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Newsletter 88- page 1(1)
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Sand in the wheels

Weekly newsletter - n°88 – Wednesday 04 July 2001.

MOBILIZE FOR THE GSF

Content

1- World Bank Nervous over Growth of Bond Boycott

The World Bank Bonds Boycott marked its one-year anniversary in April 2001 with an announcement that nearly 30 entities throughout the U.S., including city governments, trade unions, churches and investment firms, have committed not to buy World Bank bonds. Officials at the World Bank are getting the jitters. At the same time we learned that during the mobilizations against the G8 meeting, symbolic actions will occur in the city. (More details soon)

2- Genoa Social Forum, alternatives and resistance

As we come closer to the events, information are starting to be more accurate. The GSF will start July 15 in Genoa, the city that is supposed to welcome the G8 Summit July 20 and 21. We will discuss and work on alternatives and proposals: another world is possible as we like to say when the only politics made are corporate driven ones.

3- WTO Tidbits

China's path to WTO entry is cleared of obstacles, while tensions develop between China, Japan and the US at the APEC forum. Meanwhile in the West, the EU Plan for Sustainable Development (a contribution to the RIO+10 summit in September) gets seriously watered down - although, at the TACD, US and EU consumers make joint demands on governments. At the WTO, reform of the Dispute Settlement Body looks to go ahead with less opposition than expected.

4- Tobin Tax on the agenda of the ECOFIN Council agenda for Liege

In answer to the appeal put forward by the ONGs, particularly 11.11.11, ATTAC and the Belgian action networks against financial speculation, we are hoping that tens of thousands of people will demonstrate peacefully in favour of the Tobin tax at Liege in September 2001 at the time of the ECOFIN Council. The Member States should not block the initiative of the Belgian Presidency but should on the contrary seize this opportunity to jointly promote within the heart of the international institutions the establishment of a tax on financial transactions.

5- Belgian presidency of the European Union

It is at least the moment and ATTAC's responsibility, with the Belgian presidency of the EC, with ECOFIN meeting in Liege in September and especially European summit of the chiefs of state and government in December to Laeken-Bruxelles, to get together the maximum of citizens and political organisations favouring another Europe, a social, ecological, democratic and united Europe.

6- Police Brutality

The participants at the Asia-Pacific solidarity conference had therefore become hostages of the Indonesian crisis. The Islamic militia justified the attack on the globalization seminar in the name of anti-communism. It also claimed we desired to disrupt the meeting of the MPR (the assembly of people who are granted the exclusive power to render a president destitute) set to take place in two months; next august!

7- Stop Sale !

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



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World Bank Nervous over Growth of Bond Boycott

By Todd Tucker and Neil Watkins

The World Bank Bonds Boycott marked its one-year anniversary in April 2001 with an announcement that nearly 30 entities throughout the U.S., including city governments, trade unions, churches and investment firms, have committed not to buy World Bank bonds. Officials at the World Bank are getting the jitters.

Among the new institutions that have made the commitment in just the past few weeks are the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the International Longshoremen Workers Union (ILWU), and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly.

These new institutions join the international unions of Communication Workers of America (CWA) and United Electrical Workers (UE); the cities of San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and Takoma Park, MD; the religious communities of the New York Province of the Marianist Brothers and Priests, and the School Sisters of Notre Dame; the Central Labor Councils of San Francisco, Alameda County, and Northeast Indiana; and various union locals including SEIU Local 250 and United University Professions (the largest AFT affiliate with 24,000 members).

Also this spring, the student governments at Clark University and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) passed resolutions encouraging their administrations to adopt the boycott.

Said Takoma Park city council member Marc Elridge, "If we're spending our money, we ought to have something to say about how it's used. And it should not be used to support policies that we wouldn't support in our own country."

The World Bank is becoming increasingly concerned about the growing campaign. Calvert Group's statement of policy against buying Bank bonds caused the Bank to be concerned that the growing campaign might endanger its 'AAA' bond rating, and similar resolutions more recently from Harrington Investments, and L.L. Blake and Associates have enhanced that fear. High-level Bank staff have lobbied city councils against passage of a resolution in Madison, Boulder, and Los Angeles. Moreover, we have heard that the boycott is encouraging liberal Bank staff to move the Bank in a more sustainable direction on some

issues, out of fear that the challenge presented by the boycott will grow. Bank staff have referenced the boycott as a reason to develop quickly, for example, a more "green" procurement policy.

As the campaign grows in the U.S., so it is growing around the world. Social movements in Pakistan, Honduras, Italy, and Senegal have recently joined others in Asia, the Americas, and Africa that are already working on the boycott. The group Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Democracy (ASEED) is planning a Europe-wide launch of the boycott this summer.

The World Bank Bonds Boycott demands an end to structural adjustment programs and similarly harmful lending practices; 100% cancellation of debts owed to the World Bank without using citizens' tax dollars; and an end to environmentally destructive project lending, such as for oil, mining, and gas projects.

The campaign works this way: the World Bank gets about 80% of its money through the sale of bonds (listed under the name 'International Bank for Reconstruction and Development'). Large institutional investors, including unions and their pension funds, city and state governments, universities, churches, and mutual fund investors, are potential buyers of World Bank bonds. The campaign works to get these types of investors to adopt resolutions against buying the bonds in the future. The boycott hits the Bank at its twin Achilles' heels: its public image and its financing. The World Bank is trying to repaint itself as an institution that promotes social welfare. But the reality is that the Bank continues to push policies like user fees on health care, privatization of essential services like water provision, and policies that suppress workers' abilities to organize and raise their standard of living. The boycott demands an end to these policies, which place corporate rights over human rights.

Acting Locally for Global Justice: Genoa and Beyond

People across Europe are making plans to come to Genoa, Italy and protest at the G-8 summit to be held there. Activists around the world have been pressuring President George Bush and others to in turn use their influence at the World Bank and IMF to write off 100% of the debts of Global South (and East) countries, while they are in Genoa. In the US and beyond, people are making plans to come to Washington for the summit and mobilization that is being planned from September



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28 – October 4, 2001 at the time of the Annual Meetings of the IMF and World Bank.

Simultaneously, people's initiatives for economic justice in communities around the world, which are increasingly reeling under the effects of growing corporate globalization, are burgeoning. The World Bank Bonds Boycott campaign is one valuable tool for making the connections between the local and the global. The boycott is an important way to build greater democracy over how investment decisions are made in our own communities and institutions.

You can organize in your community against the cut-off of social services and welfare there, while protesting that your tax dollars may be used to cause the same harm to low-income people elsewhere through the World Bank. Ask your city council, church, union, or college to pass a resolution or ordinance that it will not invest in World Bank bonds in the future, until the World Bank makes fundamental changes. It doesn't matter whether your institution already holds these bonds or not (indeed, whether your even institution invests or not) – the political pressure on the Bank is the same. .

For more information on starting a boycott campaign in Europe or in participating in a strategy meeting on the campaign in Genoa, contact ASEED Europe for more information and an organizer's kit. This and other resources are available via the internet at the addresses listed below:

A SEED Europe; tel: +31-20-6682236; fax: +31-20-4682275; email: wbbb@riseup.net ; Web: www.aseed.net or www.worldbankboycott.org

Todd Tucker is an organizer with the US World Bank Bonds Boycott campaign and Neil Watkins is the campaign's coordinator.

Genoa Social Forum, alternatives and resistance

By Laurent Jesover

As we come closer to the dates of mobilizations, information start to be more accurate and things get clearer. From the G8 itself some news are worth mentioning, although everybody know they will hold their conference on the 20th and 21st of July, or try to at least, and that the G8 is a "rich man club".

But where will they sleep? Not yet totally confirmed information are telling us that Bush Junior (US President) will bring its fleet and its airplane-carrier to sleep in it. Well Jacques Chirac (French President) will bring his also, probably the new nuclear one that had propellers problem on its first sailing away, the "Charles de Gaulle". Please take them seriously they are the big boys. Silvio Berlusconi is therefore bringing also its fleet, and since nobody seem to want to sleep ashore will offer, as the inviting power, some beds to the powerful guests that cannot bring also their fleet. One thing for sure, a cruise-line boat first named "European Vision" just put at sea a week ago in St Nazaire (France) is sailing to Genoa to accommodate some of the "little big boys" (that's in this crew where actually you can find some women) i.e. the real big boys' helpers.

Not only did we see the boat but we renamed it "Tobin Tax Vision" during an alternate ceremony that took place at the same time of the official one in St Nazaire. It sailed out okay from the harbor and we are waiting for it in Marseille (where it supposes to stop) to welcome it with due respect to the ship.

Photos

<http://attac.org/genes2001/informations/ttvision.htm>

More seriously the organizers of the Genoa Social Forum are awaiting 100 000 demonstrators from Italia, and other organizations from abroad are talking of a minimum of 10 000 protesters from all over. Among them will come a Russian delegation, with for the first time 50 delegates from independent unions and diverse movements. They will travel from Siberia, Astrakhan, Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, get together in a bus and will arrive to Genoa.

You'll find the draft program (June 27 version) of the Genoa Social Forum starting on July 15 at: <http://attac.org/genes2001/documents/docmob2p rog.htm>

The Italian government is finally deciding to talk a little with the organizers, and some of the proposals made to welcome people, women and men, young and old, are already accepted. Normally for instance the Shengen agreement (no border control) will not stop but, says the government, some ID controls will happen nevertheless at the borders.



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In Genoa, one train station will remain open (Brignole) and two highway exists (East Genoa and Nervi). The Yellow zone (the zone that took away most of the city around the red Zone, forbidden zone) where it was not allowed to be more than five at the same time in the streets, not allow to give away leaflets, not allow to walk and talk politics, not allow... (isn't this reminding you of something else?) is somewhat lighter. At least in the West of the Red zone where probably the July 20 mobilizations will take place. North of the Red zone and East of it toward the airport will be most probably taken away from the Italian democracy system and right to speak and protest will be denied.

You can find maps with information on it (although some of them will change as we will be closer to the real dates of mobilizations) at:

- <http://attac.org/genes2001/19juillet/plan.htm>
and
- <http://attac.org/genes2001/20juillet/plan.htm>

Nonetheless we will be there to work, and we will be thousands to do so. One of the major themes will be the debt and how to guarantee the fulfillment of basic human needs and how to get out of the vicious circle of the debt. Talks on the financial system, the migration problems, housing rights, gender issues and so on... will gather experts and people from the Global South, but also from Europe and elsewhere. You'll be able to find one of the preparatory documents at:

<http://attac.org/genes2001/documents/docdet5en.htm>

For us, although we will be participating to all the workshops and demonstrations (some surprises I am not yet allowed to talk about...), information will be one of our major contributions to the mobilizations. We will not be the only ones of course. Coordinations are worked on and seek for. For instance for the buses and carpools in France a SMS system (Cell phone message system) will provide live information on the borders status and city news, to help everyone during their travel.

But we are looking for help, especially in English. Therefore if you were to be in Genoa (and the earlier the better), are able to write properly and are understanding Italian (reading skills), we will need you. You can send your personal info to information.genes2001@attac.org and we will contact you. Italian organizations are working on an alternate pressroom where we will need an English speaker writer (or more than one) that will reinforce our crew in French and Spanish,

probably in German as well. (For Spanish and German, if you are native speakers and read this, do not hesitate to apply too)

See you all in Genoa!

Laurent Jesover. Editor of the Courriel d'information journal@attac.org

WTO Tidbits

By the ATTAC work group on "International Treaties"

1)A Sino-American agreement reached on WTO entry conditions for China

On the authorized level for Chinese agricultural subsidies : this is to be under 10% (which corresponds to the maximum demanded by China, and to the authorized level for developing countries), but over 5% (demanded by the US, this corresponds to the limit for developed countries). But certain trade partners feel that with a rural population of around 900 millions, even a low level of agricultural subsidies could cause distortions in the international market of agricultural produce.

Although the Sino-American disagreement on this subject has been ironed out, it still looks difficult for China to join the WTO before end 2001, and drawing up a nouveau protocol will be likely to take 6 months.

Other subsisting obstacles concern the limitation of the Chinese market for insurance and the retail trade; specific Chinese safeguard measures; and commitments as regards sanitary and phytosanitary measures and the TOTs (Technical Obstacles to Trade).

Mexico, however, has announced its intention of toning down its position on China's entry – Mexico being the only country not yet to have signed bilateral treaties with China, because of concern about its anti-dumping measures and about the speed of elimination of restrictions on "sensitive" Chinese imports. It is considered that this bilateral agreement will need 6 months of discussions, and that it could be finalized in the framework of the WTO, after China's entry.

The 16th Session of the Work Group on China's accession will be held on June 28th in Geneva. Europe hopes its last disagreements with China (market access, and commitments in the insurance sector) will be smoothed out there.



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2) Tensions develop at the latest APEC forum in Shanghai

Some differences arose between China, Japan and the US – the three biggest economies of the region.

The most apparent among them was the deepening rift between China and Japan on import reductions, particularly the Chinese threat to halve imports of Japanese cars in reaction to Japan's reduction of imports of Chinese vegetables.

China and Japan were, however, united against Bush's proposed enquiry into whether US steel manufacturers had been penalised by foreign imports. This problem, to Japanese eyes, is attributable to US lack of international competitiveness.

Shanghai will also host the 13th Ministerial Meeting of APAC next October.

3) After Göteborg, the EU strategic plan for sustainable development is still a far cry from the original project

The Plan was conceived as the environmental part of the Lisbon agreement, which contained political strategies on social and economic levels designed to make the EU the most competitive region of the world by 2010.

Among the 7 points of the Plan as submitted for adoption by the Committee, the only 4 retained concern : climate change, public health and traffic congestion. However, there is no date for implementation and no costed objectives, while the long series of specific actions proposed by the Committee has not been taken up by the Council.

The Plan calls on member states to draw up national plans for sustainable development. Progress on these would be reviewed annually. European leaders foresee that the new emphasis on sustainable development "will open the way to a new wave" of technological innovation and investments, engendering growth and jobs.

The Plan forms part of the regional preparatives for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10), to take place in Johannesburg (SA) in September, 2002.

4) Meeting of the 4th Annual Assembly of the TACD (TransAtlantic Consumer Dialogue)

Numbering 65 US and EU consumer organisations, representing 600 million people, participants asked governments to ensure : safety and respect for human rights in the treatment of demonstrators at the coming Ministerial Conference at Doha; the defense of public utilities and of national rulings in GATS negotiations; not to oppose legislation on GMO labelling; and to make public medicine patents publicly available.

5) Opposition to reform of the DSB loses steam

A certain number of countries broached this subject at the meeting on June 6th. Contrary to what had previously been observed each time the subject was brought up, it now no longer meets with much opposition. Japan is still one of its main propagandists.

The next meeting of the Doha Preparatory Committee will be held on June 25th – the same date as the Regional Meeting of the OAU at Addis Abeba and a meeting of the Caribbean Countries in Jamaica - a fact which has hardly been appreciated by these delegations.

A meeting is to be held on June 15th to review current negotiations in the sectors of agriculture and services.

6) The US proposal to the EU to settle their differences outside the WTO

The EU has not rejected this idea, but points out that establishing such an agreement would almost certainly give rise to political, judicial and technical problems.

Work Group "International Treaties",
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Tobin Tax on the agenda of the ECOFIN Council agenda for Liege.

By the, "Capital Taxation, Fiscal Management, Globalisation" Inter-party Group of the European Parliament, sponsored by ATTAC, War on Want and Solidar.

PRESS RELEASE

27 June 2001.

Belgian Presidency: Tobin Tax on the ECOFIN Council agenda for Liege



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The "Capital Taxation, Fiscal Management, Globalisation" interparty group of the European Parliament, is very happy over the announcement made today by the future Belgian Presidency of the European Union that the Tobin tax is being placed on the agenda of the ECOFIN Council to be held on 22 and 23 September at Liege.

The announcement was made on the occasion of the Economists' Presentations on the Tobin tax, organised for today by the interparty group which were followed by a Round Table on the Belgian Presidency at which Charles Picque, Minister for the Economy and Scientific Research, Guy Moens, Belgian Senator, Susan George, Vice-president of ATTAC France and Sophie Charlier, representative of the Belgian networks for action against financial speculation, were present..

In the course of the Economists' Presentations, Professor Anthony CLUNIES-ROSS of Strathclyde University, Glasgow, Bruno JETIN, Reader (Maitre de Conference) at Paris XIII University, and Professor Paul Bernd SPAHN of Goethe University, Frankfurt ,explained to an audience composed of European deputies and representatives of ONGs from various European countries the different technical possibilities for the taxation of foreign currency on the international market. Professor Spahn, who has been an adviser to the IMF, presented his tax proposal on two levels, first a tax of the Tobin type ,at a very low rate (0.02%), which would free up resources in the order of 60 billion dollars annually, or rather more than the current amount of public aid for development and ,second , another tax inspired by the mechanisms of the old "European monetary snake", which would be at a very high rate and would become chargeable when the basic rate of a currency exited violently from a fixed level of fluctuation. The economists have shown how the taxation of exchange transactions could be implemented unilaterally.

The Professor of Law at the Free University of Brussels, Lieven DENYS, has countered the European Commission's arguments concerning the alleged incompatibility of a Tobin tax with the European Treaties by showing that such a law could be drafted in conformity with article 93 of the EC Treaty. It has been pointed out elsewhere that the independence of the European Central Bank (ECB) would not serve as an argument against the tax, the ECB being responsible for monetary policy whereas policy on exchange rates remains within the competence of the Council

which is entitled to require the ECB to implement such a measure.

"There are no further academic or technical arguments against the introduction of a tax to thwart currency speculation which destroys the means of existence of businesses and entire countries", declared Glyn Ford, MEP (RU, Labour party), secretary of the interparty group at the end of the discussions.

"What we need now are plans and concrete projects regarding the implementation of such a tax and the optimum level at which it/they should be levied, in order to allow for the generation of sufficient revenue to meet the immense needs which face the countries of the south in matters of health, education and infra-structure and to reduce the great poverty affecting 1.2 billion people who live on less than a dollar a day" added Harlem Desir, MEP (France, socialist party) President of the interparty group.

In answer to the appeal put forward by the ONGs, particularly 11.11.11, ATTAC and the Belgian action networks against financial speculation, we are hoping that tens of thousands of people will demonstrate peacefully in favour of the Tobin tax at Liege in September 2001 at the time of the ECOFIN Council. The Member States should not block the initiative of the Belgian Presidency but should on the contrary seize this opportunity to jointly promote within the heart of the international institutions the establishment of a tax on financial transactions.

More information: euro.institutions@attac.org A group reuniting international civil servants and elected representatives

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Belgian presidency of the European Union

By Denis Horman.

Under the presidency of Didier Reynders, Belgian minister of finances, living in Liège, the Ecofin council (the 15 Ministers of the Economy and the Finances of the EC) will hold a session in Liège, on September 22 and 23, 2001.

A key instrument of liberal Europe



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With close connection with the European central Bank and the European Commission, Ecofin sees that a maximum of restrictions on the " smooth working of the Market and Finance " are removed.

At the economic level, Ecofin, in contact with the Commission, sees that every States follows the " EPGD " (Great Economic policy great directions). In 1998, the EPGD set the tone: " Aiming at obtaining the wanted results, a extension of the salary range downward requires a reduction from 20 % to 30 % of the wage cost of the less qualified activities, as it was the case for example in the United States in the 1970's and 1980. Besides, for being effective, such a measure would require in Europe an equivalent reduction of unemployment benefits and social allowances for avoiding " the trap of the poverty "".

The EPGD 2001 were published in April. As every year, since the Treaty of Maastricht, they announce the new limitations that should be implemented by the national governments of the fifteen member countries of the EC. That's enlightening!

Again, it will be necessary to tighten the screws on the unemployed persons and in precarious situations: " for facilitating the rise of work offer, it is necessary to see that the statutory framework encourages people to enter or to stay on the work market. It is advisable in particular to pursue the financial incentives to accept or to keep an employment. For improving the perspectives of the unemployed employees and the inactive persons, it is necessary to resort to active and targeted policies ". The recommendations for Belgium, regarding old unemployed person specify: " review and reduce the highest allowances and revise the special status allowing the older unemployed persons (more than 50 years) not to look actively for an employment".

For Public Services, " it is necessary to improve the competition on the markets of goods and services, in particular in the case of public services and financial services (..) IT will fall onto the member States to insure the actual application of the legislation of the internal market and to encourage a bigger competition ". This is the cap onto still more privatisations!

Every State is receiving " specific recommendations " it may be blamed for, if they are not applied them. So, in February, 2001, small Ireland - which represents hardly 1 % of the GNP of the 12 member countries of the zone Euro-

received a grouped shot from the European Commission, the Ecofin and the Belgian minister of finances, which chairs for one year the Eurogroup (12 euro countries, Sweden, president of the EC for the first half of the year by not being a member). What crime had committed Ireland? I had authorised, among others, wage and minimum incomes rises!

At the summit of Stockolm of March 22 and 23 of this year (under Swedish presidency), Ecofin seized the subject of the ageing of the population for making "the financial balance of the public old-age pension and healthcare" the 5-th criterion of the Stability pact for the Single currency. If things continue this way, ageing and healing oneself will be a nightmare for all those that will have pass through a long period of unemployment and uncertainty.

At the European level, the agreement within Ecofin, in November, 2000, and regarding " the harmonisation of the tax system on saving incomes" is largely all a front. Indeed, it does not target the most profitable assets (the securities and the profit generated by the speculation on the Stock Exchange); it does not target the tax paradises; it plans a generalised end of the bank confidentiality within the EC for 2010. But this measure is conditioned by the end of the bank confidentiality in the tax paradises, linked to countries of the EC (eg the English - Norman islands) or still " third country " (Switzerland).). We are not out of the wood yet!

Belgium, which is going to chair the EC from July till December, 2001, is a good pupil of Ecofin. As testifies the tax reform proposed by Didier Reynders, Minister of finances, endorsed by the government and supported by the parliamentary majority in October, 2000. This reform increases highly the inequitable and unequalitarian nature of the Belgian tax system: presents for the high incomes, the small tax credits for low incomes (instead of a rise of incomes!) Belgian tax haven for the big wealths (neither register on the movable patrimonies, nor, all the more, taxes on the big wealths, on the stock-exchange profits).

Mobilisations

No doubt to let triumph this European Single market which domesticates us! No more question to give up control on these institutions which decide for us, without us, against us!



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As in Nice, in December, 2000, following the example of the " collective for the another Charter " (which was supported by numerous organisations, movements: Attac, Marches Européennes, Droits Devants, trade-union , parties - Greens, PCF, LCR-etc.), it is time, for us too, to get together and to formulate objectives as high as the stakes for the another Europe.

While the fundamental labour laws (old age pension, unemployment benefits, minimum income, and so on.) are excluded from the Charter of the fundamental rights of the EC which should become the introduction of the European Constitution in 2003, we must demand, as in Nice, that these rights are explicitly and without ambiguity written in the Charter before it is a integral part of a " constitutional Pact ".

The Belgian presidency of the EC gives the opportunity of demanding from the federal government a double step method: propose precise directives at the European level and give concrete expression to certain measures at national level.

It is the opportunity, for Belgium, to propose directives, at the European level, targeting the tax harmonisation generally and the capital returns in particular, for an international financial justice. For example, an abolishing directive fiscal bank confidentiality, obliging the States to exchange periodically the information about all the incomes generated by the financial products, including the profit; a directive establishing a device of penalties against the tax paradises and the offshore centres.

Did not come also the time to go beyond the " launch of a serious study on the feasibility of the institution of the tax Tobin " (Memorandum of CES, of the FGTB and CSC in the Belgian presidency of the EC)? The book " Révélation\$ " by Denis Robert and Ernest Backes on the company of " financial routing " Swift and the two "international bank clearing" institutions, Clearstream (Luxembourg) and Euroclear (Brussels) proves that all the international financial transactions are recorded on micro-index cards or optical discs and kept within clearing institutions and in Swift's archives. From then on, as underlines " the Appeal of Brussels for an international financial justice " , " the movements of capital from the banking and fiscal paradises can be easily reconstituted, which provides necessary tools for the fight to against the financial crime and the proliferation of the tax

paradises. For the same reason, the control and the establishment of a tax on the financial transactions are largely facilitated ". The tax Tobin on financial international transaction is technically possible. The political will is missing. To us to impose it!

Belgium stays one of the last countries of the EC with a bank confidentiality, without a register of the movable patrimonies, without wealth tax. As underlined by the report of the workshop on tax system, during the day of reflection Attac Wallonie-Bruxelles, " the opposition of Belgium to end of the bank confidentiality is of a total nonsense in a country where the overdue of the sums to be covered by the fiscal administration does not stop to increase years after years (879 billions on December 31, 2000). This, without speaking of the sums which evade taxes with the complicity of the banking institutions ".

As underlined by both Belgian unions, the FGTB and the CSC, in a common note, " the European Union can not serve however always as alibi; certain measures can be taken at the Belgian level to insure a better knowledge of certain incomes and, by this way, a better contribution of these incomes to the receipts of the State ". And quoting the end of the bank confidentiality, the end of the securities and the other bonds, the implementation of a regime of taxation of the profits, etc.

It would be well suitable for Belgium to make a gesture in that direction.

It will not be spontaneous. It is at least the moment and ATTAC's responsibility, with the Belgian presidency of the EC, with Ecofin's meeting in Liège in September and especially European summit of the chiefs of state and government in December to Laeken-Bruxelles, to get together the maximum of social citizen and political organisations favouring another Europe, a social, ecological, democratic and united Europe.

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Police Brutality

By Pierre Rousset



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Newsletter 88- page 9(9)
Please circulate and distribute.

WHEN THE POLICE AND THE FUNDAMENTALIST MILITIA ATTACK AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBALIZATION IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Friday 8 June. The second day of meetings of the Solidarity Conference for people of the Asia Pacific region. About 100 people participated, two thirds Indonesians, and one third foreign. We were discussing the effects of capitalist globalization when, at 15:00, around 50 police interrupted, several with fire arms. Perhaps they had consulted the agenda for that day of the seminar; the next subject at hand was militarization and its consequences. Forget Pakistan, who was illustrating this theme. We pass directly to the drill. Welcome to Indonesia.

After two hours of face off and negotiations, all the foreign guests departed in a truck. Direction: the district general of the Jakarta police. We tried to think of the reasons for a police raid. We very soon had an answer. A little after our forced departure, the police barricade was actually disbanded, leaving the way free to an Islamic militia of the extreme right, the Ka"bah Youth (AMK). They attacked the Indonesian participants with pointed sabers, traditional knives shaped like scythes and machetes. Two people were injured, money and informational material were stolen, and glass and furniture was broken. A terrorist operation like many others, in the recent past, in the archipelago. Where the forces of order and the paramilitary groups work together. We should not have been able to witness it.

The seminar had been organized by an organization created fairly recently, Increase (Center for Social Reform and Emancipation) which desires to weld its action to the heart of national and international resistance to neoliberal globalization. It was activated mostly by the radical wing of social movements: worker's unions, militant peasants or students, feminists (a popular grassroots front), and other groups of cultural action. But it was also sustained by Infid, an important network of development NGOs, and Walhi, the Friends of the Earth in Indonesia. Open to foreign participation (previously all regional), this was the first time that such a conference met on the archipelago.

A few of the conference attendees were much sought-after targets of the chief of police and the fundamentalist militia: the unionist Dita Sari and, above all others, Budiman Sujatmiko, the president of the PRD, the young Democratic Party

of the People. Detained during the last years of the Suharto dictatorship, the haven't recovered freedom after the election of the new president of the republic, Abduhrman Wahid (Gus Dur). They remain today subjected to permanent oppression. The house of Budiman, in the village, has been recently burnt down. These have been the first steps in the combined police-militia operation conducted against the conference. Thus Kelik Ismunanto, director of Increase, who made a big mistake inviting via the internet some foreigners to come and participate.

We, 32 foreigners, found ourselves in the central commissary of Djakarta. There were about 20 Australians, including a little 4 year old girl, who remained remarkably calm. Participants came from Pakistan, India, the South East of Asia, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Belgium, Pays-Bas, and Germany. I was the only French present, sent by Attac-France and the European Institutions of Attac. With the support of the group I work for in the European Parliament who would intervene alongside the embassy, after our collective call for help.

We were accused of having entered the Indonesian territory on a tourist visa though we had decided in fact to participate in the conference. In reality, the majority of us simply did not need a visa in order to come to Indonesia! The protest was organized. We contacted lawyers of the Group of legal action, the media, militant networks, and embassies. Portable telephones were indispensable marvels. We did not need to depend on the good will of the police in order to telephone and this made a big difference. In the meeting hall where we were left, in the district general of the police, there was a television. Our incident made it on the news. It was, clearly, political.

In fact, the situation in Indonesia is even more volatile. We evidently knew it before coming to the country. The forces released by the ancient dictator regime the New order of General Suharto, removed from power in 1998 have taken the offensive. The democratic transition has subsided. The composite coalition that brought Abdurrahman Wahid to the presidency was undone. Today only a minority in parliament, it is threatened with destitution. A force of iron opposes it and the chief of police has of late refused to be decommissioned and replaced by his assistant. The crisis goes even deeper than this: rebels along the periphery of the archipelago, a new affirmation of fundamental religion, political

factionalism and military activism, and a brutal growth of social inequalities.

In this context, the PRD plays the role of scapegoat, denounced by both sides. Right from the start it was accused of being communist in a country where, from 1965-1966, more than a million communists were massacred. It was upon this, one of the biggest massacres of the century, that the new order of Suharto was raised. For 30 years anti-communism served as the cement for the dominant ideology. The PRD is also accused of supporting President Wahid. This is in a certain sense true. In effect, if this party severely critiques neoliberal politics put into action by the government, it is not opposed less actively to the reverse of the presidency by force to the ancient regime, in movement behind the most respectable figure of Megawati Sukarnoputra (vice president, she would succeed Wahid if he is rendered destitute).

The participants at the Asia-Pacific solidarity conference had therefore become hostages of the Indonesian crisis. The Islamic militia justified the attack on the globalization seminar in the name of anti-communism. It also claimed we desired to disrupt the meeting of the MPR (the assembly of people who are granted the exclusive power to render a president destitute) set to take place in two months; next august! As the police carried on like they were not interested in anything more than a matter of visas, it was even shadier how all the congress participants taken at Bali had entered the country in the exact same way we had. Without a single visa.

These accusations were hardly credible. For once, the media turned against the police and the militia. "Democracy is in danger" was the title of an editorial in the "Jakarta Post" the 11th of June. The embassies were put into action. The state system itself was divided: the Department of

Immigration dealt the "coup de grace" to the police department in revealing the fact that they had never been informed of the operation, conducted under its department name, and that they would not bring any charges against the foreigners (with the exception of the unfortunate Farooq Tariq, of the Pakistan Labor Party, expelled from the territory on the pretext that he had effectively come, for his part, with a tourist visa).

Monday, 11 June, we were free.

Though the conference was not able to finish its work, the matter was concluded on a political victory. This is not any less important. This demonstrates what extent the democratic rights gained after the renversement of Suharto remain fragile and are put again into question. The police system is awaiting its time: and evidently it will not destroy the black list of foreigners drawn up on this occasion. Above all, the raid conducted against the globalization seminar illustrates to what point our Indonesian friends are threatened today. In face of the police, the army, and the new fundamentalist militias, they live every day in a situation of great insecurity. A situation that risks getting even worse, when the offensive reaction against the Gus Dur presidency grows more serious. They will need all of our solidarity. We will come back.

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