30% of the Pakistani can read and write. About 50% of the children suffer from malnutrition. 260 million people have no access to health service, and 337 million have no drinking water. The region as a whole has 1 000 million inhabitants. Two thirds have no basic sanitary services, and 400 million suffer from hunger every day.

It is absolutely evident that the ruling classes of India and Pakistan have failed to solve any of the elementary problems of the population. There has been no industrial revolution; there is a sort of feudalism and tribalism in the whole region; there is no real democracy and the nationality issue has not been solved. Fifty-one years after independence has been declared, the situation in India and Pakistan has not made any headway. In all these years we have seen all kinds of governments in both these countries: military dictatorships, liberal democracies, nationalism, etc. All of these experiments fell

through.

Stalinism

In spite of all this, the left has not been able to consolidate. The Stalinists, for example, who once had mass influence, are completely bound to the ruling classes. During the recent war between India and Pakistan, when our party pronounced itself against both bourgeois and for the right of the Kashmir masses to chose where to be, the famous ICP



Cover of the Labour Party magazine

(Indian Communist Party) not only backed the Hindu domination, but took a stand to the right of the ruling party. They went as far as to demand medals of honour for the Hindu soldiers killed in Kashmir as martyrs of the motherland!

Genuine Marxist forces have been unable to gain influence in this process. But there was a moment when it happened. Influence by the Bolshevik Revolution, the ICP reached mass influence in a series of regions. This was between 1921, when this party was founded and the 30s.

The founders of the ICP were leaders of 70 trade unions and a number of mass movements against the British domination. The British imperialists got so scared, that in the mid-30s, they banned this party. By

that time, however, the ICP had already been influenced by the Stalinist ideas of socialism in one country. For example: it was these cadres who acted as messengers of the guideline of the Communist International that led the Chinese revolution to defeat.

In spite of these Stalinist ideas, they kept on growing in India, for they were seen as fighters against the British domination. But ICP's greatest sin was to accept – after the II World War, and after the withdrawal of Great Britain – the division of the country based on religious criteria. The Pakistani ruling class took advantage of this fact to justify the division into two countries. Things got so bad that even the ICP itself got divided by a religious boundary: the Muslim had to go to Pakistan, where they founded the PCP, while the others remain on the Indian side and formed the ICP.

That is why the PCP, created in 1947 – has been unable to make any headway. They defended the theory of revolution by stages, always on the look out for progressive bourgeois with whom to act. In India they thought that the Congress Party, who dominated the country for years, was the party of progressive bourgeois revolution. In Pakistan they thought the same first of the Muslim party and then of the Party of the People.

The bourgeoisie

There is no progressive bourgeoisie. There have never been any bases for a revolution by stages in the Hindu continent. When we got inspired by Trotsky's ideas against the revolution by stages and a progressive bourgeoisie, we were accused by the Stalinist of being CIA agents. The Pakistani experience has been sufficient proof of the bourgeois incapacity of fulfilling any progressive task. There have been great expectations about Zulficar Ali Butho, who – in 1976 – formed the Progressive People's Party. Let us remember that the 60s and 70s were

the years when the bourgeois of colonial and semicolonial countries often took pride in using the name “socialist”. Calling yourself a socialist was in fashion. So Butho used socialist demands in order to divide the mass movement against the dictator Ayub Khan. The military dictatorship lasted for 25 years, and there were many mass movements against it. Within these movements, Butho became a popular leader.

After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, Butho was the Prime Minister and at the beginning he introduced some reforms in education and nationalised 30% of the industry. But as from 1974 this turned into a counterreform. In 1977, after a coup by the reactionary sectors against Butho,

another dictatorship was enthroned in Pakistan and it lasted until 1988. This was the time when we – in exile – got in touch with Leon Trotsky’s ideas. The Stalinist left in Pakistan was almost entirely pro-Moscow. The Progressive People’s Party continued in opposition to the military dictatorship,

and when Benazir, Butho’s daughter, returned to Pakistan in 1986, millions came out to welcome her. In 1986, the main slogan of the masses was, Benazir is back, and so is revolution. But actually Benazir was a direct agent of American imperialism who was coming back to try and pacify the mobilisation.

In 1988, when the military dictatorship came to an end, she took over from 1998 till 1990, and that was the second government of the People’s Party. Actually, it was a government of reforms against the workers, of privatisation, of attacks on the social rights. She lost power

in 1990 and Muslim conservatives took over; she returned between 1993 and 1995. Since then the Muslims have been in power. None of the so-called “democratic” governments have been able to complete the five years in power in these last ten years. There have been seven Prime Ministers in ten years. And in India there is about to be the fourth general election in seven years. This goes to prove how fragile the bourgeois democracy in the region is.

But, on the other hand, this incapacity of capitalism of granting any concessions has allowed for a fast growth of Muslim fundamentalism. These trends acquired a great strength after the Iranian revolution and the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. Fundamentalist took up



Oppression moves women to the street

many of the left banners. They call themselves “revolutionaries” and overtly declare the opposition to American imperialism. They are against privatisation, talk against the neoliberal policy, against IMF and the World Bank. And they say they are not corrupt as the politicians of the old elite are. This radical way of speaking gave them an impressive force among both, the lower middle class and the workers. In 1998, for the first time the Nationalist Party took over on the basis of their anti-imperialist discourse.

There are about 100 religious

groups like that in Pakistan. And five of them can mobilise about half a million people whenever they wish to. Their popularity is growing fast. With Kashmir they reached the peak. They say that they are fighting for the “Shiny Path” of Islam. But actually this growth of fundamentalism is giving rise to more reactionary forces growing in the Indian subcontinent. And the collapse of Stalinism and of the former USSR was a blow to the conscience of many people as well as of the former Stalinists. They no longer want to be referred to as the left or socialist.

In general the awareness of the masses is against the system. Most people perceive the politicians as

being corrupt. Those last ten years have engraved upon the minds of most of the youth – and of people in general – that this system can bring no improvement, no better future. But the, what is to be done? That is why this conscience is being pushed towards the right, in the direction of a fundamentalist

conscience. Our party, the LPP, was founded in the midst of these contradictions.

Labour Party of Pakistan

We began in the 80s, in Amsterdam, as a small group of students and trade unionists. The initial idea was to issue a paper that could be sent to Pakistan, with a guideline hinging around the struggle against the dictatorship and a return to a democratic regime. The first number appeared in

November 1980. It was called Struggle. Simultaneously we got in touch with Militant.

Most of us were in the People's Party and dissatisfied with the policy of the leadership. We were the left wing of the People's Party. Our idea – somehow imprecise – was to change the leadership of the Party and to transform it into a left Party. That is what we called ourselves, but really we did not mean to defend a socialist movement. That is because back in Pakistan we had had a contact with the Stalinists, but they did not guide us anywhere. They gave us no guidance or study. They just used to tell us to read some books such as *Mother* by Maxim Gorki.

In the exile times we were looking for socialism, but there was nobody who could teach us what socialism was. We contacted the Militant due to a number of coincidences. In 1982, when we were about 70 exiled comrades, we became a section of the CWI. In the exile we grew quickly, because we were the best fighters against the military dictatorship. Many of us had quit our jobs to become professionals of the Party.

By 1986 we were the biggest left exile group to oppose Benazir Bhutto's administration. We were the first political group of exiles to return to Pakistan – for by then the dictatorship allowed that. Our first activity was entristm in the People's Party, which was correct during the dictatorship, for there were lots of illusions regarding this Party. People thought it was a revolutionary party that would solve their problems. At that time it was possible to recruit a lot of comrades from the People's Party for our tendency. But we carried entristm too far.

By 1990, we were 300 militants, 9 professionals, we had a monthly paper and three offices. But we still did not call ourselves a party. We just used to say we were a paper with three offices. In 1991, a new split took place in the Militant between Ted Grant and the present day CWI. We felt very unhappy about going on with entristm and we wanted to call for the building of an independent

workers' party in Pakistan.

In 1991 I was expelled from Militant for defending the end of entristm. I was the only one to defend this policy. Most of the group stayed with Ted Grant and we were left with nothing: no offices, no paper... All that we had built during 12 years now stayed with the majority. In 1992, with five comrades we once more started printing a new monthly paper and to build a new group. And we joined the majority of the CWI International headed by Peter Taffe. In 1993 we launched a public opposition known as Young Fighters. We were 27 comrades; but the youth we had launched were 800 by then.

We had not yet quite forsaken the tactic of entristm by then, and the International advised us not to break away completely from the People's Party. By the end of 1993, we decided in Pakistan that – no matter what the International standpoint was, we would rather cease that tactic and build an independent organisation. In 1994, 70 of us called for a conference that decided to launch a Movement of Revolutionary Struggle as an independent organisation. It is known in Pakistan as GIT.

Within a year the GIT grew to have 700 members. Between 1995 and 1997 groups and groups of fighters and former Stalinists joined us. In the first part of 1997 we made up our minds to take the big step forward and form a party. By May 1997, 129 delegates resolved to found the Labour Party of Pakistan. CWI proposed that the party should be called Justice Party. We had a long debate in our rank and file, and their proposal did not earn a single vote. Then we had disagreements about the strategy for the USA where they had expelled some comrades. Ever since then, the leaders of the CWI made every effort to expel our section.

We gave them every chance to do their best. We invited them to go to all our cells, to all the comrades, to explain their ideas, because we

saw that it was a good opportunity to train our comrades and let them draw conclusions as to the nature of the CWI leaders and their compulsive methods. They told us that, since we were growing fast they had to come over to Pakistan to educate us and teach us how to consolidate. But they only showed concern about this education after our Congress had taken a stand on the expulsion of the Americans. Our growth was developing since 1994, but they had never paid us long visits. And we were not quite sure what kind of education they were about to bring us. But, in spite of being quite aware of their intentions when they did come to Pakistan, we did not hesitate to open up and allow full contact with all the comrades.

It may be ironic, but it was precisely when we were at our best, when we were launching an independent party, our leadership saw it clearly that the CWI policy was to expel us. But we could not halt all this because of the crisis of the International. We were perfectly aware of the fact that the launching of the party and addressing the workers was a real, objective need."

Note: due to space limitations, the last part of Farroq's contribution and his answers to the questions posed by the Congress will be published in a future issue of the Courier.

“Women’s liberation is one of the major banners of the socialist struggle in Pakistan”

During his stay in Brazil, Farooq Tariq spoke to International Courier about one of the most pressing issues in his country: women’s oppression.

“Pakistan is one of those countries where many primitive traditions regarding women are still maintained. It is mostly women who are victimised by the maintenance of religious traditions in the name of Islam. According to this tradition, a woman is worth half of what a man is worth. There are many laws – mainly those passed during the latest military dictatorship (1977 – 1988) that really make a woman be worth half of a man. So woman’s liberation is one of main socialist banners in our country. Only very few women work outside of their homes; most of them stay at home. It is different in the countryside; there, they are forced to work.

But the proportion of women in the working class is very small.

Social traditions are very primitive, especially where women are concerned. For example, women have no right to marry who they want, but a man can have up to four wives. A woman cannot by herself start running a shop. It must be a man or at least two women. Women are not admitted as witnesses of crime, and in many



regions tribe traditions prevent women from voting. One of the Islam laws says that if you kill someone you have to pay a determined sum of money to the relatives of the victim. But if the victim is a woman, the killer will only pay half the amount. If a woman is raped, she has to have four witnesses to accuse the man. This means that practically nobody is ever punished for rape.

Women are often killed on

honour issues. If a woman decides to marry someone whom she had chosen, or to go out with a man who is not her husband, the man, or even the woman’s relatives have a right to kill her in defence of the honour of the family. This tradition is called karo-kari and has been used indiscriminately to murder women.

Last April, a woman was murdered in a lawyer’s office. She had been married for eight years, had four children and studies. During the last four years she had been living with her

parents for she could not put up with her husband any longer. She had to travel 10 hours to get to Lahore to get a lawyer in human rights, because she wanted a divorce and in her city she could get no lawyer. She was staying in a shelter, a secret place. Her parents, however, discovered that she had gone to look for a lawyer to get divorced. The called the lawyer saying they wanted to settle. The lawyer agreed and the mother went to meet

him and some gunmen went with her. They killed the woman, right in the lawyer's office. Her only crime had been to want a divorce.

We learned about that crime ten minutes after it had been committed and the party made a demonstration against the crime. The following day, about 200 comrades and activists demonstrated in front of the government building. For two hours we occupied the building and various comrades – women and men, myself included – were beaten by the police. But the following day we hit the headlines of the major papers declaring that we were not going to put up with any more of those crimes against women's rights.

At the university, women students cannot sit next to their male classmates. A couple of months ago, some girls were having tea together with a boy. The university is controlled by the Islam fundamentalists and they forbid men and women to sit together. For them it was a crime that these girls should be sitting there at the same table as men, having tea. So a group of fundamentalist leaders of the Islamic Youth started beating the boy. This has been a common practice these last years. The difference is that this time a group of women decided not to put up with it any longer. One of the girls contacted the party and asked us for help to fight the fundamentalists. A demo of about 80 women students was organised in front of the main office of the fundamentalist party. It was the first demo in that place in 20 years.

That goes to show that in Pakistan even the most fundamental rights have to be paid for with your life. That is why, one of our major tasks consists of developing a campaign in defence of the women's rights. It is through this campaign that we have managed to recruit women for the party. There are sectors of women organised in what is known as the Forum of Action for Women, that also campaigns for their rights. Our party has been taking part in these campaigns and

it has been one of the main grounds for recruiting women. A short time ago one of the main feminist leaders, who lives in a shantytown, joined us.

On the 8th of March, we issued a special number of our paper, dedicated to women's struggles. The party participated in all the rallies that were organised. We also made debates and other activities. Last year we made a special title on the rights of women in Pakistan and a poster, where a woman appears saying I am not a half. It was very well received. Most of the women in our party are workers, especially teachers. On the 10th of December, the International Day against Domestic Violence was celebrated. A NGO organised a demonstration of 2 000 women in Lahore. We took 400 women comrades.

In spite of the fact that most of the demands were against the religion, we did not pose it like this. We just said that these were primitive traditions maintained in the name of the religion. In the 60s, due to feminist movements, some conquests were achieved. One of them is that a man cannot marry for the second time without a written permit from the first wife. It is an achievement, because at least the woman had to be consulted. But during the military dictatorship, this and several other achievements were lost.

All the laws against women that were made during the dictatorship remained intact during the Benazir Butho administration. When she returned to Pakistan in 1986, hundreds and thousands of women went out to receive her. In 1988, when she took over, women had great expectations in her. But by 1994 it was all over. Benazir Butho is a bourgeois woman, and the women issue is closely linked to the class issue. It cannot be solved by a bourgeois leader. Even the NGO I mentioned before had bet on Benazir. But in 1997, when we ran for the elections, they changed their vote, and supported us. Tariq Ali's mother, who lives in Lahore, is a leader of an organisation

(Democratic Association of Women) and in 1997 she also took part in our rallies in support of our candidates.

In Pakistan, attitudes of discrimination against women are quite common also among the working class, even worse than among the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois women have more rights due to a higher level of education. There is also more awareness among the middle class women. The working class is the real victim of these traditions.

Within the party we are still discussing whether we are or are not going to form a feminine wing. There are arguments for and against this. But in these last six months, women have been meeting separately, for in this way they feel more at ease to discuss; especially the new women militants. And they formed a Women's Committee. One of our main leaders is a woman. She was a candidate in the general elections. It is absolutely abnormal that a woman should run for an electoral post. It is not forbidden, and neither is the right to vote, but it is unusual.

If we do not defeat the prejudice against women as well as those against the minorities, it will be difficult to make a socialist revolution. We need to make the workers become aware of the rights of the women, otherwise we shall not get them to have revolutionary ideas. We have many examples of comrades in our party, who has prejudices against women, but we managed to make them change their minds. Every year we organise summer camps and we insist a lot that the comrades should bring their families, mainly because women cannot go out. It is to these camps that many comrades brought their wives for the first time. It is hard work, but it is yielding crops.



The United States

***“The US left, in general, is in a bad state today...
Yet, paradoxically, there may be more socialists now than
ever before...”***

The political and economic situation of the US, the increase in trade-union and other struggles, and the importance of speaking openly of socialism were the main topics of Peter Johnson’s intense contribution. Peter is a member of the ITO (International Trotskyist Opposition), who attended the IWL Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity to greet this IWL Congress and to report on the situation in the US. The US is not only a very big country; it is also very complicated. I’ll describe the political situation, both because it is important in itself and because whatever US imperialism does will affect all countries.

The US produces about one-quarter of the world’s total output. So it’s interconnected with the world economy, which we discussed earlier. But it also has some specificities worth analyzing.

I’m not about to tell you the history of the world, but it’s necessary to look back a bit. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the US economy expanded relatively fast. Not as fast as the economies of Western Europe and Japan, but fast. During the early 1970s, the US economy bogged down. Productivity grew between 2.5 percent and 3 percent in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, it’s grown at half this rate. This difference may seem small, but it’s the difference between being able to raise living standards and not being able to raise them.

The US economy — like that of the rest of the world economy — went through three recessions in the past 25 years: 1974-75, 1981-82, and 1990-92. Right now, we’re seeing the last phase of an upturn



Strike in GM

in the business cycle. We can expect a recession in 2000 or 2001. But at this moment the US economy is still expanding. In the last quarter of last year and the first quarter of this year, the US economy grew at a rate of 4 percent. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in the last 25 years, and real wages have begun to grow for the first time in 25 years.

This creates a complicated social situation. On one hand, some sectors of the working class are beginning to feel an improvement in their living standards. On the other hand, the previous 25 years have done a lot of damage.

Inequality is the greatest it has ever been in the post-World War II period. For 25 years, 80 percent of the population have seen their living standards fall. With the excuse that jobs are available, the bourgeoisie has cut back social welfare. So, the poor “disappear.” What happens to them? The proportion of homelessness is the highest since the Great Depression.

The situation of the Black and Latino population is twice as bad as that of the white population, by any measure:

unemployment rate, poverty rate, infant mortality. Using the excuse of crime and drugs, the bourgeoisie has launched a campaign against the poor, especially Blacks and the Latinos. The US imprisons the highest proportion of its population of any country in the world. Russia and South Africa used to be our rivals at that, but now we’ve taken the lead.

Also, women’s and youth’s rights are under attack. The ideologists of the ruling class are proclaiming “family values.” Women and young people who defend their rights are attacked for undermining family values.

That is why the social situation

is complicated. On the surface, there's improvement. But below the surface are the effects of 25 years of capitalist crisis and attacks. The situation will get much worse when the economy turns down.

The bourgeoisie turns right

A few words on bourgeois policy. Since the 1980s, the bourgeoisie has turned to the right. Both major parties are bourgeois. The Republicans are openly the party of the rich and those aspiring to be rich. The Democrats claim to be the party of the people. But they've moved so far to the right that now they now openly defend the same neoliberal policies as the Republicans do.

But there are limits to this bourgeois turn. They have succeeded so well that, paradoxically, they have nowhere to go. They don't need to go further now, and if they try, they risk provoking the working class to fight back. This, in a sense, is the meaning behind the change from the Republican presidencies of Reagan and Bush to Clinton. A younger reaction, or reaction with a friendlier face.

In next year's elections, a Republican, George Bush, Jr., is likely to be elected president. The Democrats are likely to regain a majority in the House of Representatives. And then we'll be back to the "normal" situation in the US: the Republicans have the executive power and control the armed forces, while the Democrats complain ineffectively from Congress. This probably won't mean a major change in domestic policy, which shows how far to the right the situation has gone.

Internationally, US imperialism is very confident. A generation has passed since the Vietnam War, the economy is relatively good, and what used to be seen as the main threat to the US — the Soviet Union — no longer exists. US imperialism feels that its hands are free to shape the world as it wishes.

But US imperialism has weakness. It has to achieve its goals without loss of American lives. And it has to have "humanitarian" cover for its actions. Politically, this is still necessary. The American people will tolerate bombing a country into submission. But only if they can be convinced that this is done for the benefit those who

are being bombed — and only as long as no American lives are lost. A Vietnam-type conflict would still provoke a major political reaction.

This is what the US ruling class must bear in mind, as they try to impose their "new world order." This is their contradiction. They may attack an isolated country like Iraq or Yugoslavia, if they take no casualties. But that doesn't give them world control.

Revival of the labor movement

In the early 1970s, US workers were very combative and went out on "wildcat" strikes independently of the union bureaucracy. But the 1974-75 recession put an end to this. The bureaucracy wanted to return to the situation of the 1950s and 1960s, but the generalized crisis of capitalism meant that the bosses could not make concessions as before. And the bureaucracy was not willing to fight the kind of battles the workers fought in the 1930s. The bureaucrats began making concessions to the employers, which has undermined the unions.

The rate of membership in the unions has dropped from 35 in the 1950s percent to 14 percent today. The number of strikes has fallen sharply. The bureaucrats wouldn't fight, and the workers felt that strikes couldn't be won with this leadership. Until about two years ago, union membership and the number of strikes decreased from year to year.

Lately, this has begun to change. There has been a change at the top of the union bureaucracy. In 1995 a new AFL-CIO leadership was elected. Some of the younger and more dynamic bureaucrats had become convinced that the old leaders would drive the unions to extinction. They wanted the unions to organize more aggressively, to assert themselves politically — mainly through the bosses' Democratic Party — and now and again to go on strike.

But this change was important mainly because the ranks of the unions wanted a change, wanted to get organized and fight. This rank-and-file sentiment was seen in the 1980s and early 1990s in isolated struggles that were generally

defeated. For example, in the Hormel meatpacking strike in the mid-1980s, and the strikes in Decatur, Illinois, at Staley, Caterpillar, and Firestone.

There has been an increase in the number of strikes since then and — to a point — of the militancy of those strikes. The strikes have received considerable support from the working class and the population in general. The first strikes were supported mainly by the vanguard, the most politically conscious workers. But the 1997 strike at UPS and last year's strikes at GM were taken up by the class as a whole.

That doesn't always mean victory. For example, the Detroit newspaper workers have just celebrated the fourth anniversary of their strike. The strike was finally defeated, but the workers celebrated having fought for four years. The solidarity that surrounded the strike swept away 40 percent of the circulation of the two struck papers and all their profit. So the workers said, "They may have defeated our strike, but we destroyed their business."

There has also been a political change in the vanguard, and I mean the working-class vanguard, not students. The advanced workers are more political now than they have been since the early 1970s, and in a sense, since the 1940s. This is partly because the generation of the 1960s and 1970s is now leading the unions locally and, in some cases, nationally. And they are respected rank-and-file leaders, even if they're not union officials. There's also a new generation of workers coming into the factories and other workplaces, who are very angry and disillusioned about society as a whole.

The change in the vanguard can be felt in both layers of workers, the younger and the older. It's a shift to the left. It's not organized independently from the unions, but you can feel it when you go from one union to another, from one workplace to another. These are the people you can rely on to support the struggles of other unions and, often, the struggles of workers in other countries. You can count on them to oppose the policy of the union bureaucrats, to oppose the policy of the Democrats and the US government.

Most of them are quite skeptical about political organizations. Many of the older activists were in left organizations when they were younger and then quit. And the younger ones have a similar negative attitude toward the organizations their parents were in. They say, "It just doesn't work." But they're willing to take part in strikes and in the union oppositions.

The most important union opposition is that of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). They were the base of Ron Carey's movement and leadership. Carey involved himself in corruption when he appealed to friends in the Democratic Party for money to defeat Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. The government expelled Carey from the union, and Hoffa has been elected Teamsters president. But TDU still exists and is strong in some places.

The opposition in other unions is not as advanced as in TDU. In the auto industry there is a caucus called New Directions. I am a member of this caucus, even though I don't work in the auto industry. The United Auto Workers (UAW) is much more centralized than the Teamsters, mainly because the auto industry is much more centralized than trucking. The bureaucracy's tighter control — and its image of being less corrupt and more progressive than the Teamsters "old guard" — means that New Directions is less effective than TDU.

More and more socialists are being elected to union leadership. In Detroit, this has happened in five UAW locals. There's also been a change at the Saturn plant, where a leadership opposed to "cooperation" with the bosses was elected. The key issue in all these contests has been the cooperation between the union and the bosses. Local leaderships have been elected who say openly that they will not cooperate.

I don't want to exaggerate. The ranks aren't about to overthrow the union bureaucracy, but you can see a change in the rank-and-file when you look around.

The struggles of youth, Blacks and Latinos, women, and gays

There are important youth

struggles in the US. Anti-Racist Action (ARA) is a big movement against racism and fascism, especially among white youth, but also involving Black youth. ARA organizes demonstrations and puts out statements against racism. They also physically confront the fascists. Today there's nowhere in the US where the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan can appear without ARA and other counterdemonstrators showing up. Not even in the deep South.

There've also been initiatives to organize college students. Among the most important is the movement against "sweatshops" — superexploitation — in poor countries. Students have become aware of how and under what conditions Nike, Adidas, and other popular shoes and clothing are made.

Students have also organized to defend affirmative action. Since the early 1970s the US has had a policy to favor — up to a point — women, Blacks and Latinos, who have traditionally been excluded from schools and jobs. This is called affirmative action — action to overcome the effects of past discrimination. Bourgeois democracy says that everyone should be treated equally. But, given the real social conditions, to treat everyone the same would mean to discriminate in favor of white men. To a certain extent, the law has recognized that.

With the bourgeois reaction of the past twenty years, affirmative action is increasingly under attack. In California, Texas, Michigan, and other places, students are organizing to defend affirmative action.

There has also been a certain rebirth of the Black movement. During the 1980s the most militant Black resistance to racism took place under conservative religious leadership, particularly the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan. Young Black militants often identified themselves as Islamic. This parallels developments in other parts of the world. But lately there's been a revival of left-wing Black militance, including a national meeting called the Black Radical Congress. This is a very positive sign.

The women's movement is much

smaller now than it used to be ten or twenty years ago. But women and women's rights supporters still mobilize to defend abortion clinics when the religious right attacks them. And there's a discussion among young women, especially on campuses, about what feminism means to them.

There's also a relatively big lesbian/gay movement in the US, with a history of struggle against discrimination, antigay violence, and government neglect of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. This movement is not as large as it used to be ten to fifteen years ago, but it exists and is quite strong in some areas of the country.

The left and far left

The US left, in general, is in a bad state today, if we just take into account the number of people organized in left groups. Yet, paradoxically, there may be more socialists now than ever before, with the possible exception of the early 1970s.

Many people identify themselves as "socialists." There's the older generation — tens of thousands of people who 20 or 30 years ago identified themselves as socialists. During the 1980s and the early 1990s they saw no reason to say so publicly, but now they say it straight out. Among the youth, anarchism is the predominant ideology. But these youth don't have a clear idea of what anarchism is. They don't like any of the political tendencies they see, so they say, "I'm not this." Well, if you're not anything, then you're...an anarchist. But many of them also identify themselves as socialists.

This means that there's a possibility for a political crystallization and an organizational regroupment. It's not yet happening, but there are signs.

A nonrevolutionary expression of this is the Labor Party. It was formed in 1996 by relatively small unions representing perhaps a million workers. It is reformist party, but its program, by US standards, is quite left-wing. The Labor Party says its aim is to take political power, that is, workers should take political power. In the 1950s and early 1960s, to say this

would have meant bringing the FBI swooping down on you. But now this is part of the Labor Party program. And the reduction of the working day to 32 hours a week — not just the European 35 hours — and a minimum wage of \$10 an hour. Many Labor Party leaders are socialists, even if the party itself is not socialist.

But the contradiction of the situation is evidenced in the party's policy. The party has about 10,000 members, but its policy is not to run in elections. And yet, in today's conditions in the US, a party that doesn't run in elections is not a party. The union officials who are the Labor Party leadership also back the Democratic Party, because they think the Democrats are a lesser evil compared to the Republicans. Also, they don't want to split from the AFL-CIO, whose leadership supports the Democrats with all its might.

The situation prevents the Labor Party from competing with the Democrats. But that means that party can't grow substantially. The militants whom it might recruit say, "Call us again when you make up your mind to become a real party."

I'll now briefly describe the far left, although this might be too strong a term to use for some of the groups I'll name.

The Communist Party has about 1,200 to 1,500 members and is an old-style CP, relatively left-wing by current Stalinist standards. There's also a Gorbachevian split, of about the same size, called the Committees of Correspondence. Both organizations are reformist in their practice. Both are involved in the union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party. They help keep the unions tied to the Democrats.

Among the groups that might be called revolutionary socialists, the four biggest have about 300-400 members each. Two of them are Stalinist. The League of Revolutionaries for a New America (LRNA) is a descendent of a 1950s left split from the CP. The

Revolutionary Communist party (RCP) is the largest surviving Maoist organization in the US.

Two derive from Trotskyism. One is the Workers Word Party (WWP), an adaptation to Stalinism which split from the SWP in the 1950s. During the Yugoslav War, they refused to criticize Milosevic, arguing that our duty was simply to oppose US imperialism. We worked with them regularly in antiwar demonstrations.

Another relatively large group deriving from Trotskyism is Solidarity. Solidarity includes USec supporters, state-capitalists, and bureaucratic-collectivists — political heirs of Max Shachtman. They are not as aggressively anti-imperialist as the WWP, but their

about 25 comrades, concentrated in Detroit. We're able to carry out organized work in the Detroit area. Elsewhere our comrades are active as individual TL members. We have comrades in the UAW, the Teamsters, and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). We are members of the Labor Party and have offices in the Detroit branch. We also have comrades in the Anti-Racist Action movement and on campuses in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and San Francisco.

Our first priority is trade-union work. We work with TDU in the Teamsters and with New Directions in the UAW. We stand out among the other members of New Directions because we try to

maintain a clear political profile.

A comrade who visited here two weeks ago, was elected to the Executive Board of UAW Local 600, the most important industrial local union in the US. He and another comrade openly present themselves as socialists and distribute leaflet articles explaining

what socialism is and its relevance to workers and to the elections. This almost never happens in the US. Yet they've been doing it for years and getting between 3,000 and 4,000 votes in elections in a local union of 14,000. Now they've both won union offices saying they're socialists.

This is important. For a socialist tendency to crystallize in the unions, socialists need to begin identifying themselves and explaining their views. We need to avoid taking foolish risks, but we need to be open about our politics to win people over.



The bull, the Wall Street symbol

policies are generally better. During the war they were against the NATO bombing, but also defended the self-determination of Kosova.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has about 100 members. It used to be a very big organization, but it has lost most of its members. There are three other groups with about 100 members: the Spartacist League, another USec group called Socialist Action, and the US section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), which is called Labor Militant and publishes a magazine Justice. There are several smaller Trotskyists groups, including the Lambertists and ourselves.

The Trotskyist League (TL) has



Italy

The Challenge of building a Revolutionary Party

Franco Grisolia, a guest at the IWL-FI Congress, leader of the ITO (International Trotskyist Opposition) and of Proposta, Internal Trend of Rifondazione Comunista of Italy, gave a very interesting report on the political situation of his country.

“Italy is one of the members of the G7 (today, G8 after Yeltsin’s Russian was admitted), which is one of the world’s major groups of imperialist countries. It has a centre-left government whose head is Massimo D’Alema, who used to be secretary general to Left Democratic Party. D’Alema is the Prime Minister of this administration, and the party he represents is the main party of Italian left.

Within the framework of bourgeois domination, there is instability inside the main groups. These are: centre-right under the leadership of Berlusconi and centre-left previously under the leadership of Prodi and now of D’Alema, but there are many contradictions, too. Small parties of the centre pass from one block to another, a transformation of Italian political electoral structures, which started in the early 90s with the crisis of clean hands has never fully crystallised. So part of the old team of bourgeois political leadership, Christian Democrats and socialists, full-fledged right, hinging around Bettino Craxi. Well, there certainly is political instability in Italy.

We believe it to be instability in the political superstructure, and that obviously affects the relationship between classes, but it is not fundamental to the class issue. In our opinion this is a case of instability of the political apparatus of the bourgeois and it does not mean any instability of the bourgeois domination. Quite to the contrary, we believe that during the 90s, Italian imperialist bourgeoisie has completed important achievements. Specifically there is the admission to the Europe of Maastrich, which was not all that

clear at the beginning, for Italy was going through important structural problems, mainly debts and deficits that kept on impairing its chances of adopting a sole currency, of arriving at agreements, etc.

This was achieved through



Cover of the "Proposta" magazine

policies implemented by centre-left governments, particularly the Prodi administration that came before D’Alema and was based on a centre-left alliance that grew in the years of flexibilisation and privatisation. There were severe cuts in the benefits for industry, an attack on the pensions of the workers, and that meant victory for the bourgeoisie. All this was not without any reaction by the class, principally the one that took place in 1994, with riots similar to those that took place in France in 1995. There were very comprehensive strikes, in a way even more ample than the French one, though not as radicalised. Their epicentre was in the factories, which was in a way lacking in France, where it was the public sector who was most mobilised. In Italy both sectors moved, but the epicentre was in the factories. It was a moment of great radicalisation, when we spoke of a tendency towards a prerevolutionary situation. But then it abated due to lack of a leadership.

An element that explains this reaction, the main features of its development and its final defeat – not immediate, but as a part of a process – is the fact that it took place against the centre-right Berlusconi administration. This made the mobilisation easier, for the trade union apparatuses moved up to a point. Without risking a destabilisation of the government by means of a riot, they did jeopardise it on the parliamentary path. Finally the government fell, but it was not directly through the mass mobilisation.

This made things easier. But a year later the trade union bureaucrats granted technical support to the new government for most of the reactionary projects in exchange for a system of pensions that the workers’ activity had determined. This, together with some other victories of the bosses’ offensive, caused a great demoralisation in the workers’ movement; to a defeat that is not total, not frontal; it is partial. But actually it was that that made last year the year of the lowest since 1945 rate of struggles. Naturally, it is not the only indicator of the situation of class struggles, but we do believe, as Trotsky used to, that it is a central one.

It is our opinion that these last elections showed this negative situation within the workers’ and people’s movement. There has been a partial defeat of centre-left and the left – even the opposition left – in the European elections and also in the municipal elections. A segment of the working class did not shift to the right, but towards the abstention. Unlike what some spontaneists,

Maoists, that we have in Italy, we do not see it as a positive reaction, but rather the expression of passivity, demoralisation, because there is no shift towards the left. It is precisely that conception that says that everything is the same, so voting makes no sense, fighting makes no sense, for struggles lead you nowhere. The same goes for elections. Naturally we have to play the situation down, because it is just one aspect. It is not the most political people, the ones most linked to the trade unions who abstained. But we think it does express the difficulties of the situation.

The left in Italy

The main left wing party is the PSD (Left Democratic Party), the former Communist Party, which changed names in 1991. It occupies about 20% of the electoral scope, while the CP had up to 35%. We see it as a right wing social democratic party, with some features that drive it closer to the bourgeoisie. There are those bourgeois who see in it their point of reference for their policy, and not only in the economic sense, but also in general. But, in spite of its borderline position, it is still a workers' -bourgeois party. It has a social democratic character, but far to the right.

It comprises a centre-left coalition with many internal contradictions, particularly with a new party, founded by the former Prime Minister Prodi. It is the so-called Democratic Party, which obtained a lot of votes in the last elections: 9%. It has many conflicts with D'Alema's party about a superstructural issue, not about actual policy, the essential policy of the government. Because it was D'Alema and his party who produced an operation that led to the downfall of the Prodi administration towards the end of last year and to its substitution by the new D'Alema's centre-left administration. Naturally, these votes, this definitely bourgeois force, the Democratic Party, once in the European Parliament, joined forces with the liberals and not with the social democrats. The success of the other force, of a clearly liberal nature,

adds to the confusion and points out the negative character of the situation.

There are two smaller left wing parties; three, if you take the Greens into account. The greens have fewer than 2% of the votes, have been badly defeated in the latest European elections and are very busy discussing about what should be done. Now, the Party of Refundazione Comunista, who reached 8.6% in 1996, had dropped to 4.3%. It suffered a great defeat in these European elections. And then there is the Party of Italian Communists (PCI), which is a Stalinist party that split away from Refundazione Comunista less than a year ago, precisely because Refundazione shifted to oppose the centre-left administration. This party obtained 2% of the votes, which was quite good as far as they go. They celebrated it as a victory. As we can see, the sum of both is slightly over 6%, so from this point of view the defeat of the Refundazione cannot be explained by the simple fact that the Stalinist party – the PCI –exists and is part of the centre-left administration.

The Trade Unions

The three main central trade union organisations are CGIL, CISL and UIL. The first one is a large, traditional central organisation of the Italian workers which has always been under the leadership of the Communists and, to a lesser degree, of the socialists. Now it responds to PDS. The CISL has traditionally been a catholic trade union organisation, responding to the trade unions located in the centre of the stage. The UIL has traditionally been a right wing social democratic central organisation, which now also responds to PDS. Because the leaders of the central organisation joined the PDS due to the crisis of the former socialist party led by Craxi, it has been practically dissolved.

There are several smaller trade unions, which we call extra-confederate, because they are out of the three confederations. I must explain why I believe that there is a lot of confusion among the non-Italian comrades about the COBAS.

The COBAS, such as we knew them ten or twelve years ago, do not exist any more. It was a very short-lived phenomenon, which affected essentially some sectors, such as teachers and the non-teaching staff, and well, schools in general. There was a spontaneous mobilisation that got organised around these committees.

We are fully acquainted with this question because the main leader of this organisation was, for some time, one of the representatives of our organisation. This process has never crystallised as from that experience and the existence of a small sector of an ultra-Stalinist group that had, before that movement, built small trade unions using Moscow money, because they were in the World Trade Union Federation when CGIL left. They, together with 500 supporters, were in the Federation responding to the soviet guideline and building small trade unions that have grown a little now. But they are something altogether different. They are an ultra-Stalinist political creature that - in a way - reflects the disappointment of the workers with the big confederations. Some of them, the smaller, actually the best, use the acronym COBAS, but they are a trade unions split from small nucleuses that used to be with the CGIL and they do not express mass mobilisation. This is something important to understand.

The total amount of the extra-confederates is about 100 000 and the CGIL has about 2.5 million (I mean active, because a lot are pensioned off). The CISL has a million and the UIL has half a million. It is a very expressive sector, but they are tiny trade unions. They are not an expression of the mobilisation of independent masses of the extreme left. They are very split up. There are about a hundred acronyms, some of them reflect sectors, some are confederate, perhaps about 200 members in the whole Italy.

Refundazione Comunista

Refundazione is a split from the former Communist Party when it changed names in 1991. From this point of view, it is a political expression of the nature of the

former Communist Party. There was a great opposition, about 30%, and a minority split away giving rise to the Party of the Communist Re-foundation.

All the forces left of the PDS, and that includes most of the former Italian extreme left, joined them. Particularly a party called Proletarian Democracy that had a few representatives, and not more than 1.5% in the elections, though some effective weight. So it was not what people may have seen from abroad: just a split from the former Communist Party. It was a retrenchment. 30% of the active members and of the leaders do not come from the former CPI. And many of those who do, have had in 1968 and in 70 some activity in the extreme left and had returned to the CP in the late 70s. That is why we say that the process is much richer than just a simple split from the former CP.

We thought it extremely important to join this party, for it expressed a political re-composition of the Italian militant advance guard. This does not mean that the fundamental cadres in the factories joined them. Many did, but still the majority is in PDS and many more are independent. But as this was the political advanced guard, it grouped almost entirely there. That is why right from the beginning we fought for our admission there. In those days – 1991 – we were a minority in the Italian section of the USEC and we had independent life in spite of being the biggest centrist party. We were the ones who most insisted on going into the Refundazione, against the hesitating of the Pablist leadership who used to say that we were the New Left, and the others, the old ones. We insisted that we were not the New Left, that we were Trotskyists, and that we had to intervene where the bulk of the advanced guard whose positions were the nearest to ours was.

Finally we joined this centrist party will all the section. Naturally we were fully aware right from the beginning that the nature of this party was reformist, and that our only possible tactic was the same as our strategy: a political struggle. Because of the status that we have as a small minority of the USEC section,, the Pablists, we began a

battle inside the party. This led us to confrontations with the leading group of the Pablists who thought it better to avoid confrontation. They thought it was dangerous, that we would be expelled. They said we were sectarian, that it was necessary to wait for a social re-composition of the workers' movement, a better moment for the class struggle, etc. This discussion eventually led to a split.

As from 1991, we began to intervene independently, not abiding by the centralism of the section of USEC. As from 1993, we started publishing our paper and actually split away as an organisation. This was made official in 1994 and in 1995 the USEC World Congress ratified our exclusion.

What is the strategic aim?

What was the strategic aim when we split away in 1993? We focussed the discussion from two different conceptions: the organisation of a thousand, a party of ten thousand. There are great parties of over 100 thousand members, where 20 000 are active. We might think of a reformist party, workers-bourgeois, perhaps left reformist. As far as our party is concerned: at the beginning we were 35 and it is reasonable to think that – in quite a short period of time – we might recruit and consolidate several hundred, split away and build an independent Trotskyist organisation, the strongest of Trotskyism, etc.

The other possibility was to fight from inside, within the frames of a party that was complete, with its militancy, its cadres, its discussion and target at building a new party. Consider the perspective of a more ample time span, also more ample from the point of view of political contents and of organisation, and take the lead of an ample trend, take an advantage of a political occasion where this trend might split from the party.

Naturally not all the workers' advanced guard would give its support to this, but it would understand the meaning. They

would not say things like, "Well, the Trotskyist are splitting away for ideological reasons"" but rather something like, Well, they are splitting away because they do not share the policy of backing centre-left." It was because of this that we developed our activities around the contribution to political debates, the issue of Communism. That is because there was a discussion going on about what re-funding Communism meant, about the problems of class struggle. For example, in 1994, our battle was all about the perspective of a general strike for undefined time, until the downfall of Berlusconi. That's because the party sustained a position of the left backing the trade unions. Sort of: they struggle, they call for a one day strike, and then for another just a week later... well, we don't quite agree to that, but it's OK because we develop the movement.

We fought that battle at the party Congress in 1994. Finally a hazy sort of left was formed, of about 20%, with the Pablists, with a minimum base, which was – nevertheless – quite clear. We were the first ones to fight. They joined in later on. But it was a rather blurred sort of a congress for the representatives were not elected on the basis of documents. A region could vote the guideline of the majority, but chose good comrades responding to the minority. From this point of view, the 20% was slightly overestimated, because in the regions many left comrades, a minority as far as their political positions, were elected, because the others thought, "Fine, these are the comrades who go to the congress".

Proposta

By mid 1996 we formed our own organisation called Marxist Revolutionary Association *Proposta*. That is the name of the paper. There were 134 comrades. We kept up the struggle against the centre-left and the following year there was a double split in the minority: the centrist, spontaneist elements on one side. It was the end of 97. Precisely because they

were centrists, they tried to press Betinitti, leader of *Refundazione* - just when there was a confrontation with the centre-left - to split away. In this way - and within the framework of a confrontation with the right wing, too - the Pablists joined the majority and we were isolated, with a 7% in the National Committee.

Our split with the Pablists was a historic event, because it clarified the advanced guard of the party about what the differences were, and this is something that we also do through our press. But this was a necessary test for the comrades to understand why we are something while the Livio Maitan people were something else. Even with a very modest outcome - in my opinion - it would still be a victory, for we are now leading this opposition much more clearly. But it was not what most of the party expected, for in the end we summoned 16% of the congress, but all by ourselves this time, without the Pablists and centrists as in the previous congress. It did mean a few votes lost, but now they are real votes, because the regions vote after the debate, so it is not an electoral vote and the representatives are proportional. This means 16% of the real votes, about 20% of the active militancy of the party.

Four central issues

We made a document about this process. It has four central issues: 1) A balance sheet of the support given by the party to the centre left and its anti-workers implication. 2) A project of our own (the name of the document is *For a Communist Project*). The debate is on the nature of the government, the concept of hegemony and a battle hinging round the concept of general strike, shortening of labour day, salary increase, unemployment dole and the transformation of the anomalous collective agreements and irregular long term contracts. 3) The Communist project: the nature of capitalist crisis, opposition to neokeynesianism - which is the immediate proposal of *Refundazione*; the issue of the Soviet October project and the

reasons for its degeneration; women's liberation; the issue of the south of Italy - which is a specific issue; Transitional Programme, abolition of private property and the downfall of the bourgeois state. 4) Democracy and the class character of the party.

With this success, our organisation has now about 250 members. Before the congress we were 211. We grew a little, but not as much as necessary. We are the leaders of the tendency, and this means that the tendency is not univocal. There are small left groups. Ted Grant's people, for example, act negatively. They manipulate a lot, but they are a minority in the tendency. There are small local centrist groups, without much theoretical work, and many independent people, some of whom are our sympathisers, others generally revolutionary sympathisers. We have 7 members in the leading team, and two sympathisers in the party leadership of 10. Every time local leading groups of that minority join us, fully aware of what the main guideline of party building is - some of them do so with some insight into the Trotskyist theory while others only because of the struggle - it is because we are clear about these issues: the struggle of the party, its revolutionary character, etc.

We have decided at a meeting of representatives (by 60 votes of a small Maoist group and 5 abstentions, two of which came from Ted Grant, the old Militant) to transform the minority into an organised tendency - naturally, a tendency is not like an organisation such as Revolutionary Marxist Association - and to strengthen the co-ordination of our intervention in class struggle, issue a publication of the tendency - while maintaining our paper of the independent organisation - and for other activities.

What are our political prospects? The central topic is our relation with *Refundazione*, with the centre-left, for we still have contacts in practically all regions and in the local governments. Obviously, we are for breaking away from any relation. But that just goes to show the situation as

it is: the future of *Refundazione* in relation to the centre left is uncertain. It will be defined in the next years.

It is clear that in this rather negative situation of class struggle, of the defeat of the party - which was not demoralising, for there is more discussion than demoralisation in the party - we have recruited new comrades precisely in the weeks immediately after the defeat, for the new ones would say, "You were right". Like this a division would appear as something purely sectarian. If the party restores the opposition in the next stage, in the next tow years, we shall be reduced to a small organisation of a couple of hundred isolated comrades. We are not afraid of that, but we would miss an opportunity. On the other hand, if *Refundazione* retakes the path of agreement with the centre left, we think it might lead to a new government, once more the party supporting the anti-workers policy. Clearly there would be - in our opinion - conditions to carry out a split, the building of a new party, which would be more ample for the militancy in the *Refundazione* and the ample advanced guard of workers movement.

Summing up, we must say that all we did was possible because there was an ITO there and we did not act in isolation, in spite of being a small tendency. All this is, on one hand, linked to an international perspective, and on the other hand, it is part of the process of rebuilding the Fourth. Because we do believe that what is really important for us is not merely what we win - we expect to keep up with the building in Italy - but what this represents - and apart from being important and in spite of our smallness - as a useful element for the debate in the international Trotskyist movement tending towards the project of rebuilding of the Fourth"



Brazil

Left Articulation – PT¹ Brazil The importance of an international debate

Among the guests to the IWL we found comrade Walter Pomar of Left Articulation, an internal trend of the Brazilian PT. After greeting the congress, Pomar explained the meaning of the trend he is a member of. It is one of the most important left trends in PT today. He also referred to the role of PT in today's political situation in Brazil, their agreements and disagreements with the PSTU².

"I want to thank you for the invitation extended to the trend of the PT I am a member of to take part of this event. I am national vice-president of PT and militant of a trend called Left Articulation. Taken separately, our trend is today the most numerous left trend, which does not mean much. It is about 10% of the entire party. In some areas of the different social segments – such as the case of the students' movement – we have a weight equivalent to that of



PSTU. In the trade unions, however, our presence is very much below PSTU. In some other areas, for example, among the farmhands and in the suburban working class quarters, we have much more presence than PSTU. I am quoting these figures merely as a reference, so that comrades who are not from Brazil may have an idea of our size and importance. From the electoral point of view, evidently, being a tendency within the PT, we are quite significant.

Our tendency originated in a split of the old majority trend inside PT. We have no international links and our composition, from the point of view of the tradition of the socialist movement in Brazil is extremely

in Brazil, day after day the masses are more and more against the government

varies. We have comrades who come from different Trotskyist trends and others who come from what you call Stalinist parties. Our leadership is a "Zoo" of the Brazilian left; there are comrades from all over the political map. Two years ago we started a systematic policy of contacts with various international organisations. We are really willing to understand the international debate and to find our place in it.

In relation to the political discussion itself, we have quite a lot to agree to in the assessment that comrade Edu of the PSTU explained here. The main feature of the national situation is the deepening of discord

among the diverse bourgeois segments and – on the other hand – the growing dissatisfaction of the masses with the government. The great problem is that the left opposition has a policy that does not allow us to take full advantage of this situation. It is our opinion that if the leadership, particularly that of the PT, had a better tactic, more aggressive it could affect the situation considerably. Actually it could force the FHC³ administration to end its term before its time, which is 2002. There is a great risk that the political

polarisation of the country can be expressed through the polarisation between the different segments of the bourgeoisie, with the left parties acting as second line. This is a dangerous prospect, and highly probable. There is another option and the majority of the leadership of the PT is working for it. We also agree with Edu about another tactic. We think is essential to pose the struggle for power at the level of the self-awareness of the masses. It is, therefore impossible for us not to pose a demand about the government today. There isn't even the slightest possibility of challenging FHC administration's economic policy without challenging the continuity of the government itself. I have heard some criticism posed here that I can

also hear in the PT itself. There are those comrades who say that the level of the workers' self-awareness is so low that it does not allow for a demand such as Fora FHC⁴

>From the point of view of the method, there is no other way out but to formulate the issue of power in a way that can be understood by the masses. Because masses today can see power concentrated in the figure of the federal government. From the historical point of view it is useful to remind people of the fact that we did pull a president of the republic down at a time when the economic struggles were low. Fernando Collor de Melo was kicked out of his job. So Brazilian experience has taught us that it is possible – even if the economic struggles are low – for political struggles to thrive. There is one problem however, and it is the social composition of the riots. As Edu explained it, Fora Collor was a democratic, urban movement of people in general. It was not a class movement. Up to a point this was due to the fact that the CUT⁵ itself made no effort to move the grassroots workers. But the Collor episode proves that it is possible, even in a situation like the one we have now, through political struggle, to alter the relationship of forces in the country.

And to draw towards the end, about the international scope, we also have an assumption similar to that of the comrades of the PSTU. We are living in times of crisis, wars and revolutions to make it short. Obviously there are differences in the assessment of the speed with which events evolve. But as far as the general pattern, the general architecture is concerned, our opinion is very much alike.

There are, however three or four points on which we tend to disagree. One of them is about the balance sheet of the socialist experience in this century. We don't have, we don't adhere – as a tendency – to any consolidated form of assessment. It could be said that as a trend we do not have an organic overall balance sheet of these events. But the policy that we have developed points out that there are differences. Our position on Cuba is, for example quite different to that of the comrades.

We are not so concerned about stressing the struggle for national sovereignty, though we do consider it to be important. From this standpoint I have already expressed

my concern about the formula of "recolonisation". I shall try to explain briefly why. In Brazil, the defence of national sovereignty by the left, has always, sooner or later, led to a strategy of national liberation, leaving the socialist nature of the strategy of the organisations. And there is right now, in the left wing of PT, a very strong nationalist pressure, which makes it a point to say that it is a question of defending national sovereignty but from the viewpoint of socialism. This worries us, because the defence of socialism seems to slide back to the background while the nationalist approach seems to be gaining weight.

Thirdly, we do use the category of democratic and people's government, and we have different criteria about the meaning. In our opinion, this political category refers to a political strategy that situates segments of peasants and of small urban owners next to the salary-earning workers. It is with this meaning that we use this category. This gets mixed up in the political debate that we have here, in Brazil, regarding the policy of alliances. And as there are, even in my own tendency, comrades who think it possible to make electoral alliances with such parties as PDT of PSB – which are bourgeois parties - it may lead the comrades to judge that this is the outcome of the defence of the flag and of a people's democratic government. We have to discuss this.

And also we have a different opinion about PT. Analysed by Marxist parameters, PT today is a social democratic party. The question is to know, now, when an offensive is just beginning, when there is a certain low ebb that is just about to be reversed, which the best tactic to be used by the left wing tendencies can be. Is it better to carry out a political dispute inside the PT, and from the PT to extend it to the mass movement? Or is it better – in a relatively short period of time – to get out of PT and try and form another organisation, with PSTU and other political forces? It is our best understanding that now and here, the best way we can help is by fighting the political battle inside the PT, because the overwhelming majority of the working class advanced guard and enormous segments of the people have great expectations in and a great loyalty to PT. And if the crisis becomes more serious, then PT will still be a political point of reference for the masses for a long time. That is why it is so important to bear in

mind what the document of the comrades of PSTU proposes: to establish deeper political relations and a deeper and more intense political debate between the left of the PT and the PSTU.

But let's be loyal about it: this is a long-term process. We have an appraisal – to use an experience that we have in common – of what the process of the split in the social democratic parties and the formation of Communist parties was, between the II and the III International and the power of the expectations the masses had deposited in parties similar to what PT is now. We also know the risks we are running. Today great part of the PT left shows signs of bureaucratisation and political degeneration. But we do believe that right now, an operation of a merger or of out leaving the PT would mean that our political potentiality would be significantly reduce and the power of a revolutionary organisation that would emerge from that would be increased but a little.

To sum up, once more we wish to thank you for the invitation. It was important for us. The fact that we have not been able to participate more actively – for we are now preparing the Congress of the PT – does not mean we did not appreciate this event fully. Quite the opposite is true. We really did our best to take part and we wish to keep up this type of political contact and debate."

1 PT: Party of Workers was the first political party to pose workers class independence. At that time our comrades formed an internal trend of the PT. When the swerve towards the right by the leadership of the PT made coexistence no longer possible, they split away and, together with all those who – even not being Trotskyists – accompanied them in the split formed today's PSTU. **Translator's note.**

2 PSTU: official section of IWL in Brazil. **Translator's note.**

3 FHC: Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The present day president of Brazil. **Translator's note.**

4 Literally: Out with FHC. This formulation refers to a highly successful demand raised against a previous government, the Collor administration. Collor was forced out by mass riots and – in spite of the fact that the bourgeoisie never lost all control of the situation (Collor was replaced by his vice president) any demand beginning with FORA and bearing the name of the president of the moment still sounds menacing- **Translator's note**

5 CUT: national confederation of trade unions. **Translator's note**



Colombia

The epicentre of the crisis that shakes Latin America

*Josef Weil,
of the board of editors of the
International Courier*

The repercussion of Colombian on the world press is increasing steadily. The guerrilla controls 40% of the territory of the country; the administration, harassed by the economic crisis and the workers' struggles proposes peace plans; the American government –



FARC members patrol area at 300km from Bogota, the capital city

– using drug-dealing, which is among the world's strongest, as an excuse – threatens with intervention. Obviously, this is an explosive mixture. And yet, this kind of cocktail is increasingly common to the south of Rio Grande.

During these last ten years, Latin America has been living under the supremacy of the neoliberal which is put into practice by administrations servile to the American Imperialism and the economic ruling of the IMF. What prevailed was the bourgeois euphoria about the opening of markets, of privatisation, of attacks on the social conquests and the labour flexibility. The end of the 90s, however, is a different landscape altogether: Latin American countries constitute at present one of the centres of the crisis of neoliberalism.

Structural problems are now multiplied by economic recession and by the very neoliberal mechanisms: a tremendous home and foreign debt, the pillage of state companies, unemployment, growing misery. The economic crisis reaches Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia and other countries. Indeed, only Mexico seems to be safe, thanks to the privileged investments by the USA.

In the shadow of this crisis, the dissatisfaction of the workers and of the poorer sectors of society is mushrooming constantly, and so is the reaction of the masses. The recent general strike of Colombia

is not an isolated case. Quite the contrary is true. Ecuador alone has already been through several paralysing strikes this year.

All these elements that are evidenced in several countries can be seen through the crisis and weakness of the Latin American administrations. Menem, Fernando Henrique, Fujimori and others were elected in the thriving moments of neoliberalism and exemplify the submission to imperialism. The neoliberal plans, which they intended to put into practice, were at first applauded by the masses. Today, however, these very same plans are in deep crisis and are discredited and their weakness feeds the crisis of the countries. Even the crisis of the institutions of bourgeois democracy reflect this wasting away produced by confrontations with the struggles of the toiling masses.

All of these elements of the Latin American class struggle are today concentrated in Colombia. There you will find the situation of armed confrontation in the countryside, a deep economic recession and the strengthening of the workers' movement.

Imperialism is deeply concerned about the effect this situation is having all over the world. And from the point of view of their interests, they are right. The reflection of all this on the general Latin American crisis, and even the world economic crisis, is to be feared. Apart from that there is a more immediate problem about the crisis and the conflicts in the north of South America,

principally Venezuela and Ecuador.

All this collection of factors leads imperialism to opt for an increasing military intervention. The American administration means to take advantage of their recent victory in the Yugoslavia war and the occupation of Kosovo to advance upon the Latin American masses.

The evolution of the situation in Colombia is decisive for the interests of the working class in Latin America and in the world. In a way, it is there

that the fate of Latin American peoples is being decided. The point is to check if what is going to prevail is the imperialist oppression and exploitation or the people's resistance. To stake on the second hypothesis means to organise the struggle against the military intervention. These articles and – above all – the IWL summons at the end of this section are aimed at contributing towards this effort.

A country in an absolute crisis

Colombia has a tradition of people's armed struggle that is previous to the Cuban revolution. In these last 50 years constantly has a part of the country been ruled by guerrilla organisations with the support of the peasants and oppressed sectors as a basis for an armed rebellion and open confrontation with the state. Recently, however, economic recession, corruption, the bankruptcy of a state polluted by drug dealing, the failure of the Colombian bourgeoisie totally servile to imperialism to confront the situation, all this has led to a deep crisis of the regime. New segments of the masses have joined the armed struggle for faced with the possibility of dying from paramilitary bullets, many of them can only choose between taking this fate or joining the guerrilla.

The situation in Colombia is additionally polarised because of the violent way in which the ruling class represses the struggles of the people. During the previous administration, president Samper was threatened with

impeachment and barely escaped the aggravating circumstances of corruption and violation of democratic liberties. Reinforced by American imperialism and the paramilitary forces of mercenary murderers on the payroll of the great landowners protected by the Armed Forces, repression grows claiming a toll of lives of trade union leaders and human rights activists. And yet, in spite of that, in these last years the bourgeois regime and state have been losing land to the guerrilla.

To this chronological political crisis we now have to add the worst economic crisis in these last 70 years. Colombian national gross produce has dropped 6% in the first half of this year and the local currency (peso) has been consecutively devaluated several times in 1999, and the total devaluation is now over 20%. The Pastrana administration is trying to put the country into a straight jacket of the neoliberal recipes, which only worsens the crisis. The great aim now is to arrive at any cost at an agreement with the IMF, which would only render the country even more dependant from imperialism until the year 2007.

With about 20 thousand armed men, the guerrillas, particularly the FARC and the ELN are a real alternative power in enormous parts of the country. About 40% of the land in Colombia is under FARC and ELN control. They have recently been active 30km away from the capital city, Bogota. That presence, together with the seeming impossibility to reduce them militarily, within the framework of open political and economic crisis, have put the Colombian administration in an impasse and caused president Pastrana to open peace negotiations.

The aim of the negotiations is to make the guerrilla to lay down arms in exchange for some concessions. This had been also of the imperialistic peace plans in, among others, Central America in the 80s. This strategy engulfed the guerrilla leaderships of National Liberation Front Farabundo Martí (FMLN) of Salvador and the Sandinist Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua and led the Centro American to a defeat. Colombia itself has already had some experience of this type of negotiations – also in the 80s – which ended in a partial lay down of arms by the guerrilla.

Imperialism wants to impose their order in the region

Imperialist policy in Colombia is part of what we have called the recolonising offensive, intended to impose the IMF plans onto the so-called Third World and make the NATO act as a world police force.

The USA wants to deepen their economic and political control over the region. The problem is that Colombia is objectively challenging these plans. That is why they want to intervene, to warrant the carrying out of their policy, just as they did in Yugoslavia.

The northern region of South America is strategic for the American imperialistic interests, and various focal points of concern for the Clinton administration. That is why he goes as far as saying that the Colombian events “are a menace to national security of the USA”. Colombia is the third country in the world – after Israel and Egypt – to receive military aid from the Yankee government. At first the idea was to support the Pastrana administration, betting on a negotiation that would make the guerrilla surrender in exchange for their participation – as a political force – in the deliberations on the future of the regime. But the latest events are making the Clinton administration change their minds. Pastrana got the aid of the USA through the continuance of the economic aid for the administration and the military backing for the repression forces. But faced with the loss of authority of the government and the crisis of the regime and of the Colombian State, imperialism arrived at the conclusion that there was an impasse and is now preparing a military way out with the ridiculous excuse that it is all about the “narco-guerrilla”.

Madeleine Albright, the State Secretary of the USA has just written an article that has been reproduced by the main newspapers of the world. In it she says, “peace efforts should be carried out by the Colombians themselves”. But, “the efforts made by President Pastrana have reached an impasse” so “USA and the friends of Colombian people must be ready to help”. That is to say, if the guerrilla does not accept negotiations in the terms established by Pastrana and endorsed by the American government, imperialism and the servile governments of Latin America must get ready to intervene somehow. To prove that the threat is serious 1 000 marines have just carried out

training operations which included landing on the Colombian coast.

The problem is that imperialism cannot condone - in a key region for their domination, very close to the American territory - the existence of a country where the guerrilla controls almost half of the territory. And much less so if there is a process of polarisation of the class struggle and a great political instability in the whole Latin America.

There are many examples. There we have Ecuador with its political regime in a total crisis, about to declare a moratorium for the private deeds of the foreign debt (the “bradies”) and a powerful struggle of the workers and the oppressed masses that has caused the collapse of one IMF economic plan after another. Recently a general strike has paralysed the country for several days and forced the government to give up the idea of a state of war declaration and to annul the increase of the price of fuel.

In Venezuela this polarisation and political instability has been expressed in a distorted way through Chavez’s electoral triumph that defeated the old bourgeois forces. Clinton has just expressed his concern about “the attacks on democracy in Venezuela”. This stimulated the first protests of the Venezuelan right who demonstrated in the streets. It also caused that their representative, the defeated presidential candidate Salas Romer, declared his concern about the “possibility that Chavez might export his revolution to other Latin American countries and also accused Chavez of “promiscuity with the Colombian guerrilla”. Imperialism is very worried indeed lest this situation be extended to other countries. It is also worried about the possibility that the radical methods might be co-ordinated across the frontiers. That would link Latin American trade union or peasant movements, such as that of Brazil where there has just been a protest march of 100 thousand people strongly linked to the movement of land occupation under the leadership of MST (Movement of the Landless).

Drug dealing as an excuse for intervention

American imperialism has lately been making a lot of propaganda trying to justify their more and more frequent interventions in Latin America as a means for putting drug dealing out of business. That is what they did when they occupied Panama during the Noriega administration, and

again when they claimed to eradicate the coca plantations in Bolivia. They insist on doing the same thing to support their increasing intervention in the security forces in Latin American countries, such as Peru and Mexico. It is enough to make horse laugh when they try to blame the Colombian guerrilla for drug dealing, when it was the wife of colonel Hiatt, officer in charge of the troops stationed in Colombia, who was caught when trying to pass cocaine through the diplomatic channels. This piece of news was swiftly covered up so that it would not hinder the efforts made to blame the guerrilla for the huge drug dealing business in the USA. This business is so gigantic that a net within the famous American Airlines used the facilities of access to the airports to offer cocaine in the major capitals of the land of Uncle Sam.

The truth is that all this campaign is nothing but a pretext for imposing an economic and political control, for not even the minimum objectives are reached this way. Drug dealing in Panama increased after the intervention against Noriega. The administration of the former Mexican president, Carlos Salina de Gortari, a great friend of the USA, was leaning on – among other things – this drug dealing business, and Raul, the president's brother, was one of the central figures of smuggling and dealing. In Colombia, the most prominent dealers support the paramilitary forces and they took a direct part in the execution of trade union leaders, activists and journalists. These crimes remain unpunished, and enjoy full benevolence and indulgence of the very armed forces that the USA guide and feed.

The American concern about Colombia grew to its present dimensions due to the fact that guerrilla is spreading and the struggles against Pastrana are increasing. They would not say that the real reason for the intervention is to halt the crisis and impose order in the region. That is why the opt for launching a campaign against drug dealers and their alleged association with Colombian guerrilla as a way to conceal the real motive for the intervention from the public opinion of American, Colombians and the world.

The paramilitary forces

After their military defeat in

Vietnam, imperialism has been trying to maintain stability in the essential countries or regions through negotiated solutions reached in the name of “peace and democracy”. But as early as the end of the Carter administration, faced with the fact that speeches about peace alone did not provide solutions to armed conflicts, they introduced a new bias into the approach. During the Reagan administration they started arming and financing counterrevolutionary groups that could challenge the guerrilla and to act out of law against the workers’ and peoples’ activists. This was meant to force the workers’ and peoples’ leaders to sign “peace accords”.

The first ones to gain worldwide fame were the “contras” from Nicaragua. The support they received from American imperialism was so great that the fact gave rise to the “contras-gate” during the Reagan administration. It then became clear that they were financed not only by the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, but also by the American government and by the CIA, who drew resources for such activity precisely from the cocaine business. Groups of a similar nature and with identical purpose crop up in almost all the Central American countries. They are to challenge the guerrilla organisations and force them to negotiate thus altering the course of the workers’ struggle against imperialist plans.

In Colombia, the backing for these agents is aimed at spreading fear and defeat among the fighters of the left. These are the mercenary groups who, in these last ten years, have given Colombia the name of the “champion of breaches of human rights”. The paramilitary forces have specialised in hunting down not only guerrillas, but also trade union leaders and other popular fighters. The name of Carlos Castaño and his AUC has become famous spreading terror. The contradiction is that these groups have acquired a life of their own and now demand their part in peace negotiations. The fascist agents of repression refuse to simply walk off the stage; now they want to sit at the negotiation table as peers to the guerrilla and to the government.

Imperialism has always backed and armed the Colombian army, famous for their breaking of the human rights. The complicity between the army and the paramilitary forces also accrues problems for the government, who

often fails to discipline such groups and their leaders. This is the background against which the recent separation of General Alberto Bravo Silva, commander in chief of the Fifth Brigade of the army, posted at Bucaramanga city. He was dismissed for covering up for a massacre of 50 peasants in the northeast of the country perpetrated by Peasants Self-defence of Cordoba and Urabá between the 20th and the 22nd of August.¹

What imperialism fears most: the resistance of Latin American peoples.

One of the most serious problems for American imperialism is that American people are not for sending troops for land battles. The reason is simple: it would mean the loss of hundreds – eventually thousands – American lives. This is what prevents imperialism from intervening in Colombia as much as they would like to. A commitment of the sort that existed in Vietnam might cause a serious internal reaction. The American government will try to avoid this kind of situation by preparing a scenario where – in case of need – the troops should proceed from the countries of the areas rather than from USA alone.

Yankee diplomats have been visiting several governments of the region in order to obtain their support for eventual “peace mission”. Bases have already been established in Ecuador, Peru, Aruba, and Curacao – for the traditional bases in Panama have to be dismantled before the end of the year. Menem has already declared his readiness to send troops to warrant the American peace plans if the Colombian government asks for it. He has also allocated bases in his country where the American troops could train. Fuyimori comes hot on his heels in his attempts to serve the master. But the problem for all these governments is that they will have to fight against an armed guerrilla. To take part with troops in a civil war may mean unsettling many of them, especially those who already have their own internal problems. That is why most of the governments of the region are still reluctant to send Latin American troops immediately.

But let us not fool ourselves. It may well be that the Yankees are not in a condition to disembark marines; it may well be that a Latin American force cannot be formed right away.

But the intervention is already taking place. It exists, with Pastrana administration's blessing, through the mission of "orientation" of DA and CIA who, in the name of hunting down drug dealers, hunts guerrillas. American military men may choose to gain the trust of Latin American bourgeoisie little by little by proposing a system (co-ordinated by USA) of watchful frontiers between the South American countries. During his visits to the governments of the area, MacCaffrey used a two-faced language. He said that it was not about to ask for troops. He only wanted to point out the danger of the possible extension of the "narco-guerrilla" to other countries. He also insisted that "in order to put an end to drug dealing it is necessary to put an end to the subversive groups who protected it" (El Mundo – 25/08/99)

Enter workers' movement

Colombia has recently put up a national civic strike that lasted for two days. The trade unions have lately been putting up important struggles against privatisation and cuts in social and labour conquests. In October 98, 800 thousand state workers went on a powerful strike. The government declared them illegal and the paramilitary forces murdered several of the trade union leaders. In May 99 there was the strike of the teachers, health workers and students protesting against cuts in the budget. It was ruthlessly repressed and tens of activists went to jail.

Recently (31.08 – 01.09) the central trade unions called for a national strike, which was actually meant to be for indefinite time. According to news agencies, a million and a half workers joined, representing 20% of the labour force. On the first day the support was the strongest and public transport was entirely stopped. There was a lot of support from the poor neighbourhoods of the great cities where police was challenged. The natives of Nariño, a region bordering with Ecuador also took part blocking the Pan-American Highway in demand of land, farming equipment and acknowledgement of their ethnic group.²

On the second day, however, the strike started to flag down. That meant that there were no good conditions to go on with the strike for an indefinite time. The headquarters composed by the central trade unions CUT, CGTD, AND CTC decided to interrupt the strike in order to negotiate with the

government. A commission has been formed with ministers and trade union representatives and a list of demands has been presented to be discussed. Event though the movement has not yet received a concrete answer to their demands, it became clear that there has been a radicalisation in the cities.

Among the 41 points on the list of demands the following are worthwhile highlighting: moratorium of the foreign debt, discontinuation of privatisation, reformulating of social and economic policy, breaking off from the IMF and the recovery of the social rights under assault from the government and the neoliberal plans. The fact that the workers' movement has appeared on the stage poses a new class outlook for the Colombian process.

A class solution to fight against imperialism

Colombia is living a situation where 40% of the territory is under the rule of a dual power and the rest is in the hands of a regime in crisis and a government that is challenged and lags on because of the support from imperialism. Concerned lest this situation should evolve into a real civil war, imperialism threatens with intervention. This is the kind of situation that poses the need for a strategy for a consistent struggle against imperialism. It is necessary to pose a programme that – apart from demanding the immediate withdrawal of the advisers and banning every sort of interference of the CIA, DEA or the USA army – should lead towards the expropriation of the multinationals that rule over the country's wealth, towards the non payment of the foreign debt and the break off from the IMF, just as the general strike of August 31st *proposed*.

The key issue to defeat definitely not only the repression by the government and by the paramilitary forces, but also the bourgeoisie and the imperialism lies in the alliance of the peasants and workers in defence of the exploited and oppressed of the city and the countryside. But only the working class can lead in that direction and propose a unity between the trade unions, guerrilla, natives and other organisations of the poor and the oppressed. The Colombian bourgeoisie – as all their Latin American peers – who in their day have had some kind of confrontation with imperialism, has now proved to be incapable of any resistance at all to

the colonising assault. Latin American bourgeois government have forsaken any pretence at defending even their national sovereignty.

Colombian exploited masses can find their allies among their class brethren of the continent. The enemy who oppresses them and threatens with intervention is the same one who oppresses economically and politically all the Latin American nations. That is why it is of fundamental importance to aim at Latin American unity of workers and the oppressed masses to defeat the intervention and expel the imperialism from the region.

An anti-imperialist approach demands that there must be an internationalist call to the workers' movement, to the people's movement, to the democratic movement of Latin America and the world to stop the intervention that is now underway with the blessing of Pastrana. But this cannot be a mere call for solidarity. It is necessary to cry out loud IMF OUT OF LATIN AMERICA. Let all the nations of the whole continent, all those who are right now fighting against the plans imposed by the IMF, let them know that it is the same enemy all the time. Those who are planning the military intervention in Colombia are the same ones who are already intervening economically in the lives of millions of workers and oppressed people of the continent, reducing them to misery and famine.

Only the working class and its allies can warrant a united anti-imperialist approach. No confidence can be harboured for puppet and submissive administration, such as that of Fernando Enrique Cardozo or Zedillo.

We must demand the withdrawal of the troops from the American bases in Latin America and the end of any kind of interference of the IMF in our continent.

Instead of defending a government of unity with the bourgeoisie – as the guerrilla would like it – we must struggle for a government of the organisations of the workers, the peasants, the guerrillas, the ethnic groups, and the trade unions. This government, with the support of the mobilised masses will have to break away from the IMF and imperialism, refuse to pay the foreign debt, expropriate the bourgeoisie and carry out the land reform. Along this path it will make headway towards socialism.

1. El Mundo, 4/9/99

2. El Tiempo 1/9/99.

50 years of Guerrilla

Jorge Eliécer, an extremely popular liberal leader was murdered. As a response to this, a rebellion, known as the "Bogotazo" began.

Immediately after a civil war, known as "the violence", began. It lasted for ten years: from 1948 to 1958. It divided the country into two main camps. The guerrilla – which in turn was divided into a liberal majority and a Communist minority - on one side, and the repression, headed by the conservative government, on the other. The guerrilla held a Congress. 300 thousand people died in the struggle.

In 1953, due to an impasse in the civil war, General Rojas Pinilla gives a coup.

In 1958 the liberal and the conservative parties arrive at an agreement to put an end to the Rojas Pinilla administration. This gave rise to 16 years of National Front signed by the leaders Alberto Lleras, liberal, and Laureano Gomez, conservative. According to the agreement the conservative and the liberal were to take turns to govern the country: four years each. The other side of this coin was the disarming of all kind of guerrilla. The first chosen president was the liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo.

In 1959 under the impact of the Cuban Revolution the guerrilla movement is revived.

At the beginning of the 60s, during the administration of the liberal Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Colombian army started an offensive against the liberated zone controlled by the Communists in Marquetalia, department of Tolima – a region near to Bogota. The peasants resisted with guerrilla-like actions. One of these peasants was Manuel Marulanda Vélez, known as "Tirofijo".

On the 20th of July 1964, the Communist guerrilla held a meeting in Marquetalia and voted a programme of revolutionary agrarian reforms based on the "confiscation of large estates" and of any "land held by imperialist companies". This programme

would be forsaken in 1984, when the FARC signed their first truce. Eventually the army expelled the guerrilla from Marquetalia.

Two years later the Communist guerrilla of Marquetalia, together with detachments of guerrillas from the south of Tolima founded the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC).

In 1967, the impact of the Cuban Revolution led to the creation of the National Liberation Army (ELN) inspired by Che Guevara. The Maoist PCC-ML (Marxist-Leninist Colombian Communist Party) organised the EPL (People's Liberation Army). Both these guerrilla branches reflect the ascent of the students and impoverished urban masses of the 60s.

In 1970 the conservative Misael Pastrana Borrero was elected by 1 614 419 votes. The former dictator, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, leader of ANAPO (People's National Alliance) got 1 557 482 votes. There were generalised mutual accusations of fraud and a great dissatisfaction among the poor masses that had voted Rojas Pinilla. Three years later, as an outcome of this event, the M-19 (Movement 19th of April) appeared. It was a people's nationalist guerrilla. This movement crops up from among the rank and file of the ANAPO. It is named after the date of the electoral fraud that snatched the power away from that party.

The policy of the "peace plans"

A new stage of class struggle begins in Colombia in 1977. The new upsurge begins with a general strike and "civic strikes" with the conflict lasting more than a day in some regions.

In 1992, confronted with the upsurge of the struggles and the spreading of the guerrilla, the newly elected Belisario Betacour conservative administration adopted a policy of "peace" with the guerrilla.

In March 1984 the administration signs a truce and a one-year cease-fire agreement with M-19 and ELP (People's Liberation

Army). A few months later, due to constant aggression by the army, the M-19 breaks the cease-fire.

In the 1986 election the victory goes to the liberal Virgilio Barco. Also participating in these elections there was the Patriotic Union (a movement inspired by the Communist Party and associated to FARC), that obtained over 300 thousand votes.

At the beginning of the following year, paramilitary groups launch a systematic plan of murders committed not only on guerrilla men, but also against political and trade union leaders. On The 11th of October, the paramilitary forces murder Jaime Pardo Leal, presidential candidate and the highest leader of the Patriotic Union. Up to that moment over 500 members of the UP had been murdered. This murder gives rise to a wave of unrest, pillage and confrontations between the masses and the police. Eight people died as a result of this. On October 13th the CUT summons to a national strike which paralyses practically the whole country.

The so-called "peace dialogues" – a summons called for by the Cesar administration – was made between the 1990 and 1991. Some important guerrilla groups accepted the dialogue. The M-19 handed their weapons over and so did a significant part of EPL. Once negotiations were over, the right wing response was relentless: a great part of the leaders were murdered. On the other hand, some guerrilla leaders were incorporated into the bourgeois regime and the administration. As soon as the guerrilla groups lay down their weapons, all the government promises were forgotten. The government tried to apply a neoliberal plan as from the "peace" obtained, and that meant a further give-away of the country and the present day economic crisis which is the greatest in all these decades.

Guerrilla organisation's strategy: a programme of a revolution by stages.

One of the stumbling blocks that make the struggle of the people more difficult is the guideline offered by the leaders of the guerrilla organisations. While reflecting its roots in the Colombian Communist Party, FARC - the largest of them - defends a policy that never grows out of the framework of the dependant Colombian capitalism. It looks as if they believed that it is possible to advance together with sectors of national bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism. In their most important document referring to programme, they propose a government of unity and reconciliation that would abide by private property whether big, small or medium sized.

They have not forsaken the conception of revolution by stages stemming out of Stalinism: first, "bourgeois democratic" revolution together with national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and the workers; then - at a non defined moment of the future - the struggle for socialism.

As we shall see below, they do not even pose nationalisation of the key sectors of economy. They barely mention something about negotiating the foreign debt and proposed a mere reform of the State, including the repressive apparatus, the armed forces and the police. The 31st of August general strike programme is much more comprehensive than the one of the FARC.

That poses an enormous contradiction between the radical method of the armed struggle against the bourgeois state and the actual dual power in the liberated zones on one hand, and the programme they propose to carry out if they are victorious.

"PLATFORM FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION (April 3rd 1993)

We invite all the Colombians to dream of a benevolent motherland, in full development and in peace; to work for the constitution of a PLURALIST, PATRIOTIC AND DEMOCRATIC national government that will commit

itself to:

1. A political solution of the serious conflict that the country is suffering.

2. The military doctrine and the Defence of the National State will be BOLIVARIAN. Our liberator says, "the purpose of the army is to protect the frontier. May God protect us against their turning their weapons against the citizens."

The armed forces will be the warrant of national sovereignty, respectful of Human Rights and will be entitled to a budget in accordance with the needs of a country that is not at war with its neighbours. The national police force will become once again subordinate to the Ministry of Government, structured in such a way suited to its preventive function: to moralise and to educate in the respect for the Human rights

3. National, regional and municipal democratic participation in all decisions that comprise the future of the society

4. Economic development and modernisation with social justice.

The state ought to be the main owner and administrator of the strategic sectors, such as energy, communications, public service, highways, ports and natural resources, benefiting a balanced social and economic development of the country and of the regions.

In the sphere of economic policy, the emphasis will be in the broadening of the home market, self sufficiency in food and a permanent encouragement for the PRODUCTION, the small, the big and the medium sized private industry, the self-government, the small venture and jointly responsible economy. The state will invest in strategic areas of national industry and will develop a policy meant to protect this national industry. The official economic administration should have the

following features: efficiency, ethos, productivity and high quality. Trade unions, people's organisations, academic and scientific entities will participate in the decisions on economic and social policy and also in the decisions referring to energy and investments."

This strategy is not anti-imperialist

There is no consistent anti-imperialist strategy in the FARC policy. In spite of the fact that they admit that it is urgent to halt the imperialist offensive meant to squash the armed struggle, in their platform the FARC merely claim for "protection for national industry" and "alleviation of the interests of the public debt". No reference is made to expropriation of imperialist concerns in Colombia, or to discontinuity of the payments of the foreign debt.

Neither do they call on the Latin American masses to fight against their governments - subject to the IMF and orders emitted by the USA. What is the FARC message for Ecuadorian, Mexican or Argentine masses? It is not about the need to join the struggles against intervention in Colombia so as to put an end to all the plans of the IMF in the whole Latin America, is it? Or do they tell those people to press their governments to become arbiters of "peace"?

Responding to imperialist propaganda clamouring about the "threat to the security of the region", the guerrilla leadership hastened to pledge commitment of no



intervention in the other countries and to respect the order and the good relations with the bourgeois governments. The International Commission of the FARC has recently issued a declaration saying, "we promise not to carry out military operations in other territories" (declaration of July 15th, 1999). On the 20th of August, the guerrilla commander, Felipe Rincón, added at an interview, "we have a policy of friendship and understanding with all the countries of the world, especially with the motherland of Simon Bolivar, hero and liberator who is also the guide of the political and military action of the FARC."

There is, therefore, a policy of limiting the guerrilla activity to Colombian territory in order to win over the goodwill of the governments of the area. This policy will not prevent an imperialist intervention, but it may jeopardise the mobilisation of the workers' movement not only in Colombia but also of the whole Latin America and even the world. And that includes eventual movement in USA against the imperialist intervention.

Only the toiling masses, the exploited and oppressed of the continent and the world can really support the struggle of the Colombian people driving back the imperialist and their Latin puppet governments. Let nobody be led astray by "commander" Chavez; his main concern is to negotiate as fast as possible an agreement with Pastrana in order to stabilise the region. He wants to make sure that the guerrilla will accept a negotiation so as to avoid a direct intervention of the USA. Chavez is also interested in avoiding that guerrilla influence on the Venezuelan mass movement should lead to more radical options that would put his own control at stake.

It is the same problem, the idea of giving priority to conversations with friendly bourgeoisie and of respecting the established frontiers that led, in Central America, to the Sandinist Nicaragua to abstain from helping the Salvador guerrilla, a fact that eventually led to the isolation of Nicaragua. What enormous difference there is between this policy of "peaceful coexistence" with

bourgeois governments and the claim of Che Guevara, "Two, three, a thousand Vietnams in Latin America".

"Peace" policy



The expressions about peace stem out of the programme positions expressed above and are crystallised in this year's declaration on peace negotiations:

"This noble national yearning of joining the two Colombias once more is feasible if there is strong investment in the countryside and in the cities; if a firm and unyielding battle is fought against corruption and if the forces of national security of the state are purged so that they never again will use their weapons or the powers of the law against the hungry and dispossessed when they stand up for their just rights.

Let us hope that these expectations of the nationals and foreigners about the peace issue can be crystallised in a real treaty of development, independence, sovereignty, fair distribution of wealth, defence of environment that may save our natural resources; in the finding of ways to alleviate the weight of the foreign debts with its high interests; in the coming together of joint commitments in the struggle against drug dealing in all its extension. This will lead Colombia firmly into the new millennium. (Declaration of the International Committee of the FARC about the peace conversations)

There is no chance for peace within the framework of bourgeois

institutions. There will only be peace if the toiling masses destroy capitalism and imperialism. Here we have the same contradiction that sowed in the strategies of similar organisations in the 80s and the 90s. They all wound up by accepting the establishment of new bourgeois regimes in exchange for being re-integrated into civil life and electoral dispute. Today this tactic stems out of a search of a negotiated peace. Beyond any political disagreements with the official policy, they would accept a different negotiation, where the arbiters would be personalities of Latin American bourgeois governments, of the European imperialists or of the Church.

All the previous "peace" negotiations (El Salvador, Nicaragua and even Colombia itself) have proved to be a dangerous and mortal trap aimed at strangling the people's movement. The arbiters - be

they governments such as the Cardozo or Chavez administrations, European social democrats, or even Fidel Castro - would try and disarm the guerrilla in exchange for their incorporation into civil life. As we have said above, this has already happened in El Salvador, Guatemala and Colombia, and the price was a heavy toll of lives and the perpetuation of imperialist domination in those countries. After much ado announcing it, "peace" never arrived. The contrary did happen. In Colombia the paramilitary bands proliferated in the countryside and in the cities, and with them there came the killings of activists of the trade unions and of the toiling masses.

And yet, in spite all the disagreements we have with the guerrilla organisations, we admit that they are the concrete leadership of the armed struggle and we are all for the most ample unity in action to halt the military intervention and to defeat the bourgeoisie and imperialism who will try to drown this just struggle. We are unconditionally with the resistance of the Colombian people and their organisations - be they of the trade unions, of the toiling masses or of the guerrilla - against the danger of an armed intervention whether directly by American troops or through "friendly countries".



Argentina

Hobbling Along Towards the Elections

Alejandro Iturbe,
Buenos Aires

This is an electoral year, for by October the man to replace Carlos Menem will have to be chosen. According to public opinion surveys, Fernando De la Rúa's possibilities are growing. He is the candidate of the UCR-FREPASO Alliance challenging the



Buenos Aires suburb: where misery is ever growing

justicialist Eduardo Duhalde. But the path towards the elections is far from being a bed of roses. The Menem administration has been considerably weakened by a strong economic criticism and important workers' struggles, especially in the provinces.

At first the Carlos Menem administration decisions seemed invincible. But ten years later he is none the better for the wear and tear. The toiling masses hate him; the bourgeoisie finds him unable to solve the current problems that afflict the country. What has allowed him to remain in power so far is the agreement between imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the trade union leaders meant in order to avoid Menem meeting a similar end to the one that was Alfonsín's fate in 1989. He had to step aside before his term in office was over.

Two hard blows he suffered this year prove his weakness. One of them took place in May, when joint demonstrations by students and teachers forced him to go back on an IMF-imposed budget cut for education. Clarín, the Argentine paper of highest edition, defined this fact as "surgery without anaesthetics". This expression had

previously been used by Menem himself, when he spoke of his policy of privatisation and labour flexibilisation. The next blow came a month later when Menem was forced to recoil to a strike with roadblocks staged by the owners of the lorries, who refused to pay an extra tax on motorcar vehicles.

Both facts were profusely commented in the papers and TV and an energetic discussion took place on the convenience of continuing with the policy of budget cuts that had already caused so much protest. That is why it appeared evident that further adjustments demanded by the FMI or even by the economic crisis itself had to wait until after the elections.

The economic crisis...

Such weakening of the government is doubly grievous for the bourgeoisie trapped in the net of a deep economic crisis. This crisis has recently been worsened by the effects that devaluation in Brazil has had on the Argentine economy. Estimates for 1999 announce a 4.2% drop in the Internal Gross Production, but this figure grows to as much as 14% when applied to industry. Exports have dropped 25%

and the fiscal deficit reaches the 6 000 million dollars. Foreign credit has become so much more expensive that the administration had to get another loan; the rate interests on this credit reach 16% (10% more than what USA pays!) Another important fact is that the pace of foreign investment – the dynamic element of the growth in the previous years – has diminished notoriously.

On the other hand, and as a result of an acute crisis of the Mercosur, devaluation in Brazil produced a real avalanche of imports from that country, especially of car parts and shoe industry. These products often cross the frontier at dumping prices and hit the local industry hard. A great number of factories closed and many people lost their jobs. Overall estimates tend to agree that about 250 000 jobs have been lost. Total unemployment has already reached 17%, 2% more than last year. Economists are pessimistic in their prognosis and it is believed that the slide of the economy will continue till the end of the year and part of the coming year.

...gives rise to squabbles and splits among the bourgeois sectors

The crisis has caused the squabbles between the diverse sectors of the bourgeoisie – and especially between the bourgeoisie and the government – to increase notably. Apart from the strike of the lorry owners that we have mentioned above, - there has been a previous protest of most farmers, who blocked the motorways and marched on Buenos Aires. The new

leaders of UIA (Union of Argentine Industrialists) criticised the administration severely for its passive attitude towards the crisis and its weakness with respect to Brazil on the issue of the shoes and car parts. Entrepreneurs' Chambers representing these industries - together with trade unions - have even carried out demonstrations and interrupted activities a signal of protest and in demand of protectionist steps.

Nobody has ever mentioned anything about reversing the structural reforms made by Menem, such as privatisation or flexibilisation. But beyond that, there seems to be no agreement on how to face the crisis. The issue of whether to devalue the peso or not to devalue the peso - that is to say: to abandon or not to abandon the system in which one peso equal one dollar - is one of those controversies. (See the previous issue of *International Courier*). All this makes the crisis of the government, and the general crisis of the country, all the more serious.

...adds more pressure to the boiler in the provinces

The economic crisis is at its most explosive in the provinces, where the weakest links of the chain are to be found. The already deteriorated regional economies have been very much affected by the devaluation in Brazil. It is within this framework that it is important to take into consideration how many people work for the provincial governments or for the city councils. The decline in the tax revenue and the dwindling of the funds transferred by the national state forces many provincial governments to dismiss thousands of employees, to reduce salaries and even to postpone the payment of wages.

That is why prolonged struggles, very combative and explosive, have been cropping up from among the grass roots. The local trade union bureaucrats have been either totally overwhelmed or have been forced to lead the struggles. Very often these outbursts wind up in tough confrontations with the police or - if the local police are either overcome, or opt for joining the protest - with the gendarmerie. The corresponding governor - no matter what political party they may represent - have also been questioned. The most

outstanding case took place in the province of Corrientes. It lasted for about 3 months and forced the governor of the province and the mayor of the capital city - both representing a provincial political party. In August similar riots took place against governor Bussi³ in Tucumán, where a worker died of heart failure after a march had been repressed. Important struggles took place also in Neuquén and Tierra del Fuego.

It might seem that the situation is more than ripe for a summons to a general strike and a national plan of struggles⁴ aimed at defeating both the national government and the provincial ones and to stop the layoffs in industries. Unfortunately the diverse trade union central organisations have done their best to prevent this from happening. The bureaucrats from the industrial trade unions have either been totally passive, or - as in the case of the metallurgic trade unions or those of the shoe industry - they just limited themselves to demonstrate together with the bosses. Even the one that appears to be most "oppositional", CTA, whose congress had voted a day of struggles for the 6th and 7th of July, diluted the tension in limited strikes and regional rallies that did not weigh heavily at national level.

It is here that the lack of a fighting leadership that Argentine workers suffer from is seen at its worst. It is also one of the reason for which Menem has not been pulled down in spite of the crisis of his administration and the defeats that had been inflicted upon him. The battle for a general strike and a plan of struggles together with the demand that the leaders should call for it: this is the main task of revolutionaries in Argentina.

Here comes the new president and... a new package

It is within this context that the bourgeoisie and imperialism have managed to maintain the final control of the situation and to channel it - at least for the moment - towards the elections for president in October. They have made some headway in another question. Up to a couple of months ago it was not clear whether the

elections would favour the Alliance candidate, Fernando de la Rúa, or the Justicialist, Eduardo Duhalde. The bosses and imperialism were also in a maze about it: they did not know whom to support.

The situation is much clearer now: De la Rúa has overtaken Duhalde quite clearly now, for Duhalde is being dragged down by the generalised crisis of the Menem administration. The Alliance might win even in those provinces where the Justicialists have recently won the local elections for governors, such as in Córdoba and Santa Fe.

Unfortunately, the numerous struggles will once more lack a joint electoral expression, for the left will once more compete split into different options and this will weaken the opportunity offered by real life to compete for an important position. The non-existence of a clear workers' alternative is a political manifestation of the crisis of leadership that we have already pointed out to. (See box)

"Those on top", however, are not deceived. They know that, no matter how many votes he may have, De la Rúa will head a weak administration who will have to sail stormy seas of inter-bosses divisions, a serious economic crisis and an explosive social situation. And that they are running out of time.

Aware of this, the candidates for the post of Minister of Economy (J. L. Machinea, Radical and J. R. Lenicov, Justicialist) have made a tour of the main centres of financial power. The current Minister of Economy, Roque Fernández accompanied them, in order to warrant the continuity of the current economic policy, the payment of the foreign debt and pledge security to eventual investors. Apart from that, Alliance and Justicialists are discussing an agreement to vote together in the Parliament for a new package of adjustment measures to be taken between the elections in October and December, when the new president is to take over. They wish to take advantage of the impasse that will take place during these two months and so protect the future government against having to confront - right at the beginning - the struggle of the people. With all that has just been happening, it is hardly imaginable that they will reach their aim.

For a New Trade Union and Political Leadership

As we have already pointed out in the central article, the main weakness of the Argentine working class lies in its lack of a leadership that would allow it to express itself politically in an independent way, while – at the same time – would give an impulse to and develop the struggles. But together with this weakness there are immense possibilities to overcome it.

This asseveration is based on an extremely deep crisis of Peronism, the historical bourgeois leadership of the workers. The new generation has never considered it to be their party, but now there is also a strip of those who have lived the “golden age” and who are splitting away from the mother trend. This is the very process that our Morenist trend has been waiting for during decades.

The Alliance, especially the Frepaso part, is capturing part of this process electorally. But the relation with this mass of voters is critical and unstable, especially since De la Rúa became the candidate and the whole all their positions turned towards the right. Even if he gets a heap of votes as a punishment for Menem, it will be practically impossible for him to crystallise into a new leadership of the workers. There will be, therefore, a lot of room for our revolutionary policy.

That is why we consider it possible for new expressions of class independence to crop up, an issue we have been exploring lately with different tactics, especially the proposal of forming a Workers’ Front that we posed for these coming elections. This policy was aimed at such outstanding trade union leaders as “Perro” Santillán, whom we summoned to lead the front, but on the other hand also at the left political parties, calling them to place their legality and their militant force at the service of this possibility.

The CTA Congress

It was the same policy that drove us take part in the II

Congress of the CTA. In the provincial Congress in Chubut, a letter sent in by the MPT posing the need to build a political tool for the workers, obtained 30% of the votes of the representatives and in the Neuquén branch, the candidates of both, the Alliance and the Justicialists, were voted down. 6 000 representatives took part in the National CTA congress. The leadership managed to control it and avoid a similar voting, but they had to be very careful about the way they posed their backing for the Alliance. Motions for class independence obtained a majority vote in the Commission of Human rights and an important support in other commissions, such as Education and Trade Union Issues, all of them very numerous. Apart from that, the experience of participating in this congress proved the policy of privileging CTA as a place for intervention. In the first place, it has wider democratic margins than other central trade union organisation and that allows us to express our policy and to debate with the many activists who form part of this organisation. Also, a great many of those activists honestly wish to fight and they reject the policy of supporting Alliance – and very much more so now that De la Rúa is the candidate. Deep inside there is a crisis spreading among the activism, which will probably go off when Alliance takes over. This may cause cadres and leaders to split towards the left. The first signs of this are already visible and it is necessary to intervene there. It is with this in mind that we are proposing the formation of a trend of class- awareness of opposition to the current leadership of the CTA.

The MPT and the UP of Cordoba.

Unfortunately, the policy of Workers’ Front could not crystallise in the country because none of the leaders who could have headed it was willing to do so. The self-proclamatory attitude of the main left parties also conspired against the success of this policy. Faced

with the flat refusal by Jorge Altamira of the PO⁶ of **supporting any unitarian candidate of the left, the Front of Socialist Struggle will participate in these elections as from the lists of United Left, which consists of MST⁷, CP and other forces.**

Notwithstanding, even if the Workers Front failed as a project in the country as a whole, it did crystallise in several provinces. We have already commented in previous articles about the formation of the MPT (Movimiento Político de los Trabajadores)⁸ in the province of Comodoro Rivadavia. It was originated by leaders of ATE (State workers’ trade union), of the Trade Union of Non-teaching Staff of the University, of TV workers and of Committees of Unemployed. Here the IWL-FI did an outstanding job. Now the UP (Unidad Popular)⁹ has been formed in the Province of Cordoba. It is an electoral front, whose main candidate is Luis Bazán, a leader of the provincial state workers and secretary general of the Cordoba branch of the CTA. This front represents different trade union sectors and social segments. It contains the United Left and the Front of Resistance (whose main member is Patria Libre¹⁰). This is a very important event, because it happens in one of the most important provinces in the country and because a notorious trade union leader heads it. Furthermore, there is proposal that this experience should continue after the elections; there is a foundational congress summoned for December and an eventual national meeting is posed.

All these facts prove that – even if the pace is slower than what we might have wished – Argentine situation offers us many possibilities of being part of the creation of a new political and trade unionist leadership and, being part of this process, of building a strong trend.

A.I.

Electoral Agreement

In these elections we must confront the candidates of the Adjustment: the Peronists and the Alliance. Defeat Menem and the IMF and impose a Plan of the toiling masses.

The Menem administration has never been so weak. Forsaken by important sectors of the bosses, who have so far been supporting it, it is now being confronted by such middle class sectors as the owners of the lorry transport and small farmers. This is a painful confrontation by those who used to be the rank and file of his supporters and are now applying more and more radicalised methods of opposition.

If this administration has not yet crumbled down it is mainly due to the support of the servile leaders of the CGT who refuse to develop any kind of struggle and of the Alliance¹, who have pledged a "pacific" transition till October.

The leaders of the bosses' opposition do not wish Menem to suffer the same fate as the one that befell Alfonsín in 1989². That would be a destabilising precedent for the coming administration and an impediment for those who would have to keep on applying the same adjustments that the IMF now demands from Menem.

But while the leaders of the CGT³ openly back Menem and the transition, those who claim to be the opposition, people such as Maffei and Degenaro from the CTA, Moyano and Palacios of the MTA and the "Dog" Santillán from the Class-conscious Combative Trend do not unduly exert themselves trying to develop and unify the struggles that are breaking out everywhere.

Maffei and Moyano have had their chance with the lorry drivers' strike, but they refused to lead the conflict. Their refusal actually prevented this conflict from becoming a nation wide fight of the toiling masses that could have engulfed all those who are now either in the middle of a conflict or about to start one. Neither did they do anything to join the provincial struggles of Tucumán, Corrientes, Neuquén or of Tierra del Fuego towards on

great National General Strike that each one of those desperately isolated conflicts needed to win. That is why Menem, who is now weaker than ever – partly due to the capitalist crisis and partly because he has just lost several battles (against the students, the fishing boats, the lorry drivers, etc) – can still afford to strike out hard. He keeps on penny pinching from the pensioned people, proposing to reduce taxes to some great entrepreneurs, pushing on with labour flexibility and – in general – discharging all the weight of the crisis onto the shoulders of the workers through such common devices as increasing the dismissals and discontinued labour.

Authorities - in complicity with trade union leaders and the bosses' "opposition" parties - will do their best to divert the struggles into the electoral boggy channels and so avoid the anger from turning into unified national struggles. This will allow the bosses' politicians – the Peronists and the Alliance - to run safely for presidency.

We, the toiling masses, should take the opposite direction. We must call for the most ample solidarity with the struggles. We must summon to rallies and plenary meetings of delegates to vote resolutions demanding, imposing on the trade union leaders (CGT, MTA, CCC) the demand to summon a real a co-ordination of struggles. Only such co-ordinated struggles can pull down the government and put an end to the adjustments and replace them by a Workers' Emergency Plan.

In these elections, as part of this struggle against the bosses and their adjustments, we should pose our own independent alternative and so challenge the system.

It is within this framework of general political agreement as to the need to fight for the Workers' Emergency Plan - which is the opposite to what Duhalde, De la Rúa and Cavallo defend – the awareness that this kind of plan can only be feasible under the pressure of a

National Strike and a co-ordination of all struggles, that the United Left opens its lists to incorporate candidates of the FLS who are to act within this agreement with their own profile:

1. To fight against the unemployment and the new layoffs, we propose a reduced and redistributed labour day with no cuts in the wages and no increase in productivity. Nationalisation under workers' control of any company that refuses to redistribute the working hours or threatens with closure.

2. Non-payment of the Foreign Debt; progressive taxation of the great concerns in order to finance a Plan of Public Works and Services, which will generate jobs for thousands of unemployed-

3. Annulment of all privatisation and renationalisation of the companies under workers' control so that they may be re-activated at prices available to all. Re-incorporation of all workers who had been previously dismissed or forced to accept a "voluntary" retirement.

4. This plan must foresee the liquidation of flexitime, defend all the workers' conquests – recover those that have been lost – such as collective agreements – grant immediate increase of salaries and pensions until the level of the cost of family upkeep.

The electoral agreement between the United Left and the FLS call for a repudiation of all attempts at aggression on Colombia by the Yankees and their allies and against the sending of our troops or adviser. We are for the immediate withdrawal of all the American bases in Centroamerica, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and other places of Latin America. We are for the immediate withdrawal of the hundreds of imperialist advisers in Colombia.



Brazil: a march on Brasilia

100 thousand people and one mighty cry: Out with FHC!

*Fernando Silva and
Wilson H. da Silva, Brasília*

On the 26th of August, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of Brazil, woke to find unwelcome guests in the gardens of the Planalto Palace in Brasilia. A large crowd of workers and youths of the city and the countryside were swarming in one of the greatest anti-government protest rallies organised by trade unions and opposition parties. It was the “March of the Hundred Thousand”. What follows is the reproduction of some paragraphs on this topic from the PSTU paper, “Opinio Socialista”.

“I am here to try and dismiss FHC from the government and to put an end to the robbery that has delivered the country to the bondage FMI controlled foreigners. For us, the public servants, FHC is worse than Collor. If he keeps on like that he will wreck the whole works of public service.”

These words, pronounced by Wilson Batista de Amaral, a public servant from Brasilia, are just a sample of the feelings of the tens of thousands of workers who marched on Brasilia on August 26th. Outrage, willingness to fight, a feeling of power and strength and a full awareness that one could no longer put up with FHC and his gang. That was what the rally of the 100 thousand in Brasilia expressed.

The cynical counteroffensive launched on the previous day by the government and the main mass media prove totally useless. The people, who as early as the 25th started filling the streets of the Federal Capital, simply chose to ignore the threats of repression, the accusation of provoking a coup, the monstrous display of nearly 8 thousand-man police force ostentatiously watching the demonstration.

The spirit could be felt as the buses approached. In general, they were enthusiastic convoys coming in from the four cardinal points of the country and converging at the

Central High Plateau. Many bus rider, with practically half their bodies out of the bus windows, armed with posters, whistles and drums demonstrated a long way before reaching their destination. It all sounded like the arrival of football fans.

The heat was intense. Brasilia has a hot, dry, arid climate. The distances from anywhere are enormous. It is a city for “the power” to stay out of reach of the people. Exactly suited for what the FHC administration represents. Those who arrived the latest had to park their buses far from the demonstration and then walk as much as three, four and even five kilometres. But that hindered nobody.

People walked in group by group. Groups of public servants, of students, the PSTU column, and representations of the different states. Practically everybody walked in with their group, singing out demands that were spread by their own sound equipment. Hundreds of trade union and political stands offering their press, T-shirts, food and drink. In a way they made a useful contribution to the infrastructure of the demonstration, for it was not easy to find bars and restaurants anywhere near there. Actually, there are practically none.

“Get out now, get right out of here, FMI and FHC!”

It was almost midday when the speeches began. 1.5 million signed petitions were handed over to the National Congress demanding the initiation of an impeachment against FHC. There were those who spoke on behalf of the Pastoral¹ of the Land, of associations representing the People’s Movement, the students... Several provocateurs from bourgeois parties tried to join in but they were booed away.

Among the speakers we could also hear Joao Pedro Stedile for the MST², Joao Amazonas for the PCdoB³, Miguel Arraes for the PSB, and Brizola, the president of UNE. Ze Maria spoke for PSTU and in two minutes he managed to arouse the crowd, when he asked everybody present to put up their hands if they were for the demand “Out with FHC, out with IMF”. The response was positive, immediate and unanimous, and then again when he expressed the demand **“Get out now, get right out of here, FMI and FHC!”** The greatest expectations were around the contributions by Lula⁴ – in the first place – and by Vicentinho of the CUT. But before that there were the speech by Ze Dirceu, national president of PT and Member of the

THE LIFE OF THE MOVEMENT

Federal Parliament. Within the general background of the rally, the three made rather disappointing contributions, especially if you take into account that these were the representatives of the most important organisations of Brazilian workers and therefore that what they said there would certainly have an effect on the continuity of the struggle.

Half way there

The three contributions spoke out bluntly against the government. Vicentinho informed – almost apologetically – that a week before the march the National Plenary meeting of the CUT had voted to support it. But he forgot to mention that the same meeting had voted a day of strike. An unfortunate piece of forgetfulness.

It was an enthusiastic crowd that gave a warm welcome to Lula chanting the traditional slogan “It’s urgent for Brazil. Lula President now”. Flags, thousands of them, waved ceaselessly for over a minute. But neither he, nor Ze Dirceu mentioned anything about “Down with FHC”. At no moment did they make it clear that this was the reason for which all those people had come. They limited themselves to such vague remarks as “We shall come back here to make room for a president of the people” (Ze Dirceu) or “we haven’t come here to uproot anything, but because we are those who will administer this country tomorrow” (Lula). But how will this happen? When? When, exactly, are the great joint actions to take place and what

for? To back the struggle of the metallurgy workers? To join the marches of the landless? For education? The speeches did not refer to that.

An atmosphere of victory

But not even the anti-climax of these last speeches could abate the enthusiasm and the radicalisation of the demonstration. At about 3 o’clock in the afternoon the crowd started to break up and the demonstration drew to its end. Tired out because of the intense heat, the

sun beating down on our heads, after the many hour (days, in some cases) on top of a bus, but very happy, we all shared the same conviction: the country will not be quite the same after today. So we yelled out our message that must have reached the Planalto Palace, for FHC skipped his stroll that day.

Brasilia shook to the thunder of our voice: **“Get out now, get right out of here, FMI and FHC!”**



The PSTU presence in the One Hundred Thousands rally

The presence of PSTU

Throughout this page we have been trying to show you what the PSTU did during the demonstration. We shall present below the main paragraphs of the speech delivered by José Maria de Almeida (Ze Maria). Out of the about twenty speeches, his was one of the most applauded and there was a moving moment when he asked all those present to raise their hands if they were for the “Out with FHC and IMF”

But apart from Ze Maria’s speech, the party was also represented through thousands of militants and sympathisers who during the whole day carried and waved flags and countless posters. One of them, from the Macapá region was 18m long. The party distributed 30 thousand pamphlets, sold over 400 copies of the paper, 350 brochures, over 100 stickers for cars and made 22 new political affiliations. And last but not least, PSTU contributed 130 thousand signatures under the petition of impeachment for FHC.

Ze Maria’s speech

It is important that in this rally we should express our solidarity with the international struggle of the workers and, right now, the USA are organising a military intervention in Colombia. We must challenge this menace as a threat aimed at all the Latin American nations. We must say NO to the intervention in Colombia! We must organise a campaign right here, in Brazil, to show that we repudiate this cynical campaign against the Colombian people and their organisations. We



Partial view of the “One Hundred Thousand rally”

must prevent the submissive governments of the region – those like the FHC administration – from taking part in this intervention.

FHC, so arrogant and bold with the people is unable to say no to the IMF and the Americans. This is the same president who has spent the whole week trying to intimidate us, saying that our rally here, in Brasilia, was coupism, tendency towards coups d’état, and that we had lost our bearings.

A coup⁵ it was, most certainly, to buy members of Parliament to change the Constitution so that the amendment allowing a re-election should pass. A coup it was to leave all the electoral promises unfulfilled. A coup it was to destroy the public services, the landslide of privatisation, the giving of the country’s sovereignty away to the multinationals.

This rally is here now to make it quite clearly that we can oust him. That is why, now that we are all here and they are most certainly listening to us, let us make our message quite clear. What I wish to ask you is this: do we or do we not wish to overturn this government? (YES, responds the crowd) Now let all those who have come here because you want FHC and IMF out of here put your hand up! (A multitude of arms goes up)

Now it is necessary for us to go

on with this movement. Let us support the metallurgy workers’ strike in September. Let us support the struggle of the public servants. Let us join forces to build a general strike in October, for it was voted for by the National Plenary Meeting of the CUT. We have to build a general strike and raise our demands, the demands of our class. We have to break the bondage that ties us to the IMF, and not to pay the foreign debt. This is the challenge.

We want to oust this government and say that we want new general election. Because we also have to oust this National Congress where the majority is corrupt, and addicted to FHC. It is not enough to choose a new president. This national Congress helped FHC to govern and to carry out the new liberal plans. This Congress has been bought for ready money to pass the re-election of FHC. And this is the Congress that conceals all the great scandals that surround this government.

And while we are about it, we shall create the conditions for workers to govern. We need a government of workers, because we shall only be able to turn a new leaf in the life of the country if we ourselves govern it.

So, comrades: let us continue with this movement and let us shout at the top of our voices so as to make sure that they hear us:

“Get out now, get right out of here, FMI and FHC!”

When the speech was over, the crowd kept on chanting Ze Maria’s slogan.

¹ This word is used here in the liturgical sense indicating the influence of the Church. (Translator’s comment.)

² MST: the Movement of the Landless.

³ Communist Party of Brazil.

⁴ Lula: main leader of the PT.

⁵ A play on words: “coup d’état” and “blow” can be translated in the same way. (Translator’s comment)



VIDA DEL MOVIMIENTO

Irán - Solidaridad con la lucha de los estudiantes iraníes

Fin a la represión a los estudiantes iraníes! Todo el apoyo a la lucha de los estudiantes y trabajadores iraníes por las libertades democráticas!

Resolución de Solidaridad aprobada en el Congreso Mundial de la LIT.

Durante las primeras semanas de julio los estudiantes iraníes conquistaron no sólo las universidades, calles y plazas de Teherán y de otras ciudades iraníes, sino también la primera plana de los noticieros de todo el mundo. Luchaban contra la dictadura de los “líderes espirituales” <<ayatollah>> que nadie eligió, por la democracia y libertad de expresión y de prensa, por reformas, contra el “gobierno de palos y la policía mercenaria” que intentan trabar salvajemente sus movilizaciones.



sus ‘reformas’.”

Ante la represión y amenaza de muerte, los estudiantes y militantes iraníes necesitan del apoyo de todos los revolucionarios. Ellos necesitan saber que no están solos en la lucha contra el régimen iraní y que hay un movimiento internacional que apoya sus reivindicaciones y su resistencia contra la represión.

Rápidamente quedó claro que las reformas salidas del calor de las movilizaciones juvenil eran bien diferentes de las “reformas” prometidas por el actual presidente Mohamad Khatami, cuando para su elección en 1997, obtuvo entonces el apoyo de las masas estudiantiles. Ahora él ha declarado que “las desviaciones serán reprimidas con fuerza y determinación”. En realidad, la llamada “apertura y libertad” entonces propagandizada es sobre todo, la “apertura y libertad” para el capital imperialista, para la explotación y la rapiña del pueblo iraní por las multinacionales y, en fin, para una nueva colonización del país. En 1979, precisamente hace 20 años, las masas iraníes protagonizaron la Revolución Iraniana, liberando su país de la dictadura del Sha y del dominio imperialista, aunque bloqueada por el clero islámico.

El presidente Khatami y su ala reformadora se ha unido con los clericales <<ayatollah>> en la represión contra las masas estudiantiles. No fue por casualidad:

la exigencia de libertades y democracia totales apoyada en las movilizaciones masivas cuestionan profundamente el poder teocrático y no elegido del clero ultrareaccionario que se organiza detrás del “ayatollah” Ali Khamenei. Este exigió “limpieza total” y “juicio ejemplar de los contrarrevolucionarios”, amenazando con penas de muerte y llamando a las masas bajo su influencia para salir a las calles en contramanifestaciones.

Las movilizaciones estudiantiles amenazan también la estabilidad del régimen, pretendido por todas las fuerzas dominantes, para las próximas elecciones de febrero del 2000.

En su saludo al Congreso Mundial Extraordinario de la LITCI, los compañeros de la Liga Socialista Revolucionaria Iraní resumen bien los sentimientos de los estudiantes iraníes: “Hoy hay una división entre los que apoyan al presidente Khatami y aquellos estudiantes que no sólo se oponen al grupo línea dura de Khamenei, sino también están contra el presidente y

El Congreso Mundial Extraordinario de la Liga Internacional de los Trabajadores - Cuarta Internacional hace suyas las reivindicaciones de libertades democráticas de los estudiantes iraníes y responde con orgullo al llamado de solidaridad de la LSRI para con sus militantes, que luchan en difícilísimas condiciones, como también lo hacen con las masas estudiantiles.

Así, la LIT-CI llama a todas las organizaciones, militantes y simpatizantes que divulguen la lucha de los estudiantes y trabajadores iraníes contra el régimen opresor y hagan pronunciamientos de los partidos, dirigentes y organizaciones junto a las embajadas iraníes de cada país, enviando la respectiva copia para la LSRI, exigiendo la inmediata liberación de los estudiantes presos y el respeto a las libertades democráticas para el pueblo iraní.

Viva la revuelta de los estudiantes y trabajadores iraníes!

Abajo la represión de Khatami-Khamenei!

Defendamos la libertad y la vida de los estudiantes y militantes presos!

Libertades democráticas para el pueblo iraní!

Inglaterra

Tameside: trabajadores de la salud hacen huelga combativa

Martin Ralph, de Inglaterra

La huelga de los trabajadores de la salud de Tameside (un área cercana a Manchester), que duró 14 meses, empezó poco después del final del conflicto de los portuarios en 1998. Al inicio del conflicto abarcaba unos 200 trabajadores, terminó con cerca de 90 en huelga. Los números, en cualquier caso, no dan una indicación del espíritu, de lo que motivó la fuerza de trabajo, principalmente femenina, en el reconocimiento nacional que el conflicto adquirió entre sindicalistas activistas.

Ellos, como los portuarios, ganaron una experiencia incalculable, insustituible para los trabajadores británicos mas, diferente de los portuarios, ellos empezaron con una pequeña o casi inexistente experiencia sindical y ninguna experiencia en participar o en liderar una huelga.

Los huelguistas eran miembros de Unison, un sindicato del servicio público de 1.5 millones de miembros, y cuya dirección está muy próxima a Tony Blair y al gobierno laborista. El conflicto indudablemente se originó debido a la profundización de la crisis del servicio público en Inglaterra. El gobierno Blair está gastando menos en servicios que cualquier otro en los últimos 40 años (datos del *The Guardian*, 25 de agosto). El gobierno está desarrollando varios esquemas para privatizar los hospitales, el metro de Londres, escuelas y para cortar muchos otros servicios.

Muchos de los trabajadores de la sanidad han trabajado más de 20 años y eran muy cualificados para cuidar ancianos. Tenían una relación de mucho tiempo y una cuidadosa atención a los ancianos, a los cuales cuidaban en las doce casas en que trabajaban.

Los directores exigían un recorte de los salarios y condiciones de trabajo, que hubiera sido ya el segundo recorte de salarios para la fuerza de trabajo, y esto originó una huelga, que empezó en marzo de 1998. Algunos años antes, los trabajadores de las casas de salud para ancianos sufrieron un recorte en sus salarios de £6.50 (cerca de 10 dólares) por hora hasta £5 (cerca de \$8). Aceptaron el recorte, en nombre de

'salvar las casas del cierre'. A pesar de eso el año pasado, los directores exigieron una reducción hasta £3.60 (cerca de US\$5.5). La misma cifra que el gobierno laborista fijó como salario mínimo.

La situación que los huelguistas tuvieron que encarar significó que tenían que luchar dentro de su sindicato, Unison, por el apoyo y dirigirse a los ancianos, sus parientes y a la comunidad por apoyo.

En un encuentro nacional en Tameside organizado por Unison, el secretario general, Rodney Bickerstaff dijo que el conflicto de los trabajadores de las casas para ancianos era un conflicto sindical y debía ser mantenido de esa forma. Esa era la actitud no solamente de los líderes nacionales sino también de la dirección regional y hasta de la dirección de la sección..

Los huelguistas fueron desanimados por el sindicato respecto a formar un comité de apoyo a la huelga que, al principio, era asunto del comité de sección (la sección tenía cerca de 2.000 miembros, parte de los cuales eran los huelguistas). Hasta el dinero recibido para la huelga que llegaba a través de los canales oficiales de Unison y otros sindicatos y otros que les apoyaban acababan en un fondo - un fondo de la sección de Unison. Hasta el día de hoy, los huelguistas no han visto nunca un balance financiero, había dinero venido de todas partes de Inglaterra.

En mayo de 1998, un comité de apoyo a la huelga fue organizado por iniciativa del consejo de sindicatos de Tameside (una federación sindical local), con miembros de la Liga Socialista Internacionalista y un huelguista. De allí, muchas veces, surgían ideas que después eran tomadas por el sindicato y por el comité de huelga, mas el comité de apoyo siempre actuó para dar apoyo al comité de huelga y a los huelguistas. Desde el comienzo se hizo evidente que el comité de apoyo continuaría mientras los huelguistas decidiesen que querían luchar.

Otros sindicalistas, los miembros del Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (SWP), anarquistas y otros grupos políticos de izquierda iban con

frecuencia al comité de apoyo. El comité de apoyo desarrolló una orientación parecida a la de los portuarios, en que todo el mundo era bienvenido. Vinieron visitantes de Londres, Birmingham y muchos otros lugares.

El conflicto fue importante también porque mostró la orientación política de un puñado de tendencias políticas. EL secretario de la sección de Unison era un viejo militante del Socialist Party (cuyo nombre anterior era Militant), pero al final del conflicto la mayoría del comité de huelga había perdido toda la confianza en él. Tal vez no haya sido accidental que el mejor de los activistas que permanecieron y el único profesional que había dejado el Socialist Party en la área de Gran Manchester dejaran el partido en el último año. Hoy quedan tal vez tres miembros en él.

El SWP tuvo una política de piquetes de masa (así como el Workers Power). Siempre estaban cuando se estaba organizando un gran encuentro. Y traían algo de dinero, pero siempre apoyaron los intereses de su partido frente a los intereses del conflicto.

Ninguno de esos grupos políticos entendió que la estrategia tenía que ser la de unificar los trabajadores del área en una lucha por los servicios públicos y especialmente la atención a los ancianos y la sanidad y ligando con todos aquellos del país que estuviesen bajo ataques similares.

Estas ideas penetraron en las cabezas de los huelguistas en tal extensión que seis de ellos concurren a las elecciones locales de mayo del 99 y consiguieron el 12% de los votos basándose en un programa de defensa de los servicios públicos apoyados en la lucha de clases.

La mayor lección del conflicto tal vez sea esta: la huelga se mantuvo hasta junio debido al espíritu de lucha de las mujeres, y a que el papel de la dirección política y del grupo de apoyo fue ayudar a aquél espíritu y ayudar a las mujeres a desarrollar la confianza para organizar su lucha.

Down with the American intervention in Colombia!

Unity and struggle to prevent imperialist aggression!

To the workers', people's and democratic organisations of the world.

The American government is preparing another crime against mankind. After the Gulf War and the recent bomb raids on Yugoslavia, yet another military aggression is budding.

The phantom of American intervention is once more looming over Latin America.

After the invasion of Panama in 1989, after the support given to the "contras" in Nicaragua in the 80s, and the settling of military bases with the excuse of fighting against drug dealing, now Colombia is the new target for the USA government.

General Barry MacCaffrey, the "anti-drug tsar" and boss of the DEA is visiting Latin American countries trying to convince their governments to intervene against what is defined as Colombian "narco-guerrilla", which is said to draw benefits from the millions of dollars of the drug dealers. But this is a mere excuse for the intervention.

The money comes from a tax that the guerrilla organisations collect from the landowners and big companies, including some multinationals, such as Mannesman, who act in areas controlled by the guerrilla. That is why there are clashes between the "narcos" and the guerrilla. Paramilitary groups organised by the drug dealers often attack the guerrilla. So the real reason for the intervention is elsewhere.

Colombia is living an overt situation of civil war. Economic crisis and recession, corruption of the regime and the bankruptcy of a State that is totally corrupted by the drug dealers is a reality that the totally submissive to imperialism Colombian bourgeoisie has been unable to solve. All these factors made increasing numbers of peasants and other oppressed sectors get armed and stand up to confront the State openly. The only alternative they had was to put themselves under the orders of guerrilla organisations such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) who, for several decades now, have been fighting against the oppression oligarchy.

What imperialism refuses to accept is that the rebellion in Colombia should have reached a stage where the bourgeois state has lost control over 40% of its territory, and that all this region should today be in the hands of the guerrilla. The country's armed forces, even with the aid of the murderous paramilitary forces, cannot defeat the guerrilla militarily.

In the face of a situation that threatens the bourgeois stability in the regions and affects imperial political and economic interests, imperialism responds preparing a military intervention. The USA already has a military squad of "drug fighters" with more than 300 members among whom there are 200 soldiers and 100 agents of the CIA and DEA. They function as observation troops in Colombia. The death of five of them, when an aeroplane carrying combat equipment fell while overflying the FARC territory proves that those members of the armed forces are already taking active part in the struggle against the guerrilla.

Even though this is a relatively small group, it is highly probable that it works as an advanced guard for the military intervention. We must bear in mind that the invasion of Vietnam by American troops was preceded by the shipping of "military advisers", instructors and agents of the CIA. At first they did train the army of the South Vietnam, but at the same time they prepared the military intervention that caused more than 10 years of war.

At present, the government of the USA cannot directly employ large numbers of soldiers, for it is a known fact that after the Vietnam defeat public opinion of the USA will not accept the loss of American lives, unavoidable in case of an intervention.

That is why they are trying to convince the governments of the countries of the region to set up a joint military force to act. The most lackey governments, such as the Peruvian and Argentine ones, have already expressed their agreement. Fujimori was more categorical and Menem did show some hesitations.

A military intervention in Colombia would be part of an imperialistic offensive to establish a new world order under the boot of their economic and military power.

Workers' International League – Fourth International denounces this attempt at forcing the long suffering and exploited countries to make a backward movement that would place them in the position of colonies, with no sovereignty.

This summons is both, a denunciation and an appeal for the unity of all the organisations that will not accept the monstrous imperialist oppression over the whole globe. It is a duty of the workers and of the left wing parties all over the continent to carry out a campaign against a military intervention in Colombia.

This is a dramatic moment. A victorious armed aggression by the American government would, either directly or indirectly, allow imperialism to impose its will, submitting the Colombian people and increasing the oppression of Latin America and of all the exploited nations of the world.

The unleashing of an international campaign against any sort of USA intervention, either alone or disguised as a joint mission with the fake "friendly governments, is an urgent need, particularly in the Latin American countries.

What is urgently needed is the pronouncement by trade unions, students' peoples' and democratic organisations - of each and every Latin American country - against the intervention and against any sort of support or participation being offered - or accepted - by the governments to the imperialist aggression. It is necessary to organise rallies in front of embassies and consulates of the USA asserting our predisposition to fight against this intervention.

It is necessary to show imperialism and their slave-like Latin American governments the peoples of the continent will stick together to defend the struggle of the Colombian people and against imperialism and oligarchy. They must know that all the people's and democratic organisation will fight for the sovereignty of Latin American nations. They must feel that any attack against one nation will be responded as an attack against all.

No to the imperialist intervention in Colombia!

Get all the troops of DEA and CIA out of Colombia and of Latin America! Yankees go home!

No military bases in Latin American territories!

Let no government participate in any initiative of the type of intervention in Colombia!

Out with hypocritical campaign of going against the drug dealing which really only serves as an excuse for imperialist interference in Latin American countries!

For the unity of Latin American peoples in defence of Latin American independence!

August 27th 1999.

International Secretariat of the International Workers' League – Fourth International-IWL-FI

