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Sand in the wheels

Weekly newsletter - n°87 – Wednesday 27 June 2001.

TO GENOA

Content

1- After the events at Gothenburg

We printed one wrong fact last week: the demonstrator was not shot in the back but from the front. All around Europe discussions have tried to explain the facts, to evaluate consequences. All around Europe actions when demonstrating are viewed as peaceful, especially for Genoa. However there are differences on analyzing the events, and drawing conclusions from them. Non-violence is not quite the issue, since we want it to reinforce our messages and our calls, but the police reactions and legal violence, is. Here is the declaration made by ATTAC France concerning Gothenburg.

2- I was at Gothenburg

Here is Susan George's point of view concerning Gothenburg. In fact it was published in French at the same time as Christophe Aguiton's piece published in English last week. The two points of view started a very useful and interesting week with exchanges of views by readers of the French newsletter. Like it was explained there is no two different views on violence: every one is favoring non violence, but there is a variety of differences on perceiving the events.

3- The violence at Gothenburg and Barcelona

The problem of violence is central since Genoa is approaching and we all want to make it a full success with 100 000 peaceful demonstrators in the streets of the Italian city. This is why the views expressed here are important, although personal.

4- Genoa – Resisting as women

To acquiesce to the political economy put forth by, among others, the G7, is to accept the massive lay-offs, unemployment, and the exploitation of women, workers and children in the poorest countries. It means accepting that the world, with its cities, its countryside, its men and women, its languages and cultures, submit to the law of the market.

5- Culture and knowledge are not for sale

Even before the communication invasion took our ways of life by storm, grassroots organizations had begun to understand how communications can be used as strategic tools for favorable action in a more democratic and pluralistic society. This was the idea that led to the creation of the Communication Forum, which took place during the second People's Summit in Quebec, Canada, the third week of April, prior to the presidential summit in which the Free Trade of the Americas Area (FTAA) agreements were discussed.

6- WTO Tidbits

Developing countries' adjustment difficulties are recognised by a WTO committee - while a transnational company airs its views on state rights to refuse investments; a US production slowdown and its world-wide consequences are predicted; the US wants changes in the trade dispute settlement system; the Ministerial Declaration on the Environment gets mired in disputes; and a debate begins on the merits of including investments in WTO rulings.

7- Stop Sale !

In New Guinea thousands of protesters have stopped IMF and WB policies and reforms.



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After the events at Gothenburg

By ATTAC France

We shall not allow opposition to liberal globalisation to be depicted as criminal.

As a popular educational movement with some involvement in action, Attac France is not intending to avoid the issue of violence during demonstrations nor to offer some stereotyped discourse on the subject. To make our position better understood, let us first recall some facts - both basic facts and facts related to present circumstances

Attac is a movement which, in the thirty or so countries where it exists, has chosen to act in a non-violent manner without ever yielding, as regards principles, to the pressures of authorities that refuse dialogue (which -, let us make plain, - was not the case in Sweden). This choice is not open to compromise

• The three significant factors at Gothenburg, and extremely worrying as regards the first two, are : the use of live ammunition by the police in the course of an operation to maintain order, quite without precedent for decades in a democratic country; the autistic isolation of the Commission and the Governments of the Fifteen who, despite growing disquiet on the part of public opinion regarding the consequences of liberal globalisation, persisted in their determination to "liberalise" to the utmost; finally the size of the mobilisation - about twenty thousand citizens from numerous countries, and the great majority of them non-violent, who demonstrated on the occasion of this last European Council under Swedish Presidency.

Let us say first of all that we totally disassociate ourselves from the groups of violent trouble-makers who devastated the centre of Gothenburg during the counter-summit. Such behaviour is totally unacceptable for three reasons. Firstly it constitutes a breach of the democratically agreed practices in operation on the occasion of large gatherings opposed to the neoliberal policies of international and European institutions. Then, because of the priority attention given it by the media, it enables the stakes at issue and the extent of these mobilisations to be overlooked. Finally, and more serious still, it provides, at an opportune moment, arguments for all those, governments and business organisations in particular, who disquieted, with just cause, by the

popular rejection which their policies are arousing, believe that they have found there a means of turning the tables, by attempting to criminalise opposition to a profoundly unjust social order.

The Swedish authorities bear a heavy responsibility in this regard. They did not respect the series of undertakings agreed with the counter-summit organisations regarding the form of intervention to be employed by the police - whose attitude was often provocative. In particular, they permitted the use of live ammunition against the demonstrators. We formally condemn this initial occurrence in the management of demonstrations in Europe.

More generally, it is the attitude of the Brussels Commission and the European Union Governments, meeting as the European Council, which poses a problem. At the very moment when strong opposition to liberal globalisation is being expressed, and not in the street alone, they thought good at Gothenburg, along with George Bush, to request that a new dose of trade exchange liberalisation affecting agriculture, services etc. be put on the agenda for the WTO ministerial conference planned for Qatar in November. They are thus giving good grounds for all those who put them in the same category as the G8, the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and the WTO, as authors and agents of the neoliberal policies which have wrought havoc as these same institutions very well know and understand.

The European decision makers and others are fully aware of the unpopularity of their policies. In pursuing them as if this did not matter, in taking no account of public opinion, they are actively contributing to exacerbating tensions and downgrading democracy and by this course of action they are creating the conditions for depicting citizen protest as criminal. This irresponsible blindness must cease and give way to attentive listening to the demands of societies.

In the coming months - at Genoa in July for the G8 Meeting; in various towns around the world at the time of the WTO Conference in Qatar next November; during the Belgian Presidency of the EU in the coming six months - all of the social movements which think that a different world is possible and that it is imperative to make it come about, are going to continue making their voices clearly heard. They will do it with determination, refusing to let themselves be taken hostage either by groups of provocateurs or by the political



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authorities opposing their constitutional right to peaceful demonstration.

Attac France congratulates Attac Sweden very warmly on the remarkable work carried out, on the coordination achieved to create the conditions for public discussion without assistance from the European authorities, for the quality of the debates which marked the counter-summit and for the success of the non-violent demonstrations (20,000 people on Saturday 9th June) all of which (though partially concealed) constitute the reality of Gothenburg.

Paris, 19 June 2001.

ATTAC France. attacfr@attac.org

Translation : Prudence Dwyer, volunteer translator
cooridtrad@attac.org

I was at Gothenburg

By Susan George
(translation from French)

ATTAC-Sweden currently has between 4000 and 5000 members; in proportion to the Swedish population, this is equal or greater than ATTAC's presence in France, even after less than one year in existence. This is recognized as a significant political phenomenon.

ATTAC Sweden worked for several months in preparing for the Summit at Gothenburg, negotiating with the government and the police so that the demonstrations could take place in relative calm. The president of the board of ATTAC, Hans Abramsson, who holds a university seat in Peace and Conflict Studies, was at the center of this preparation, and America Vera-Zavala even met the prime minister Goran Persson (the summit's newspaper "Metro" published a photo of America, in his white shirt embellished with the red emblem of ATTAC, next to Persson). All this was conducted in the Swedish tradition of cooperation and consensus and, according to the members of ATTAC, a mutual confidence had been established.

Alas, all these efforts have been in vain. The problems began Thursday afternoon. The government had opened more schools so the protesters could sleep inside them, and a rumor spread that there were firearms hidden inside a school; its occupants refused to exit, the police came with immense contraptions to block all the access points to the schools and several scuffles between the police and the protesters took place

in a nearby park, where the police were on horseback, contrary to one of the promises made during the preliminary negotiations. Despite all that, nothing very serious happened Thursday, even as the tension began to rise.

Friday, the occupants belonging to the movements "Globalization from Below", "Ya Basta" and "Tute Bianche" had been evacuated. On Friday, I was personally in the alternative village of tents hosting multiple organizations and all the forums. Yet at less than 500 meters from there the confrontation and brawls had begun.

On the grand avenue the citizens of Gothenburg compare to the Champs-Élysées, not a single window remained unbroken at the end of the evening. About two hundred people had succeeded in shattering a thousand or so during the brawl. The police, completely over armed, once the windows had been destroyed, shot real bullets and at least one person was seriously injured in the abdomen; others less gravely. The Swedish have never experienced similar violence on their territory and consequently are profoundly shocked.

I condemn plainly and clearly these acts of violence for the following reasons:

-Apart from the philosophical positions on the question and in addition to the fact that our Swedish colleagues are quite traumatized, violence is invariably the game of our adversary. Even in the case of provocation, even when the police is responsible for having opened hostilities, as is often the case, we are all shoved into the same category. Evidently the media does not talk about this. The ideas, the reasons for our opposition, and our propositions are completely overshadowed by violence.

-The State defines itself by its "monopoly of legitimate violence". Whoever believes s/he is capable of confront and even winning on this battle ground haven't delved too deep into political analysis. Whoever thinks that breaking windows and "some cops" "threaten capitalism" are great strategies hasn't thought much about the big picture in politics.

-We can not build a far-reaching, popular movement on a base of people who are ready to fall. Everyone who is afraid of tear gas and violence--people of my age, families with children, those who are out of shape--would remain



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absent and not come to a single one of our demonstrations.

-It's not democratic. Frankly, I've had enough of these groups that are never there for the preparatory work, who don't do anything political on a daily basis, yet flock to the manifestations like wrecking crews ready to destroy; these who could have been aided by the agreements negotiated by the others. Moreover, this breaks the alliances between those that condemn violence and those that tolerate it while refusing to take part in it.

-One insults those that refuse and condemn violence and treat them as mere "reformists; but the oxymoron of "reform-revolution" has no sense in the actual context and in my opinion is not what poses a problem. This is not a "revolution" to divide social movements and alienate potential allies; this is not a revolution to solicit sympathy for our adversaries by the vast majority of the population; this is not a revolution to oppose all partial measures (like the Tobin Tax) and await for "The Big Day", which is in fact quite idiotic and counter-productive.

In sum, I've had enough of these tyrants and I fear that if this sort of violence continues uninhibited, it will ultimately destroy our movement, the most beautiful political hope for thirty years.

Susan George
Translation: Andrea Ramone, volunteer translator,
coordinat@attac.org

The violence at Gothenburg

Debate

1- The messages about what happened in Sweden, agents provocateurs attacking demonstrators in Barcelona, and the stockpiling of body bags in Genoa indicate that the powers that be are going into high gear in their battle against the opponents of neoliberal globalization.

It appears to me that the bad guys could well be setting things up for a dramatic incident in Genoa which will be used to prove to the world that the powers opposing neoliberal globalization are violent enemies of society who must be stopped at any cost. I think this will be used to rationalize a marked escalation of attacks on progressive groups and movements of all kinds.

In this context, I see it as virtually important for all of us to do a serious assessment of where the anti-globalization movement is at today. Cindy Milstein argued in her article "Something Did Start in Quebec City: North America's Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Movement" that "Care must nevertheless be taken not to let the diversity of tactics principle morph into a code for 'anything goes.' As noted by L. A. Kauffman in her recent essay, 'Turning Point,' already 'in certain radical circles . . . the militant acts at the front lines are being seen-and celebrated-in isolation, as part of a growing mystique of insurrection.' These direct actions are not yet, and perhaps will never become, insurrections. Viewing them as such could lead to the use of tactics that would be potentially suicidal for this still-fledgling movement-as the historical examples of the Weather Underground and Red Army Faction show. Without a bit more definition to the diversity principle, and a way to make people accountable to any parameters decided on, the anti-capitalist movement is wide open to stupidity or sabotage -- or at least more than it needs to be."

Given these recent developments, Milstein and Kaufman's warning takes on even greater significance.

In solidarity,
Sid Shniad

2- The violence in Gothenburg will hurt Attac. Even though the police stress that Attac is a peaceful organization, and behaved well during the riots in Gothenburg, Attac will be connected with the violence, if one does not fully and clearly stand up against the violence executed by at least groups in Göteborgsaktionen 2001 - AFA and RTC.

But Attac doesn't. Instead it blames the Police. Even with desinformation and lies. As of newsletter no 86 - quote: "The violence at Gothenburg In Gothenburg besides the tens of thousand peaceful demonstrators and the successful mobilizations, a handful of persons disturbed the city violently crushing windows in particular. For the first time in Europe the police shot demonstrators. One of them was hit in the back and is in a critical state, others were injured. The debate on violence therefore started. This is one of the opinions."

A - the police were NOT shooting demonstrators. There were three big demonstrations, all left alone



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by the police and in full cooperation between the police and the organizations. The police, however fired - in self-defense - at violent hooligans. (One may even describe them as terrorist.) And that is pot for the first time in Europe. As far as I know police in Germany, Italy, Spain, Northern Ireland has been shooting at terrorists. And police in Denmark shot around 100 rounds in riots not long ago. The police manage to distinguish between hooligans and demonstrators. Attac seems not to.

B - the badly injured young man were NOT shot in the back. He was shot in the stomach, from front, confronting the police and after several attacks towards the police.

Michael Anderson

3- 1. Apparently several European media says the 19-yearold was shot in the back. However, videotapes of the incident clearly show that he was shot in the belly (he's approaching the policemen with a raised stick and a cobblestone, he's shot, he turns around and walks a few steps, clutches the *exit wound* and then falls to the ground). The policeman who fired at him is nevertheless under investigation for misconduct.

2. This is not the first time in Europe a riot is met by gunfire. This happened, for example, at a larger scale than in Gothenburg, in Nørrebro, Copenhagen in 1993.

3. Guns were not fired at *demonstrators*, and certainly not at peaceful demonstrators, but at rioters attacking an already injured policeman on the ground with cobblestones.

The failure of the police to stop the riot without resorting violence is deplorable, and deserves strong criticism. But it is bad enough as it is, there is no need to spread a false and even worse account of what happened. Exaggerations can only lead to even more violence.

Malin Eriksson

4- I would like to point out because of Christophe Aguiton's article that the violence in Gothenburg is not the first case of shooting against demonstrators. The 18th of may 1993 the Copenhagen police shot and injured 10 people on Nørrebro in Copenhagen, the night after a national referendum on EU policy in Denmark. bye, Árni Daniel Júlíusson

Genoa – Resisting as women

By Selima Ghezali

To acquiesce to the political economy put forth by, among others, the G7, is to accept the massive lay-offs, unemployment, and the exploitation of women, workers and children in the poorest countries. It means accepting that the world, with its cities, its countryside, its men and women, its languages and cultures, submit to the law of the market. This means simply submitting to the unilateral interests defined by a group of multinational financiers whose power today is greater than that of sovereign states. Thus power is removed from citizens: this happens even in the developed countries and states where citizens exist in their own right and not simply as statistics. To surrender to the law of the market is also to acquiesce to a new world order with its murderous conflicts, its epidemics caused by odious merchandise, its famines, its pollution, the rise of extremism, racialism and fanaticism, simply by claiming powerlessness. Whether it is ex-Yugoslavia, Algeria, Somalia people always talk about helplessness, while this helplessness is actually organised.

To acquiesce to all this is to give up the rights of men and women, the right of societies and peoples to participate in forming their present and their future. This renouncement is not simple. It has dire consequences. It means, and I weigh my words well, a regression that is quite unprecedented in human history, because here we have a regression progressing without any ideology and without any religion; it is a regression that is happening under the apparently neutral aegis of the market. There are those who claim that there is no alternative to the medicines prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G7 because of the market imperative. But in doing so they create a fate supposed to be inevitable. But this fatalism carries its own darkness; a dimming of possible horizons, with their crowds manipulated and led to kill themselves. A darkness of the horizon of despair and nihilistic terror. It is vital to resist this. Here I bear witness to an infinitesimal part of the resistance.

I was born thirty years ago in a country at war. All my childhood I was as if bathed continually in the whispering of the women and certain recurring words: arrest, torture, liquidation, assassination, bomb, cut throats, vengeance, war...All these words constituted the background of my childhood. The men were not visible, they were at



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war. Even when they were present, they were not visible, we didn't see them. It was only when they came back, after military victory, as warriors, that we saw the men and did not see the women any more. This visibility caused by military victory was to have a disastrous effect and we are still living them. The warriors came home, attired in their glory. They eradicated the last traces of any other kind of resistances, of all the forms of struggle that were not violent, that were not relationships of might. This attitude that they developed when they took power after national independence, installed the relationship of brute power as a structural element in all the relationships to the interior of society; citizens with their administrations and their governors, of men with their women, parents with their children. All the relationships in society were structured around this idea of the relationship of power. Might is right.

Today there is a new war in my country. I have children and they are growing up with this murmur of war and the same words are back: torture, bomb, cut throats, rape, kidnapping, concentration camps. All these words are back. Quite simply the world has evolved, and the leaders, with an extraordinary subtlety and sophistication, have refined the ways in which to oppress people. Today the struggle has been fragmented, so that all the struggles that should be going in the same direction of liberation are back in fictive duality, opposed to each other and maintaining the system of the oppressor. Today the question of identity, as expressed for example in Algeria by the Berber question, by the question of Islam and by the Arab identity is fragmented and put into conflicting positions, each parameter one against the other.

Today the claim to a right of identity, of the right to cultural is placed in conflict with the right of universality. The rights of women are set against the rights of men and the other way round. So that at the level of the Islamists, the fundamentalists or traditionalists who are not Islamists. They all constructed their discourse on a negation of womanise' rights, on the right of men to control women. But today, in the middle of the war, the Islamists focus hypocritically on the rights of women - in order to conceal the violations of Human Rights committed by the authorities and the government. Thus while ten years ago we mobilised as feminists to claim the integration of the rights of women with the Human Rights, and we demanded that womanise' rights should form an integral part of Human Rights; our

purpose was not to use this today to protest against the violation of womanise' rights as a protest against violations of Human Rights.

It is this fragmentation in the wake of economic globalisation that is the underlying cause of the price that women in Algeria are paying the price for today. They are paying physically with rapes, kidnapping, assassinations, but also with the flesh of their flesh: with their children, arrested, imprisoned, and massacred. They pay a high price in their function as citizens, as citizenship is denied them, since legislation does not recognise the majority of women, does not recognise the rights of women. They pay also on a symbolic level the abject instrumentalisation by power instead of its claimed defence of the rights of women. It uses women as a justification for repression of men, and this is absolutely inadmissible.

More, the partial mobilisations are counter-productive mobilisations. In fact, a mobilisation against one kind of violence that is not a mobilisation against all kinds of violence feeds one or the other of these kinds of violence. The war and all those who support it in any manner have abandoned the struggle for women's' rights. The struggle for women's rights requires peace in order to make itself heard, in order to impose its own logic and in order to participate in a plurality of expressions. Today it is arms that have the say; those who chose their camp have their say. For either one is in the camp that tortures, or else one is in the camp that cuts throats. But there is no way one can be in the camp of those who say "No. I refuse to dirty my hands with blood." I claim for everyone the duty and the obligation to sit round a table, to discuss without allowing free play for confusion, without allowing the Islamists to say that women are stealing jobs. It is not women who are stealing jobs it is the structural adjustment plan. The World Bank and the economic choices that rob men of their jobs. All the consequences of globalisation lead to oppression of the people, and therefor to oppression of women. All forms of oppression: unemployment, exclusion, war, pollution, all this is felt also by women, and therefor is part of the women's struggle.

If we decide to go together in order to prevent fictive dualities it is to prohibit the struggle, to induce solidarity and to create a better world, a world that is not regulated by the struggle that legitimises violence against another violence.

Selima Ghezali
Editor in chief of La Nation, Algeria

Translation: Anne Shalit, volunteer translators
coordinat@attac.org

WTO Tidbits

By Sally Burch

Even before the communication invasion took our ways of life by storm, grassroots organizations had begun to understand how communications can be used as strategic tools for favorable action in a more democratic and pluralistic society. This was the idea that led to the creation of the Communication Forum, which took place during the second People's Summit in Quebec, Canada, the third week of April, prior to the presidential summit in which the Free Trade of the Americas Area (FTAA) agreements were discussed. The subject of communications is a new theme now being addressed; it was not even raised in the first People's Summit that took place in Santiago, Chile back in 1998.

In its conclusions presented at the plenary session of the People's Summit, the Forum, believing the right to communicate is a fundamental human right that serves and sustains all other rights, stressed how this right must be preserved and extended in face of the new challenges of globalization.

In addition, it indicated four important tendencies that have taken form since the first Summit. The first is the concentration and monopolization of communication into the hands of big conglomerates, which symbolizes the way of the neoliberal economy. The second is the amount of control this concentration implies over information and knowledge, and the homogenization of opinion; control which happens, among other reasons, because of the imposition of intellectual property rights.

A third tendency noted is the pushing of the technological revolution, one of the pillars of the globalization process. Finally, the fourth regards the commercialization of information, knowledge, and culture, conducted in a way where any possibility of exercising individual rights is annulled.

This further implies (here also referring to the conclusions of the Workshop of Communication and Citizenship at the World Social Forum, Porto

Alegre, January 2001 (See ALAI 327, 13/02/01)) a type of "neutral and universal" information has been bred, one that negates pluralism and diversity, whether it be cultural, linguistic, or other.

Apart from these tendencies, the endeavors undertaken by independent and community media were pointed out, and their contributions toward the democratizing of political systems highlighted; in example, their assistance in bringing down repressive regimes.

The forum invited the People's Summit to recognize communication as a critical sector of the social struggle, one which must be seriously considered in future actions, at both theoretical and practical levels.

This was further detailed by the following recommendations:

- That the right to communicate is recognized as a human right, by civil society as well as political and international petitions.

- That all international economic accords guarantee state sovereignty in regulating over issues dealing with the communication sector (in terms of process and content)

- That the right to communicate is recognized constitutionally and duly legislated and protected by means of regulations and policies (i.e. anti-monopoly laws)

- Considering how communication really belongs to the common wealth, corporations must pay for the use of public space. The funds obtained must then be used to assure the sustainability of means of independent and community communication, and must be distributed and administrated in accordance with the principles of economic solidarity and loose control of civil society.

- That the market economy is not the only model used while building the communication infrastructure. One must consider the people as producers and contributors of information, not just as consumers.

- That universal access must become the standard applied to all new technology, and that access to existing technology must be firmly held.

- A new discussion and permanent public debate shall be called for, regarding the new problems



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caused by the new technology, including privacy rights, intellectual property rights, and a transparent internal decision making process for corporations and governments.

-That civil society and NGOs must reinvent the terms of discussion in order to devise policy and regulations for the communication field.

The presentation concluded that Culture and knowledge are not for Sale.

Sally Burch from Correo Informativo informativo@attac.org

Translation: Andrea Ramone, volunteer translator coordinador@attac.org

Culture and knowledge are not for sale

By the ATTAC work group on "International Treaties"

1) Heavy costs of adjustment recognized by the Committee for Trade and Development

In its contribution to the UN International Conference on Finance for Development, the WTO Committee for Trade and Development (CTD) recognises that there is a link between trade liberalization, economic growth, development and poverty reduction; "Some developing countries, including the least developed among them, face serious challenges when confronted with the costs of adjustment to trade liberalization in the short and medium term."

2) A state's intention to defend its rights seen through the eyes of a transnational company

Metalclad indicated its disappointment at the Mexican government's intention to appeal against the decision condemning it to pay damages to the US company for having prevented it from setting up a reprocessing factory for toxic waste in a place in the North-East of the country. The Mexican decision to appeal "is in itself an act demonstrating the hostility of this country to those who in all good faith invest there"! The company is also to appeal.

3) The consequences for NAFTA of a US production slowdown

The WTO Annual Report predicts that Canada and Mexico, linked to the US by NAFTA, will be hard hit by a US production slowdown. (So what of the FTAA??) The economies of South-East Asia will be

particularly affected by a drop in US imports of telecom equipment, of which they are the main suppliers. Asia has become the biggest net world importer, overtaking Europe.

4) The US tries to alter the present system for settling disputes

This alternative plan for settling multilateral disputes could this facility being separate from the WTO. "This should speed up procedure and reduce obstacles to a minimum". According to the Americans, taking disputes to the WTO should be the "last chance option".

5) Trade and Environment

A contribution by the EU, Norway, Canada, Hungary and Switzerland attempts to define elements which could enter into the Ministerial Declaration on the Environment. Apart from the traditional EU stand on the defense of the precautionary principle and the clarification of WTO rules on multilateral environmental agreements, this contribution also brings support to the developing countries on the question of prohibited commodities. This has been generally considered as a way for the EU to solicit the support of developing countries for its stand on the environment.

Numerous divergencies remain, and the next phase should go beyond generalities and begin to attack specific problems.

Argentina, supported by Peru, Malaysia and India, accuses the EU of using environmental questions as a red herring to draw pressure away from its heavily subsidized agricultural sector.

The US told the Europeans that it failed to understand what they were seeking to achieve by introducing the precautionary principle into the WTO. The Americans themselves had no desire whatsoever even to discuss it. Besides, for them, external transparency should be an integral part of any discussion on the environment.

Pakistan, for its part, abandoned its traditional position by declaring that it could conceive a more important rôle for the "Trade and Environment Committee".

6) Trade and Investment

A certain number of countries, among them the EU, Japan and Korea, are in favour of including



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investment rules in the WTO. In so far as investments linked to services are already included in the GATS, it would appear feasible to extend WTO rules to cover all forms of DIA (Direct Investment Abroad). In face of this stand, India, Malaysia and Egypt amongst others remain opposed to the notion of a multilateral agreement on investments, because binding rules could limit the options for developing countries to set entry conditions for DIAs. They also issued a reminder that developing countries still in process of implementing the Uruguay Round agreements are not in a position to accept new commitments.

Adopting an intermediate position, Australia, Argentina and Brazil have declared themselves ready to consider a system of multilateral investment rulings at the WTO in exchange for concessions in the agricultural sector (reduction in export subsidies and improved market access.)

Hongkong, Singapore, South Africa and others, although they are not against an agreement on investment, feel that to embark on discussions at this stage could have negative repercussions on the pre-Doha process and create problems in Doha itself.

The US remains sceptical of the merits of WTO investment rules.

For the time being there is no debate on whether or not to incorporate in such an agreement a mechanism for settling disputes between investors and states (like those existing in Chapter 11 of the NAFTA agreement and in hundreds of bilateral treaties on investments).

Work group on "International Treaties",
omc.marseille@attac.org

Stop Sale!

By The Post-Courier (Murdoch daily in Port Moresby)

Port Moresby ground to a halt yesterday as thousands of chanting students defied police bans and marched on several key areas to protest against moves to privatise the Papua New Guinea Banking Corporation and enforce compulsory land registration.

The bank privatisation and land mobilisation are key reforms sought by the World Bank and IMF. Yesterday's protest brought to a head days of nationwide disruptions to businesses as bank staff went on strike over pay entitlements while students demanded that IMF and World Bank officials quit PNG.

Thousands of University of PNG students were joined yesterday by others as public transport ground to halt. Some buses were forced to carry protesters to various assembly points. The action targeted the capital's central business district. Other noisier protests were staged around the Australian High Commission, US Embassy, the National Parliament and the Prime Minister's offices.

One witness said police fired warning shots at Waigani as thousands of early morning commuters were stopped from travelling to work on public buses. No deaths or serious injuries were reported.

The protests were the biggest and most widespread in Port Moresby since a revolt by the army in March over now-abandoned plans to reduce their numbers.

Local reporters covering yesterday's protests said some of the protesters looted small stall holders in the Waigani area. A radio talkback show was flooded with callers supporting the students with one claiming: "Today is just the beginning. There is more to come." Another caller said the World Bank and IMF were using PNG as "a guinea pig to pay for their causes".

Others called for a halt to privatisation plans until after next year's national elections.

The Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta refused to bow last night to student demands that he meet their leaders to accept a petition. Hundreds chanted outside his offices as heavily-armed police threw up protective cordons.

Meanwhile, the privatisation plans suffered another setback late yesterday when the National Court ruled that the government's Privatisation Commission was liable for outstanding liabilities of the PNGBC, including compensation to sacked senior officials.