

Focus-on-Trade is a regular electronic bulletin providing updates and analysis of trends in regional and world trade and finance, with an emphasis on analysis of these trends from an integrative, interdisciplinary viewpoint that is sensitive not only to economic issues, but also to ecological, political, gender and social issues. Your contributions and comments are welcome.

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In this Issue

COUNTDOWN TO CANCUN: OPAQUE, EXCLUSIVE AND "RULE-LESS" NEGOTIATING PROCESS

Aileen Kwa

DERAIL THE 5TH MINISTERIAL OF THE WTO

Call of the Hemispheric and Global Assembly against the FTAA and the WTO, Mexico City, May 11-12, 2003

AN ACTIVIST'S GUIDE TO THE G8

Christophe Aguiton

AFRICA IN EVIAN: IF THE G8 IS MEETING, IT MUST BE TIME TO 'DIGNIFY' NEPAD (AGAIN)

Patrick Bond

TOMORROW the G8 will meet in Evian where they will attempt to do the impossible: bury their differences while protecting their interests. Already, 25,000 police and military from France, Germany and Switzerland have massed outside Geneva and Annemasse in France, where many of the alternative events are being held. That's almost one per protestor although it is expected that 100,00 will join the mass demonstration on Sunday - the numbers would be even greater if not for the public sector strikes in France against pension reforms which saw 400,000 on the streets last week and will continue through next week. The mountains surrounding Geneva and Evian are apparently bristling with anti-aircraft guns and the rumour is that the US brought eleven of its own high speed boats to ensure that President Bush is protected from protestors ready to plunge into the chilly waters of Lake Geneva.

Given the feeble state of the global economy, deepening splits in the elite consensus and the mass rejection of the G8 on the streets, the official public relations machine will have to work triple time to ensure that, regardless of the real outcome of the Summit, the public gets the message that the global economy is in safe hands, that the Doha trade round is on track and that the G8 has found a gentlemanly way to share the power. Don't believe a word of it: Old Europe and the US are oceans apart in their perceptions of their place in history. President Chirac - as a true son of de Gaulle - believes in a multi-polar world where "La France" assumes her rightful place. Bush, on the other hand, couldn't give a toss and, in the new era of impunity heralded by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, has no interest in sharing power with anyone. What's more, globalisation is proving to be not all it was cracked up to be: deflation (or inflation, deepening on which expert you read) is around the corner, growth is nowhere in sight and domestic debt, productivity and unemployment figures are enough to make you put your money under the mattress. It is probably a mathematical truth that the size of the world's problems is inversely proportional to the legitimacy of the world's leaders and

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their capacity (and willingness) to deal with them.

Not that the hundreds of thousands of activists gathering in Annemasse or across the lake in Geneva expect them to, nor do they have any illusions about the possibility of exploiting the big power struggle to usher in a new era of multilateralism. Both sides of the Atlantic - regardless of their positions on war - are offering world-views that are out of synch with the mood and the demands of the no-globo and peace movements. A new politics is being built in Annemasse and Geneva, at the World Social Forums, and in countless other local and national democratic spaces and processes. And while we might enjoy the sight of the Great and the Good biting each other's backs and, from time to time take advantage of the contradictions that throws up, the future will not be announced in next week's G8 declaration.

In this issue of Focus on Trade, an assessment of the state of play in Geneva just sixty working days before Cancun, a report from the global assembly against the FTAA and WTO in Mexico (announcing the key dates for the Cancun mobilisation 9th and 13th September), an activist's guide to the history of the G8, and some reflections on why African governments come back to the G8 year after year even though they always leave empty handed.

COUNTDOWN TO CANCUN: OPAQUE, EXCLUSIVE AND "RULE-LESS" NEGOTIATING PROCESS

Aileen Kwa*

With the Cancun ministerial less than sixty working days away, the WTO — in characteristic fashion when under pressure — has shifted into a more secretive and non-transparent mode of consultations. The process is characterized by 'flexibility' — that is procedures are invented on the spot to suit the interests of the powerful — and opacity. The process is tightly controlled by the Secretariat and Chairs of negotiating bodies, as opposed to being only facilitated by them, and the focus is on Ministers, as opposed to Geneva technical experts who are more familiar with the 'devil' lurking in the details of the very technical language.

To cap it all, there is no draft text for the Ministerial and developing country Members do not know when such a text will finally emerge. Members have been told that there will only be clarity on 24 July, just three working weeks before Cancun, hence leaving developing country delegations with little time to respond to the text and coordinate amongst themselves.

THE STAKES AT CANCUN

The stakes are high for this Ministerial. The fact that important deadlines on the "development" issues of special and differential treatment, implementation, and TRIPS and health were missed last year, has raised questions about how genuine the major players in the TO are - especially the US and EU - in actually delivering a "development" agenda. The public image of the WTO is on the line and the WTO Secretariat, the US and the EU, are looking to minimise the damage. Cancun will be a decisive point in whether they win or lose the battle to whitewash the WTO.

Furthermore, modalities on the agriculture negotiations were meant to be agreed at the end of March and there is still no agreement in sight, and decisions on the whether or not to initiate negotiations in investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation (the Singapore issues) also must be made in Cancun. The major drivers of the WTO do not want to see Cancun turn into another Seattle where no agreement was reached. Aside from the public relations disaster, such a scenario could bring the negotiating 'round', supposed to be completed by December 2004, to a halt. (Both EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy and US trade representative Robert Zoellick are due to leave their positions at the end of 2004 and would no doubt like to see "success" achieved before they go.) Yet in agriculture, the US and EU continue to hold their seemingly irreconcilably different positions. On the new issues, Geneva discussions have only highlighted the wide the differences between the developed and developing countries. As a result of the stalemate in agriculture,

developing countries are also holding back in General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations. Almost two months after the start of the “offers” round, when countries indicate the sectors they are willing to liberalise, few are forthcoming and those that intend to make offers will only put forward minimalist positions.

This stalemate is not foreign to trade negotiators: It is part and parcel of the negotiating strategies of the big players - to hold extreme positions, negotiate on the side with equals (the US and EU will come to their own private deals), offer some carrots and wave some sticks to developing countries, and mix in a large dose of personal contact with Ministers, with heavy servings of persuasion or coercion. Clearly, pulling off a “consensus” at the end is possible (as seen at the Doha Ministerial in 2001), but controlling the process by a few becomes of utmost importance if the “right” outcome is to be achieved. Transparency and inclusiveness in the decision-making process in the run up to the Ministerial and at the Ministerial itself, are not conducive to this as was proved in Seattle where the draft text was a Members’ text, as opposed to a Chairman’s text, and reflected the variety of different positions held by the Membership. Instead, marginalisation, exclusion and opacity are necessary, but again, this must be cleverly orchestrated so that there is at least the appearance of inclusiveness to keep the marginalized from revolting.

This is exactly what is unfolding today in Geneva as 146 nations prepare for the Fifth Ministerial to take place in September.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROCESS TO CUNCUN

1. Flexibility -No Clear Rules of Procedure

Since March this year, there were already murmurings about how the preparations for the Ministerial would proceed in Geneva, including a lot of talk that the Cancun Ministerial would fail and the Round would have to be prolonged. Various ideas were bandied around about how to approach the Ministerial in such a way that consensus could be achieved - a declaration, a communiqué, a progress report, or no declaration at all, but there was no proper discussion of these issues by the entire membership. On May 8, rather than consulting the members, the Director General, Supachai Panitchpakdi and the Chair of the General Council, Uruguayan Ambassador Carlos Perez del Castillo called Heads of Delegations (i.e. Ambassadors) for an informal off-the-record “information” meeting where they were “informed” on what the process would be.

Instead of outlining a clear approach for negotiations towards Cancun, Castillo said that while all Members had a strong interest in having “as clear and predictable a schedule as possible over the next several weeks... I am sure you will understand that it is not possible today to predict each step or its timing with certainty... We will

need to retain the flexibility necessary to manage an evolving process, while of course operating in a transparent and orderly way” (JOB (03)/88, 9 May 2003).

The ‘flexibility’ he refers to was at the heart of a fierce debate after Doha. The Like Minded Group of countries (LMG), which included Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, insisted that there should be proper rules of procedure before and during Ministerials (WT/GC/W/471, 24 April 2002). For instance, their suggestions on the preparatory process before Ministerials included:

- Any negotiating procedure to be adopted in the preparatory phase should be approved by Members by consensus at formal meetings.
- The draft agenda should be drawn up only after Members have been given an opportunity to express their views.
- There should be frequent formal meetings of the General Council to take stock of the progress in the preparatory work and minutes should be drawn up of such meetings.
- There should be sufficient time for delegations to consider documents to facilitate proper consideration by and consultation with the capital.
- The draft ministerial declaration should be based on consensus. Where this is not possible, such differences should be fully and appropriately reflected in the draft ministerial declaration... If the majority of the membership has strong opposition to the inclusion of any issue in the draft ministerial declaration then such an issue should not be included in the draft declaration.
- In the preparatory process for the Ministerial Conference the Director-General and the Secretariat of the WTO should remain impartial on the specific issues being considered in the ministerial declaration.

The list goes on and is shocking not because of its demanding content but because the requests are so basic. These procedures should be a taken-for-granted part of the workings of any rules-based international institution

The LMG effort was a reaction to the nasty experience that developing country negotiators faced at the Doha Ministerial. Murasoli Maran, then India’s Commerce Minister, summed his experience of the last two days of the Doha Ministerial:

“Only a handful of WTO members were requested to participate (in the Green Room meetings). Even during discussions on the entire night of the thirteenth to the fourteenth of November, the non-stop session lasting for 38 hours, texts were appearing by the hour for discussions without giving sufficient time to get them examined by the respective delegations. Who prepared

the avalanche of draft after draft? Why? We do not know. In the eleventh hour - probably after 37 hours 45 minutes - they produced a draft - like a magician producing a rabbit out of his hat - and said that it was the Final Draft.

“The tactics seemed to be to produce a draft in the wee hours and force others to accept that or come nearer to that. Has it happened in any other international conference? Definitely not. Therefore with pain and anguish, I would say that any system which in the last minute forces many developing countries to accept texts in areas of crucial importance to them cannot be a fair system. I would strongly suggest that the WTO Membership should have serious introspection about the fairness of the preparatory process for Ministerial Conferences.” (Speech at the India Economic Summit, 4 December, 2001).

However, the LMG position paper was fiercely countered by a group of developed countries. Led by Australia, the group, which included Switzerland, Canada, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore (WT/GC/W/477, 28 June 2002) called for “flexibility”. They argued that “Prescriptive and detailed approaches to the preparatory processes are inappropriate and will not create the best circumstances for consensus to emerge in the Cancun meeting. In a Member-driven organization processes need to be kept flexible. We need to avoid rigidities”.

The LMG did not have the political weight to bring their views to bear on the institution in the consultations which ended in 2002. One country, which was a signatory to the paper, said that the paper has since gone into “deep freeze”. They have told the Uruguayan Ambassador to commence consultations once again on behalf of the LMG, but are unsure of his level of commitment.

It is disturbing that a supposedly rules-based international organization ignores, flouts or invents procedures on the spot in order to suit the situation that will produce an outcome that is in the interests of its most powerful Members.

2. Obfuscation and Opacity

This kind of ‘flexibility’ leads to obfuscation and opacity. The process of negotiations right now is clouded with unknowns, which can only lead to surprises as the Ministerial draws nearer or at the Ministerial itself. This would put developing countries on the back foot, forcing them to react to rather than control the process.

At the same HOD meeting on 8 May, the DG, Supachai told Members that the overall package will only come together at the level of the General Council on 24 July. In the meantime, negotiations will continue in the various negotiating groups. Developing country delegates are not clear whether some kind of draft declaration will then be released on 24 July. One delegate, referring to the Canadian Mini-Ministerial, to which only about 25

Members will be invited and held most likely in late July, was of the opinion that a draft declaration will only be out by early or mid-August, depending on the outcome in Canada.

The WTO closes for the summer for two weeks from 26 July till 10 August. Any draft released after the break will give delegates about three weeks to react. Combined with how legal texts are now being drafted by Chairs (see next section), the shortness of time is a cause of concern. Usually, delegates should have enough time to send the drafts back to their capitals, co-ordinate with other developing countries and give their feed back in General Council sessions. Three weeks seems specially designed to short-circuit these responses, so that the most important decisions will be brought to Cancun to be decided by Ministers, whose handle on the complex technical trade issues cannot be compared with their trade experts in Geneva.

3. Chairman’s Text Rather than Members’ Text, Chairs Dictate Rather than Facilitate Negotiations

In the time of the GATT as well as the first years of the WTO, it was unheard of that a Chairman would bring out a Chairman’s text that gave his best judgment on where a compromise between Members could be. Traditionally, the role of the Chair is to facilitate negotiations between Members in order to work through differences. If differences persist, negotiating texts produced by Chairs invariably reflected the differences in opinions, by putting the various options in brackets. The product would be a “Member’s text”.

Stuart Harbinson chaired the General Council before the Doha Ministerial when he held the position of Ambassador for Hong Kong. He made a serious departure from negotiating procedures of international organizations by taking it upon himself to produce a “Chairman’s text” in the run up to the Doha Ministerial. Instead of reflecting the various positions in his draft, he went against international and GATT/WTO norms by presenting his “best judgment” of a compromise position. This technique worked against developing countries’ Ministers in Doha since the text made invisible developing countries’ positions, particularly on the contentious New Issues, and only reflected the EU/US joint position.

Unfortunately for the WTO, this dangerous precedent has been repeated since Doha in all the key areas of negotiations. Texts on TRIPS and health, agriculture and on non-agriculture industrial tariff negotiations have been produced in the “Harbinson fashion”. Developing countries, which raised objections pre-Doha (for instance Nigeria which denounced the Harbinson text, India, the LDCs, African Group etc) seem to be suffering from resistance-fatigue and seem increasingly resigned to such strategies.

Unfortunately, Members can expect more of the same before Cancun. DG Supachai promised Members no less at the 8 May meeting, when he said that “the negotiating

group chairs are currently working hard to fulfill their mandates... The General Council Chairman and I will be working closely together with them to maximize the chances of success of this multi-level, integrated process..." (JOB(03)/88, 9 May 2003).

His comments were echoed by US Ambassador Deily to the TNC on 9 May where she said, referring to the Ministerial in Cancun, that "We will have to go through a systematic review of the requirements of Doha, that is well prepared in advance by the DG and Chairman Perez del Castillo" (Statement of Ambassador Deily to the TNC, May 9 2003).

Commenting on the current situation, a former Ambassador to the GATT/WTO said, "Chairpersons are supposed to facilitate negotiations between Members, not divine on negotiations and expound their interpretation of a compromise position. We would never have dared to do such a thing before. We were much more prudent. We would never have dared to put our best interpretation of a compromise position when Members were still holding divergent positions.

"By virtue of the fact that Chairs are chosen because they are closer to the major players or have the ears of the major players, they would have certain viewpoints. Therefore, for Chairs to come up with their text invariably means that the positions they take would reflect more the interests of certain players rather than others."

4. Mini-Ministerials/ Green Room Meetings and Lobbying In Capitals

Critical also to the pre-Cancun negotiating process is lobbying of Ministers in capitals and what some representatives in Geneva see as the sidelining of Geneva Ambassadors and experts.

Since Doha, two Mini-Ministerials where only about 25 Members are invited have already been held in Sydney and Tokyo, and two more are in the pipeline - Egypt in June and Canada in July.

Some rather heated criticisms were heard in Geneva following the OECD Council of Ministers meeting in Paris at the end of April. Some developing country delegates, including the DG, joined the OECD members in an exclusivemeeting on the WTO in Paris. Upon their return, those not invited were 'briefed' about what had taken place, prompting some to complain about how the Geneva process had been sidelined.

An informal Mini-Ministerial is to take place on June 21-22 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Ministers from only 27 Members (counting EU as one) have been invited. They include: Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, European Union, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United States.

The Mini-Ministerial, focusing on market access issues — industrial tariffs, agriculture and services — and TRIPS and special and differential treatment, as well as the Singapore issues over a dinner session will no doubt be a critical political moment in deal-making and the forging of 'consensus' with developing country Members. The Canadian Mini-Ministerial will be even more pivotal. Before Doha, the Mini-Ministerial in Singapore led to delegates in Geneva feeling that "things were different". The outcomes from that Singapore Mini-Ministerial were not unlike what was finally agreed on in Doha. A similar scenario is clearly being planned.

These Mini-Ministerials are illegitimate, given that they exclude about 100 Members in the WTO. It is ironic that a "Development Agenda" is being negotiated with the majority of developing country Members absent from the table. Whilst the co-ordinators of developing country groups - namely the LDCs and the African Group - will be attending the Egypt Mini-Ministerial (Bangladesh and Morocco respectively) they have not been mandated to negotiate on behalf of the others.

Unfortunately, this kind of Ministerial contact are opportunities for co-option or arm-twisting. Overseeing a broader agenda, Ministers of less powerful countries are at a disadvantage in these negotiations. It is also patently anti-democratic for decisions to be made amongst a small group, only to be presented as a fait accompli to the broader Membership.

One pro-New Issues developing country diplomat had this observation about the Geneva-capital divide: "We are now at an impasse. The Ambassadors here are not willing to take decisions. There is too much at stake and they don't want to be the ones giving the house away. So they leave the decisions to the big guys. And then they complain that the Geneva process is being bypassed."

5. Geneva Negotiations Proceed in Informal Mode

The "information" Heads of Delegations meetings that are taking place in Geneva in preparation for Cancun are also happening in informal mode. This again is worrying and this concern was expressed by India and several other developing countries at the 8 May HOD meeting.

The WTO has a propensity of having off-the-record informal meetings. In the run-up to Doha, preparatory meetings at the General Council level were held informally, sometimes followed by formal meetings (although the frequency of formal meetings was still less than satisfactory). Since these formal meetings were recorded, countries' positions were made public. These public positions at least added to the transparency of the institution, and it was possible after the Doha Ministerial, to compare countries' final positions with their initial positions. The differences in their pre and post-Doha positions shed some light on what might have happened in the back-room.

In terms of institutional memory, formal on-record

meetings are also very important since it can inform those who come later what the circumstances were which shaped the present agenda. This is also important given the fact that WTO language is often ambiguous in order to accommodate varied positions. Records can help to shed light on the meaning behind the ambiguous words. Countries which are politically weaker are on the losing end without these records.

6. Bilateral Pressures

The unequal power equation between developed and the majority of developing countries is a major factor determining whether, and to what extent, developing countries exert their preferred positions in negotiations.

Although consensus means that in theory, any one country can oppose the package presented to it, and hence hold up negotiations, not one developing country, not even India, is able to do so in practice. Each and every developing country has at least an area of vulnerability vis-à-vis the US, EU, and/or Japan. This could be in the area of exports, aid, debt, IMF loans which might be withheld, preferential access (particularly the ACP countries' arrangement with the EU, or African countries vis-à-vis the US in the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA)). Threats that exports and trade will be hurt are everyday realities for Ministers, as well as Geneva negotiators. Some countries presently in bilateral free trade negotiations with the US are also particularly cautious. According to their level of dependence or vulnerability, delegates from the South temper their tone in the negotiations.

If these are not enough to silence negotiators adequately, the jobs of Ambassadors of course are put at risk. Oftentimes, pressure is put on countries to withdraw their representatives. A handful of vocal Ambassadors have been removed post-Doha, and this has considerably weakened developing country groupings in Geneva. (A very recent example of this in the UN context took place in New York, where the Chilean Ambassador was withdrawn due to his opposition to the Iraq war.)

The larger political situation today - the willingness of the United States to be openly unilateralist - and the displays of military might, are also factors which will invariably weigh on the minds of developing country Ministers engaged in WTO talks.

One developing country diplomat from the Americas informally commented "The current process is as non-transparent as the last Ministerial. To tell you frankly, the problem now (as compared to pre-Doha) is that developing countries are weaker than before, as a result of bilateral pressures and the larger political situation".

According to an African diplomat, efforts by some Africans to get others on board to a more critical position on domestic supports in the agricultural negotiations in Geneva earlier this year led to phone calls in the capitals. He said, "When they get a call from one of Pascal Lamy's

boys, they know that it is sensitive stuff they are dealing with". As a result, the initiative was dropped and what is currently on the table looks to be another raw deal for developing countries.

NEW ZEALAND: MORE TRANSPARENCY WILL DRIVE NEGOTIATIONS UNDERGROUND

Rather unexpectedly, on 9 May at the TNC meeting, the New Zealand Ambassador Timothy Groser warned developing countries not to push for greater transparency in the decision-making process. With a membership of 146, Groser warned that if every decision-making process were to involve the entire membership, the process would go nowhere. Efforts to attain internal transparency, he said, would be counterproductive and would push the negotiating process underground.

For a supposedly "democratic" nation, one would have expected rather a different tune from NZ. In any case, the process already seems to have gone underground, since it is entirely in the control of the DG / Harbinson team, and the Chair of the General Council, in alliance with the major players.

IN CONCLUSION

Unless international organizations creating international rules are only institutions that exist in today's world in order to legitimize the will of the powerful, what is happening in the WTO is a grave aberration from the aspirations of "multilateralism" that the majority of Members in the WTO most likely aspire to. Rather than standing up for the weak, the WTO is doing well at institutionalizing the will of the powerful.

Perhaps it all boils down to what John Musonda of the Union Network International in Zambia says: "It's the same old colonial equation. Our people own nothing, control nothing. Their (the North's) people are developed, now they want to expand trade. Our people are not developed, we can't expand trade" (Khan, Farah, IPS 24 May 2003 'A Strategy for the Next WTO Meeting in Mexico').

Trying to force upon the majority in the South a corporate expansionist agenda can only take place under circumstances of marginalisation, obfuscation, "rule-less" procedures and "persuasion".

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DERAIL THE 5TH MINISTERIAL OF THE WTO

Call of the Hemispheric and Global Assembly against the FTAA and the WTO, Mexico City, May 11-12, 2003

We, the participants in this historic Hemispheric and Global Assembly against the Free Trade of the Americas and the World Trade Organization, held in Mexico City on May 11-12, 2003, declare our intention and commitment to derail the Fifth Ministerial of the World Trade Organization that will take place in Cancun in September of this year.

The WTO Ministerial will take place in the context of escalating US military aggression against the peoples and nations of the world. Washington's invasion and occupation of Iraq is simply the latest and most outrageous case of the Bush administration's unrestrained unilateralist foreign policy.

The WTO is war by other means. The WTO represents the most ambitious effort to resubjugate the economies of the countries of the South to serve the interests of transnational corporations. The neoliberal, free-trade paradigm incarnated in the WTO subverts the interests of people both in the South and the North. Its legacy is greater poverty, inequity, gender inequality, and indebtedness throughout the world. It has also accelerated the destruction of the global environment.

Today, the WTO, along with the other mechanisms of corporate control, notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, are suffering an historic crisis of credibility and legitimacy. Against the massive misery they offer, global civil society is coming together to forge creative alternatives to bring about a truly just global order. Against a future of war, injustice, and permanent crisis offered by the US, European Union, and the institutions of corporate rule, global civil society offers a future of justice, peace, and solidarity.

But even as the WTO institutionalizes stagnation, injustice, and poverty, Washington is busy attempting to forge more corporate chains to subjugate the South by intimidating the governments of Latin America to sign on to the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA).

Enough. We say eight years of the WTO is enough. We say the last thing Latin America needs is the FTAA.

We declare, instead, that another world is possible; and inspired by this vision, we call on as many people as possible from throughout the world to come and join us in Cancun in the week-long Forum of the People for Alternatives to the WTO on September 9-14, 2003.

We also call on people and movements in all countries to launch massive united and coordinated demonstrations

on September 9, the Day of International Protest against the WTO, and on September 13, the Day of Global Protest against Globalization and War.

United, the vast majority of this planet says:

NO TO WAR

END THE TYRANNY OF FREE TRADE AND THE WTO

NO TO THE FTAA

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

AN ACTIVIST'S GUIDE TO THE G8

Christophe Aguiton*

Translated by Barbara and David Forbes

At the first meeting of the G5 in November 1975 there were no protests. That year, the fall of Saigon to the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and the electoral rise of the left in both France and Italy seemed more significant at a global level than the economic recession, the crisis of the international monetary system and the oil crisis. Activists in the North were focussed mainly on political issues a year after Pinochet's coup against Allende and on the social issues around the first austerity measures leading up to the Thatcher/Reagan years.

HUNGER RIOTS AND PROTESTS: FROM THE IMF TO THE G7

Until 1984, the G7 was not the focus of any widespread questioning, nor would the organisation itself have taken any notice. However, the social impact of economic adjustment measures imposed at the end of the 1970s by the international financial system on the indebted countries of the Third World (and validated by the G7), combined with the fall of the prices of raw materials, very quickly became intolerable to those who were suffering the consequences.

> From 1980, whether in Africa ⁽¹⁾, Latin America ⁽²⁾ or Eurasia ⁽³⁾, the application of these measures provoked a series of grass-roots uprisings - strikes and demonstrations degenerated into riots and looting - leading to thousands of deaths. The immediate cause of these urban social explosions was usually an increase in the price of basic foodstuffs and transport, added to the corruption of the ruling regimes. They were grass-roots mass reactions, at once spontaneous and organised, in which the participants were above all students and young people excluded from the labour market, but also local organisations, groups linked to churches and trades unions; opposition parties also played a role. In most cases, the events led to significant political changes ⁽⁴⁾. These social explosions, known as "hunger riots", constituted "a central social expression of the social struggles of the 80s ⁽⁵⁾ — they challenged the IMF by name and were thus directly linked to the G7, although without bringing this to general notice.

It was after 1984 that several NGOs and English-speaking groups began to target the G7 directly. They had indeed become aware of the fact that this was a legitimate target on which to put pressure and/or to oppose. At that moment, the G7 began to appear more and more clearly as a significant institution for the western world. The first meeting which coincided with a G7 summit, in 1984 in London, was organised by "The Other Economic Summit", better known as TOES, which turned up to insert itself in the doorway of the great and good of the London Summit. Parallel to the summit, researchers, activists, mainly ecologists and alternative economists

responding to the hunger strikes and nuclear problems, thus came to challenge the G7 member states, especially about their relationships with the countries of the South and the environment.

The English TOES then became the New Economics Foundation in London, but TOES remained the generic term for the summits held parallel to the G7 during the 80s which, between 1984 and 1988, evolved according to the different networks and coalitions of NGOs ⁽⁶⁾ of the host countries ⁽⁷⁾. In time, these coalitions came to declare the G7 a symbol of "globalisation and neo-liberalism", which made little impact on public opinion as the alternative summits had limited publicity. It is however from this period that the G7 increasingly made references to social conflicts, placing them on a par with other regional, military and political conflicts.

It was however only later that the G7 became a popular symbol of liberal globalisation and the target of broader-based activist protests. For this to happen, two major geo-political developments needed to take place. First of all, the end of the USSR and the Eastern Block: as long as bi-polarisation and the Cold War continued, international institutions, with the exception of the UN, and structures like the G7 only affected the western world and its periphery. Most of all they were subordinate to US strategy and the East-West polarisation in all important matters. The main international protests in the 1970s and 1980s also concerned solidarity with popular struggles (Vietnam, Nicaragua or Poland) and disarmament - with European protests against the deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles and US Pershings on European soil.

> From the turning-point of 1989/91, with the "Washington Consensus", neo-liberal policies became the norm in all countries and continents. The international institutions and structures - the G7, IMF, World Bank and, from 1995, the WTO - became the decisive players in putting in place what later came to be called "liberal globalisation".

However, for the protests to develop the climate needed to be right and the energies of activists had to be available! This happened at the end of the 1990s, when the global cycle of protest which emerged after "Seattle" began to spread across the entire planet. However, early signs had existed in different countries before this, in particular in France in 1989 and 1996.

PARIS 1989: THE "FIRST SUMMIT OF THE SEVEN POOREST COUNTRIES" AND "THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT!"

1989 coincided with the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Francois Mitterand wanted to give a particular

splendour to these festivities by linking them to a meeting of the G7, during an international situation marked by the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and by the disintegration of the Eastern block. The summit was therefore challenged by everyone who wished to united to be the voice of the "third estate" of the planet: a demonstration and a concert were organised, an alternative summit, a symbolic meeting of seven representatives of the poorest peoples of the world.

The decade of the 1980s was notable in the western world for numerous social policy regressions and the weakening of the voluntary networks and trades unions which had developed after the war. The only sector to experience a rapid activist expansion was the NGO world - a type of involvement new at the time, experienced as being more directly effective and free from ideological baggage - and, by extension, initiatives such as SOS-Racism and Concerts for Ethiopia which had taken on board the significance of the media, the appeal of artists and music celebrities and the use of mammoth concerts as a way to mobilise people. Just before 1989, several factors showed that an important change was taking place. The March for Equality in 1983 and "Convergence" in 1984 signalled the breakthrough of the ordinary citizen, through the voices of immigrants and young people from the slums at the forefront of the social movements. A series of social movements appeared, in France and also in Italy. Following the great student strike of spring 1986, several major social conflicts took place, first of all the railway workers and then the nurses. In both these cases, the employees used a new tool, the "coordinations", which showed at the same time their desire to impose unity and democracy on their activities, starting at the grassroots. At the same time, strong social and ecological tensions began to appear as a result of international economic policies. This was particularly the case concerning GATT and the farmers (8) but also concerning the international financial institutions: the annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank, in Berlin in 1988, was greeted by a huge protest, bringing together many groups over and above the international solidarity associations. Various initiatives converged there: ecological debates, trades union assemblies, taxi-drivers' demonstrations, an alternative congress of voluntary and political organisations, a street demonstration of 80,000 people and a special session of the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples on the IMF and the World Bank, dealing particularly with the issue of Third World debt.

The mobilisation of July 1989 against the G7 was the meeting-point of these developments. First of all it followed directly in the line of the Berlin mobilisation, as the International League for the Right and Freedom of Peoples (which had organised the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples in West Berlin) joined in the preparation of TOES '89. This took a different shape by mixing the "classical" forum, dealing with ecological issues and new economic relationships based on micro-projects, and a new, more symbolic and political form to deal in the context of G7 with issues linked both to disarmament

(East-West relations) and the Third World (North-South relations). It was this latter issue which set the tone for the "First Summit of the Seven Poorest Peoples" of 15th/16th July. By denouncing the very philosophy of the G7, it anchored itself in two of its fundamental principles: not the richest but the poorest, not the state but the non-governmental representatives of the people, thus symbolising "unambiguously the exclusion and neglect in which more than two-thirds of humanity finds itself."⁽⁹⁾

However, in the tradition of media appeal dating from the 80s, it was the French singer Renaud who organised the most significant media moment of the protest: a giant concert in the Place de la Bastille, with Johnny Clegg and many other performers. This concert took place on the evening of 8th July, after the demonstration organised by the writer Gilles Perrault who wanted to use the Bicentenary to "see the revolutionaries of 1989 celebrate those from 1789". The text of the appeal, using several references to the French Revolution, showed a totally different, more political and radical, direction from that of the concerts against racism or for Ethiopia.

All these initiatives were gathered under the slogan: "Debt, apartheid, colonies - that's enough of that", thought up by Renaud, who was responding to a deep need for a radical statement on the occasion of the Bicentenary. A radicalism without revenge or hatred, but strongly expressed. Thus, the area opened by Renaud on 8th July allowed people to "sound off" (according to the description of those organising the event), and the initiatives of the 15th and 16th showed that the "alternative" groups knew how to have ideas and start turning them into action.

However, even though the actions of 1989 definitely left their traces, they marked above all the end of a short resumption of the struggles in Western Europe, between 1986 and 1989. In spite of the final affirmation of the statement at the end of "The Other Summit", the social movements did not really take off again until 1993, and the coalition formed against the G7 in Paris disappeared.

It is true that the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall was marked by a wind of hope which came on a wave of democratisation extending beyond the former Soviet block to Africa, Asia and Latin America. But this hope that cooperation between people would in future gain the upper hand and that the G7, having lost its enemy, would vanish, was quickly swept aside, making room for a new cycle of very significant social struggles. For this reason, it was not until the summit in Lyon in 1996 that the challenge to the G7 became important once again.

LYON 1996: "LET'S RETAKE THE INITIATIVE", "THE OTHER VOICES OF THE PLANET" AND "THE SUMMIT OF THE SEVEN RESISTANCES"

Seven years after the Bicentenary, the G7 returned to France. In the meantime, "the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet empire disintegrated, bombs exploded in the Gulf, there

was a war in former Yugoslavia, Africa experienced the tragedies of Liberia and Rwanda, unemployment in Europe became more severe, the extreme right found its roots in France, and Chirac took over from Mitterrand. The same policies which, amongst others, were advocated by the governments represented in the G7, had had their long-term results: everything was the same and yet it was different, history had turned the page on the 'short 20th century'." (10).

The mobilisation in Lyon to challenge the G7 nevertheless re-discovered the same spirit as that of 1989. Six months after the general strike in the public sector in the winter of 1995, it took place with a certain continuity with this spectacular demonstration of resistance to the disastrous effects of the dominant policies and the new world (dis)order. The coalition "The other voices of the planet" multiplied local initiatives, particularly in Lille during the "Social G7", finishing off with a 12,000 strong demonstration in Lyon, followed by an alternative summit of discussion and debate. Parallel to this, the Communist trade union confederation, CGT, organised a trades union demonstration which was joined by other groups, the national teachers union (FSU) and the unions of another major trade union confederation, the CFTD, bringing together 40,000 trades unionists. For the whole week before the official G7, many conferences and meetings were organised in Lyon, particularly by the NGO collective "Let's retake the initiative", on Africa, on the International Criminal Tribunal (Rwanda and Yugoslavia), on freedom, ecology, development. The "Summit of the seven resistances", organised by two French NGOs, Cedetim and Agir Ici, became in a sense the main organ of this week of mobilisation.

The coalition "The other voices of the planet" was created in 1995, following on from the "50 years is enough" campaign which was led by the coalition of the same name to mark the 50th anniversary of the Bretton Woods agreements, together with its opposite number in the USA - which would play an essential role in organising the demonstration against the World Bank and the IMF in Washington in April 2000. Now, if the strike in the public sector was the significant event in France of the year 1995, it followed on from the appearance of other social movements. In 1994, these were the European Marches against unemployment, initiated by AC! (Act together against unemployment). The winter of 1994/95 was notable for the occupation by the DAL (Right to Housing) of the Rue du Dragon, which would become the starting point for the discussion on how to span the rift between the economic classes. And just before the general strike in the public sector, the universities went on strike and the associations for women's rights mobilised 40,000 people in defence of the right to abortion. The 1995 strike in defence of pensions and the public services became the point at which these struggles became articulated, especially in the giant demonstrations organised by the trades unions in every town in France, but also by the associations and what had come to be known as the new social movements.

This general context explains why, during the initiatives around the G7 in Lyon, a deep change was seen. The first departure concerned the themes of the alternative G7. During international summits, the message of the keyplayers (often the NGOs) had up until then been focused on solidarity with the South which, in 1989, had even influenced the reference to the French Revolution: "the new Third Estate is the Third World". In Lyon a consciousness emerged that the policies of the seven dominant countries deepened the inequalities between the North and the South, but also within each of these worlds and thus the social issues in the North also came to be at the heart of discussions and actions. A second departure followed from this: the social forces, associations and trades unions became the lead players in the alternative summit and the demonstrations on the streets. The success of the demonstration organised by the CGT also marked the entry of the trade union movement into this struggle.

The third departure was symbolised by the philosophy of the Summit of the Seven Resistances. This meeting between one Brazilian man, one Algerian woman, one Russian woman, one Bosnian woman, one Senegalese woman living in France, one Belgian man living in the USA, one Indian man, one Chinese man and several French people, chaired by a Nigerian man, showed a common desire to challenge the powerful and a common aspiration to take charge of their own future. DAL's invitation to a delegation of the Brazilian MST (landless movement) is a symbol of this development. In Lyon, a development took place from the logic whereby the NGOs in the North had the monopoly of the links with the movements in the South, which they "helped and supported", to a new logic: from now on, the movements in the North and the South would organise directly to act together and to develop actions in solidarity with each other. This was re-affirmed just after the alternative summit in Lyon during the "inter-galactic" meetings organised in the summer of 1996 by the Zapatistas from Chiapas, then at a broader level in the World Social Forums.

> From 1996 onwards, the G7 was systematically challenged. Furthermore, this is the date when, seeing that demonstrations were becoming more widespread, the members of the G7 "recognised" the "civil society" and the NGOs, by mentioning them in official documents.

Of all the initiatives organised in Lyon during the days preceding the G7, the "alternative summit" of the collective "The other voices of the planet" was certainly one of the largest. This collective, which brought together several dozen organisations, prepared a weekend of work and action with several thematic workshops on 8th/9th June, 1996. The statement to the G7 which concluded this meeting was read at the opening of the Summit of the Seven Resistances.

BIRMINGHAM 1998 - JUBILEE 2000

“And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and said: [...] you will count seven Sabbath years, seven times seven years, and the days of these seven Sabbath years will be 49 years. [...] You will make holy the fiftieth year, you will declare freedom in the country for all who live there: it will be your Jubilee. [...] if your brother next to you becomes poor and sells himself to you, he will be at your service until the year of Jubilee. Then he will leave your house, he and his children with him, and he will return to his family, into the property of his fathers.”

This extract from Leviticus must have had an effect on the British university lecturer, Martin Dent, because since 1990 he had been thinking about re-claiming the concept of Jubilee as it exists in the Old Testament, and applying it to Third World debt. In 1994 the “Debt Crisis Network” decided actually to launch a campaign which became known as Jubilee 2000. The year 2000 was chosen by the Roman Catholic church to celebrate its Jubilee. The campaign started in Great Britain in spring 1996, with the support of Christian Aid, one of the largest British NGOs. It very quickly became successful and in October 1997 a coalition of several trades unions, NGOs, women’s movements and refugee organisations formed around it.

This campaign decided to centre its challenge on the G7, the structure where the heads of state and government sit as “majority shareholders in the international finance institutions” and in consequence hold a very responsible position in relation to Third World debt. It was therefore during the meeting of the G7 in Birmingham in 1998 that Jubilee 2000 organised an action whose success surpassed all their hopes: more than 70,000 people took their place in a human chain which surrounded the summit.

The success of this mobilisation was very little reported in France, where the new forms of action coming from Great Britain have always been slow to catch on. However, Great Britain is, among Northern countries, the one which experienced the earliest re-awakening of activism, ahead of France which, after the wave of social movements in the 1990s, gave birth to ATTAC at the beginning of 1998, and ahead of the USA, where the activist networks which burst onto the scene in Seattle took shape in the 1990s.

The success in Birmingham marked the beginning of a very broad international campaign: two years later, Jubilee 2000 coalitions existed in 66 countries; Jubilee had taken part in hundreds of demonstrations and had organised a petition which, with 24 million signatures from 166 countries, beat all previous records!

COLOGNE 1999: THE BATTLE FOR DEBT CANCELLATION AND THE J-18 OF RECLAIM THE STREETS

In the memory of activists, 1999 has become the year of “Seattle”, referring to the town which hosted the WTO

Ministerial Conference so seriously disrupted by demonstrations. And in fact, 1999 can be regarded as the pivotal year, from which actions spread out across the whole planet. But even before “Seattle”, several events also pointed to the development underway.

In Paris at the end of June 1999, 1,200 activists from all over the world met on the initiative of ATTAC and other European activist networks: this meeting spawned others, which increased in number after Seattle: the meeting in February 2000 in Bangkok, around the UNCTAD conference (11), the Geneva conference in June of the same year, alongside the UN Social Summit, “Copenhagen + 5”; and, most importantly, the various annual gatherings of the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre in Brazil since January 2001.

However, two other international actions targeting the G7 took place in 1999: in Cologne, around the meeting of the European Council and the G7, and the J-18 of Reclaim the Streets.

The German government had chosen Cologne as the venue for the two summits of which it held the presidency: at the end of May the European Council (summit of the heads of state and government of the EU) and, three weeks later, the summit of the G7 itself. In response to these two summits, two actions were organised in a common framework.

The initiative to demand a different direction from the EU came from the “European Marches against Unemployment, Exclusion and Insecurity”. The Marches had gained their reputation by organising the first large European demonstration of the 90s, in Amsterdam in May 1997, the culmination of marches of unemployed people all across Europe. In Cologne, 30,000 activists from the whole continent met again, following a march of 300 people from Brussels to Cologne.

To challenge the G7, the coalition took debt cancellation as its main theme, reflecting the success of Jubilee 2000 in Birmingham, and almost 30,000 people marched again through the streets of Cologne. The issue of debt was at the centre of the discussions on both the official and the activist level. Cologne was the meeting-point for activists from the South (driven by people from the Philippines and South Africa), the same people who would create “Jubilee South” a few months later in Johannesburg with the aim of articulating a Southern voice which would be different from that of the British Jubilee: namely, the demand for an unconditional cancellation of debt for all countries of the South and not just the most impoverished. After a more lively discussion than at Cologne, the G7 announced that they would engage in a process of (conditional) reduction of the debt of the most impoverished countries. ⁽¹²⁾

But in 1999, other initiatives regarding the G7 also took place. For example a “caravan” of Indian peasant farmers from Kamataka travelled for several weeks through

European countries, finishing its journey in Cologne just as the demonstration against the G7 was taking place. This caravan had been organised by a peasant trades union in Southern India which was a member of Via Campesina, and with its 500 participants it would popularise, in Europe, the struggle of the peasants of the South. It took part in several symbolic acts: the European Marches against unemployment, the pulling up of GM rice in Montpellier with Jose Bove (who became increasingly successful in drawing media attention to the movement) and a "laughter sit-down" outside the Novartis factory in Geneva..

Another action made more of a stir: the "J-18" organised on 18th June 1999, the opening day of the G7 summit, by Reclaim the Streets and its allies. Reclaim the Streets is a movement set in motion in the UK at the beginning of the 90s by radical tendencies within the ecology groups, "Friends of the Earth" and "Greenpeace" on issues of public policy. Reclaim the Street was successful amongst the young people of Britain and specialised in organising "Street Parties" while taking part in various social struggles: the doctors' strike in Liverpool, marches against unemployment which passed through London in spring 1997, struggles together with the trades unions against the privatisation of the London Underground. J-18 was intended to paralyse the financial centres of the world. In the days after the Asian crisis, Reclaim the Street had decided, like ATTAC in France, to make the markets and the financial institutions the target of its campaign. On D-Day, 10,000 activists invaded the City of London, something which had not happened since the middle of the 19th century!

With the hindsight of several years, we can now see more clearly the importance of what took place in 1999. Seattle was only the last act of what will come to be seen as the birth year of the movement against neo-liberal globalisation.

OKINAWA 2000, AGAINST MILITARY BASES AND FOR PEOPLE'S SECURITY

In the following year, the G7 (now G8 with the inclusion of Russia) switched continents to Okinawa, in Japan. Up until then, the so-called "anti-globalisation" movement had not taken on the significance in Japan of its British, French, Indian, Korean or American alter egos. However, coming to the end of the century, the G8 summit was the moment for the global Jubilee 2000 campaign to demand once again, and forcefully, the immediate cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries. It was also the occasion for several activist movements to show solidarity with the population of Okinawa in their fight against the large American military bases stationed there: the island, which makes up only 20% of the area of the region, contains 70% of US installations in the whole of Japan! It is the real heartland housing the USA's main overseas military complex. This operational centre is directly linked to the Korean peninsula, the nearby Taiwan Strait and Southeast Asia, and, in a crisis, the Gulf.

Pacifist sentiment goes very deep in Okinawa, which was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the Second World War. The population refuses to be the focal point of any future conflict and does not want its territory to be used for the domination of other peoples. The main actions which took place during the summit were therefore primarily aimed at the withdrawal of the US military complex. The first initiative was organised three weeks before the opening of the G8, from 30th June to 1st July, by an Asian activist network, the International Okinawa Forum for the Security of Peoples, whose main themes were cooperation and disarmament.

Jubilee 2000, for its part, organised a world conference on the debt of the impoverished countries, on the eve of the G8, 19th-21st July. Every element of the international campaign was there, including a large delegation from the UK, and Jubilee South played an active role. The participants demonstrated at Naho and Naga, then joined the main demonstration: a huge human chain of more than 27,000 which encircled the base at Kadena.

This conference sent a unanimously adopted message to the directors of the G7, taking up again the Alternative G7 practice which had disappeared since "That's Enough of That" in 1989. This message demanded the cancellation of illegitimate debts, as well as those which could not be met without sacrificing the health, education or even the survival itself of the impoverished population. It condemned the conditions imposed by the international financial institutions and demanded that independent mechanisms be put in place to monitor the debt cancellation process. In an unusual political gesture, the Japanese Prime Minister Mori received a delegation from Jubilee 2000's world conference, which showed the breadth of the mobilisation against debt and the echo which it could have even beyond activists circles, even though in the end the G8 still continues to turn a deaf ear and refuses to take any real step towards lifting the debt burden from the peoples of the Third World.

JULY 2001: GENOA THE TERRIBLE

As with many major events, different interpretations of Genoa are possible and the central thread could be the loss of legitimacy of the G8 meetings or the shock of police repression; but these aspects are well-known today⁽¹³⁾. Here it will suffice to set Genoa in the short genealogy of the Seattle "movement". In fact, while the failure of the WTO ministerial conference in December 1999 marked the breakthrough of this movement onto the world scene, it has seen different phases and Genoa represents a genuine turning-point.

In the first phase, the mobilisation was numerically small. In Seattle, even with the presence of the large American trades union AFL-CIO, there were never more than a few tens of thousands of demonstrators; one year later in Prague, for the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, there were no more than 20,000 from all over Europe. The strength of the movement lies in its alternative expertise, the use of new direct methods, the arrival of a

new militant generation amongst the young people, and, above all, the sympathy of public opinion worried by the negative impact of liberal globalisation at a social, environmental and democratic level. In this respect, a parallel can be drawn with the “strikes by delegation”, which took place in France in the 90s, where those who were able to go on strike (above all those in the public sector) were massively supported by those who were in a weaker position, especially those employed in the private sector, pensioners, the unemployed, and so on.

After the actions in Quebec against the American free trade zone a few months beforehand, Genoa represented a leap both in quantity and quality. To bring together 300,000 people in spite of police violence and the closure of stations and airports was, in the first place a confirmation of massive rejection by public opinion of the effects of liberal globalisation. But above all, the physical presence of these demonstrators, the great majority of whom were Italian, gave weight to the events which followed: thousands and thousands of responsible members of associations, trades unionists as well as activists from political parties, were plunged into the cauldron of Genoa along with young people who were making their first political experiment. And nobody came out unharmed. In this way, Genoa was a major catalyst for the series of actions which took place in Italy in the following months, irrespective of the debates and differences amongst the participants: the Perugia/Assisi march against the war in Afghanistan, the “girotondo” against the amnesty Silvio Berlusconi granted to himself, the national demonstration, then the general strike against the undermining of Article 18 of the Labour Law, and finally the European Social Forum in Florence and the 2 million strong demonstration in Rome on 15th February 2003 against the war in Iraq.

In this last year Italy has experienced an impressive series of actions, but it would be a mistake to believe in an “Italian exception” within a Europe and a world which remain lifeless. After Genoa, the “general public”, began to take real notice of the fact that things were happening in all four corners of the planet: this would become clear with the second and third sessions of the World Forum at Porto Alegre where, in 2002 and then in 2003, there were 50,000 and then 60,000 participants; the Argentinean actions; the Spanish demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people at the European summits in March and again in June, parallel to a general strike which received massive support; and finally, 10 million demonstrators around the whole world on 15th February 2003.. All these examples are a result of developments which are as much about quantity as about quality.

For it should be noted that those who take part in all these different initiatives, in both the South and the North, might certainly speak in different ways but they speak about the same things and in inter-twined networks which no longer reflect the divisions of the previous century. This coalition will strengthen over time and it will be possible to speak of a “movement” in the political sense; this will bring together different hopes and challenges based around a broad sense of world democracy and sustainable development.

2002, DEMOCRACY ACCORDING TO THE G8 IN KANANASKIS, AND DEMOCRACY ACCORDING TO THE PEOPLE IN SIBY

In 2002, faced with the demand for democratisation and radical change in the international order so strongly asked for in Genoa, the G8 responded with exile. It held its next meeting in Kananaskis, a small village deep in the Rocky Mountains of Canada, accessible only by one road, fiercely guarded by a heavy police and military presence who managed to have one victim: a bear who had wandered too close to the security barrier. However, civil society was one of the most important participants - in the official discussions! Thus, the official site of the summit of Kananaskis had a section for “discussion with citizens” - an unintended demonstration that democracy according to the G8 is only a virtual democracy.

Many believed, wrongly, that nothing would be organised against the G8 that year. However, there were many events in Canada, including a counter-meeting organised by the Group of Six Billion (G6B) which attracted about 10,000 to the University of Calgary. 2002 would also be the occasion of a “first world summit” to challenge the G7/G8: a demonstration that the peoples of the South, those “forgotten ones” of the world, knew how to make themselves heard, knew how to show their autonomy and were the bearers of another vision of the world and relationships between peoples. From 25th-28th June, parallel to the G7 meeting in Kananaskis, the Forum “Kananaskis, village of the peoples” took place in Siby, Kati Circle, a small village at the centre of a region in Mali with 18,000 inhabitants, a few dozen kilometres from the border with Guinea. This forum was organised by Jubilee 2000/CAD-Mali in partnership with other organisations and with Malian civil society.

In Siby, as in Kananaskis, one main topic was discussed: the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). However, the nature and context of the discussions was obviously not the same. While the major decision-makers of the world met in Kananaskis, Siby welcomed some 300 representatives of peasant organisations, trades unions and citizens of West Africa (Senegal, Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Guinea, etc.). The point of the forum, the village of the peoples in Siby, was not to support NEPAD, but to create a collective and alternative opportunity for grass-roots education, information, discussion, and constructive criticism from the social movements at the national, sub-regional and international level, with all the diversity of their visions and positions on the burning issues of the African continent, for example NEPAD, the debt burden, unjust trade, food insecurity, and so on ⁽¹⁴⁾.

In spite of the limited means (lack of roads, electricity and running water), there were three days of meetings, analyses, and exchange of experiences, each time introduced by imaginative sketches and interpreted by young people. Not without humour, these small scenes depicted the situation of an African people impoverished by the dismantlement of the public sector, the burden of

foreign debt, the faithless competition of the western transnationals and the historical plummeting of the prices of raw materials.

A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

The movement, in gaining more and more in size since Genoa, is linked to activist networks and is integrated into national contexts, but this very fact makes it lose in homogeneity and transparency. Little separated the demonstrators of Prague, in September 2003, from those in Washington DC who, in April of the same year, were already protesting against the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. They had the same goals and the processions were made up of very similar young people. Today, the movements are confronted by challenges of a totally different order and the arrival of new forces and new partners raises complex questions. The enlargement of the movement into broad strata of the population, well beyond the young people who demonstrated in Seattle or Prague, has the immediate consequence of developing actions on the social level, the refusal of job-losses and insecurity, the protection of pensions, and therefore the links with the trades unions. On another level, the actions against the extreme right, for example in France during the presidential elections, also raise the problem of a break with liberalism, because the grass-roots consolidation of populist forces and the extreme right is also linked to a rejection of the current system and of a globalisation which allows no hope. The movement finds that it is broadening its themes and its social base, which will mean the arrival of new participants, trades unions, or left-wing parties. The movement comes up against governmental decisions and political issues which are indeed the consequences of liberal globalisation, but which raise problems of alliances, commitments, and national deadlines

Today, the demonstrations against the war in Iraq have focused the minds of the activists and given a common international context for action. However, in the long term, a widening of the mobilisation leads to a dilution of "the movement" as it used to be, in Seattle and Genoa. The issue of alliances divides it, the arrival of new partners makes it less transparent, and the need to respond to national decisions clouds its global nature. But this widening also allows it to make the case against neo-liberal globalisation. For the movement, the task will be to find the places and the tools to multiply the exchange of experiences and to improve the understanding of the current mobilisation.

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NOTES

1. Zaire, May 1980; Morocco June 1981 then 1984; Madagascar 1982; Tunisia, January 1984; Sudan, March-April 1985; Algeria, 4th October 1988.
2. Ecuador, October 1982; Chile, May 1983; Brazil, 1983 then December 1986; Dominican Republic, April 1984; Haiti, May 1985; Guatemala, September 1985; Bolivia, January

- 1986 then November 1989; Venezuela, 27th February - 3rd March 1989; Argentina, 1989; Peru 1980 - 1990.
3. Turkey, February 1980; Philippines, September 1983.
4. Cf. Serge Cordellier, *Le nouvel Etat du monde. Bilan de la decennie 1980-1990*, La Decouverte, 1990.
5. Ibid.
6. In the main, these were NGOs dealing with international solidarity, development and ecology.
- 7 Cf. London School of Economics, *Global civil society 2001*, Oxford University Press, 2002. See also the web-site of Toronto University, *ibid*.
8. A new cycle of GATT negotiations began in 1986 at Punta del Este (Uruguay), signifying the beginning of the Uruguay Round which led to the creation of the World Trade Organisation in 1994.
9. Actes du Sommet des sept peuples, parmi les plus pauvres, *Agir Ici* 1989. The impoverished countries were Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mozambique, the Philippines, Zaire.
10. Bernard Dreano, *Actes du Sommet des sept resistances*, Lyon 27th June 1996, *Agir ici*, Cedetim, 1996.
11. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
12. The campaign ran until the end of 2000 and the British NGOs who had been its inspiration decided to dissolve "Jubilee 2000 - UK". From then onwards, the British established a more short-term campaign, "Drop the Debt", which had the G8 meeting in Genoa as its goal. In fact this was the beginning of a process of drawing together of the large NGOs and new groups, which would become focused in the Social Forums.
13. "Genes. Multitudes en marche contre l'Empire", *Reflex*, June 2002, *Samizdat.net*, contains a very relevant survey of these themes.
14. Recommended reading on this topic is Arnaud Zacharie, *Forum des peuples a Siby, Mali, 25-28 June 2002, Une appropriation citoyenne du developpement social en Afrique*, CADTM, <http://users.skynet.be/cadtm/>

AFRICA IN EVIAN: IF THE G8 IS MEETING, IT MUST BE TIME TO 'DIGNIFY' NEPAD (AGAIN)

Patrick Bond*

The June G8 meeting in Evian, France may not, after all, feature the once-anticipated spoils-of-war squabbles between the warmongering coalition (US, UK and Italy) and their ephemeral opponents (Germany, France, Russia, Japan and Canada). But China's invitation to attend will distract attention from a promise by French premier Jacques Chirac to loosen up Northern agricultural barriers to trade which hold back African exports.

Where, then, does the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) fit? Is it, as many commentators now agree, yesterday's news?

More than a year ago, South African trade minister Alec Erwin made a revealing statement just as Robert Mugabe was stealing a presidential election: 'The West should not hold Nepad hostage because of mistakes in Zimbabwe.

If Nepad is not owned and implemented by Africa it will fail and we cannot be held hostage to the political whims of the G8 or any other groups.'

In contrast, civil society critics alleged that Nepad was already a subimperial project, influenced by the elite team of partners who helped craft it in 2000-01. Nepad surfaced only after extensive consultations with the World Bank president and IMF managing director (November 2000 and February 2001); major transnational corporate executives and associated government leaders (at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2001, NYC in February 2002); G8 rulers (at Tokyo in July 2000 and Genoa in July 2001); and the European Union president and individual Northern heads of state (2000-01).

What was civil society's input? In late 2001 and early 2002, virtually every major African civil society organisation, network and progressive personality attacked Nepad's process, form and content. Until April 2002, no trade union, civil society, church, women's, youth, political-party, parliamentary, or other potentially democratic or progressive forces in Africa were formally consulted by the politicians or technocrats involved in constructing Nepad.

In addition, tough critiques of the 67-page base document soon emerged from intellectuals associated with the Council for Development and Social Research in Africa (Adesina, Nabudere, Olukoshi, and others). By the time of the launch of the African Union last July, more than 200 opponents of Nepad from human rights, debt and trade advocacy groups from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were sufficiently organised to hold a militant demonstration at the opening ceremony in Durban. Then on August 31, at least 20,000 protesters against the

privatisation of nature and development at the Johannesburg Earth Summit also forcefully condemned Nepad.

The economics and politics of Nepad provide a good basis for ongoing critique. The two central premises of Nepad are that deeper integration into the world economy will inexorably benefit the continent, and that the enlivened proponents of Nepad will discipline Africa's ubiquitous despots.

Is Africa insufficiently integrated? In reality, the continent's share of world trade declined over the past quarter century, while the volume of exports increased. 'Marginalisation' of Africa occurred, hence, not because of lack of integration, but because other areas of the world—especially East Asia—moved to the export of manufactured goods, while Africa's industrial potential collapsed thanks to excessive deregulation associated with structural adjustment.

Moreover, Africa's debt crisis worsened during the era of globalisation. > From 1980-2000, Sub-Saharan Africa's total foreign debt rose from \$60 billion to \$206 billion and the ratio of debt to GDP rose from 23% to 66%.

Hence, Africa now repays more than it receives. In 1980, loan inflows of \$9.6 billion were comfortably higher than the debt repayment outflow of \$3.2 billion. By 2000, only \$3.2 billion flowed in, and \$9.8 billion was repaid, leaving a net financial flows deficit of \$6.2 billion. Meanwhile, (already-corrupt) donor aid was down 40% from 1990 levels.

So much for debt relief. By all accounts, the World Bank and IMF debt programmes (HIPC, PRSPs) that are trumpeted in Nepad have failed miserably. Convincing evidence continues to be found that women and vulnerable children, the elderly and disabled people are the primary victims, as they are expected to survive with less social subsidy, with more pressure on the fabric of the family during economic crisis, and with HIV/AIDS closely correlated to structural adjustment.

Africa's elites contribute to the problem through looting the continent. The two leading scholars of the phenomenon, James Boyce and Leonce Ndikumana, show that a core group of African countries whose foreign debt was \$178 billion suffered a quarter century of capital flight that totaled more than \$285 billion (including imputed interest earnings). Capital flight by elites is not taken seriously in Nepad, because a crackdown would conflict with the programme's commitment to further financial liberalisation..

But there remained, nevertheless, a naive hope that the good-governance rhetoric in the document might do some good: 'With Nepad, Africa undertakes to respect the global standards of democracy, which core components include political pluralism, allowing for the existence of several political parties and workers' unions, fair, open, free and democratic elections periodically organised to enable the populace choose their leaders freely.'

While South Africa under Mbeki's rule still permits free and fair elections, the other main Nepad leader, Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo, certainly does not. In the April 2003 presidential poll, Obasanjo's home state of Ogun reportedly provided him with 1,360,170 votes, against his opponent's 680. The number of votes cast in a simultaneous race in the same geographical area was just 747,296.

Obasanjo's explanation, by way of denigrating the European Union's electoral observers, was that 'Certain communities in this country make up their minds to act as one in political matters... They probably don't have that kind of culture in most European countries.' International observers found 'serious irregularities throughout the country and fraud in at least 11 (of 36) states.'

According to Chima Ubani of the Civil Liberties Organisation, 'It's not the actual wish of the electorate but some machinery that has churned out unbelievable outcomes. We've seen a landslide that does not seem sufficiently explained by any available factor.' Harsh complaints also came from the Transition Monitoring Group and the Catholic Church's Justice Development and Peace Commission, which together had 40,000 monitors documenting abuse.

In contrast, Mbeki's weekly ANC internet ANC Today letter proclaimed, 'Nigeria has just completed a series of elections, culminating in the re-election of president Olusegun Obasanjo into his second and last term. Naturally, we have already sent our congratulations to him.' Mbeki had to register, and then dismiss, the obvious: 'It is clear that there were instances of irregularities in some parts of the country. However, it also seems clear that, by and large, the elections were well conducted.'

A similar pattern of respect for democracy was evident in Zimbabwe. Mbeki and Obasanjo had termed the 2002 presidential election 'legitimate', and repeatedly opposed punishment in the Commonwealth and UN Human Rights Commission. In February 2003, foreign minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma arrogantly stated, 'We will never criticise Zimbabwe'. The Nepad secretariat's Dave Malcomson, responsible for international liaison and co-ordination, openly admitted to a reporter, 'Wherever we go, Zimbabwe is thrown at us as the reason why Nepad's a joke.'

The increasingly cozy relationship between Pretoria and Harare alienated both the Movement for Democratic

Change and more progressive civil society groups like the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (Zimcodd). Late last year, the formerly pro-Nepad MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, concluded that Mbeki had 'embarked on an international safari to campaign for Mugabe's regime. Pretoria is free to pursue its own agenda. But it must realise that Zimbabweans can never be fooled anymore.'

A February 2003 gambit to readmit Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth was merely, in Tsvangirai's words, 'the disreputable end game of a long-term Obasanjo-Mbeki strategy designed to infiltrate and subvert not only the Commonwealth effort but, indeed, all other international efforts intended to rein in Mugabe's violent and illegitimate regime.' Tsvangirai called the Nepad sponsors 'self-confessed fellow travellers on a road littered with violence, destruction and death.'

Most in Zimbabwean civil society were just as cynical. In a foreword to a new booklet entitled *Nepad's Zimbabwe Test: Why the New Partnership for Africa's Development is Already Failing*, Zimcodd chairperson Jonah Gokova writes of 'the profound rejection of Nepad by Zimbabweans from important social movements, trade unions and NGOs within our increasingly vibrant civil society'. He terms Nepad a 'homegrown rehashing of the Washington Consensus, augmented by transparently false promises of good governance and democracy'.

The durable suspicion from democratic, progressive forces across Africa appeared validated when, in October 2002, political-governance peer review was nearly excised from Nepad. Johannesburg's *Business Day* newspaper described how Nepad 'had fallen victim to the realities of African politics... Diplomats said that there were indications that SA had succumbed to pressure from other African countries, including Libya and Nigeria, to confine peer review to economic and corporate governance matters.' Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien reportedly called Mbeki to insist that peer review—even Nepad's voluntarily and hence toothless (but nevertheless crucial for public relations)—be restored.

As a result, who can blame the G8 rulers for a more reserved attitude to their elite African visitors? When Pretoria's delegation flew to Kananaskis in June 2002, expectations were high, not least because of a front-page *Time* magazine feature on 'Mbeki's mission: He has finally faced up to the AIDS crisis and is now leading the charge for a new African development plan.' In reality, Mbeki has still denied more than five million South Africans access to life-saving medicines, and his health minister was recently charged by activists with 'culpable homicide', alongside minister Erwin.

Last year was Africa's big moment before the G8. However, as Institutional Investor reported, global elites 'coughed up only an additional \$1 billion for debt relief, failed altogether to reduce their domestic agricultural subsidies and—most disappointing of all to the

Africans—neglected to provide any further aid to the continent.’

Mbeki refused to accept reality: ‘I think they have addressed adequately all the matters that were put to them.’ Kananaskis was, he claimed, ‘a defining moment in the process both of the evolution of Africa and the birth of a more equitable system of international relations. In historical terms, it signifies the end of the epoch of colonialism and neo-colonialism.’

Nepad’s future is predicted in the current issue of Institutional Investor: ‘Like other far-reaching African initiatives made over the years, this one promptly rolled off the track and into the ditch... Almost two years after Nepad’s launch, it has little to show in aid or investment. Only a handful of projects have fallen within the plan’s framework.’

As a sort of kiss of death, the magazine quotes the chief US Africa bureaucrat, Walter Kansteiner: ‘Nepad is philosophically spot-on. The US will focus on those emerging markets doing the right thing in terms of private sector development, economic freedom and liberty.’

Famed poet-activist and former Robben Islander Dennis Brutus alleged in a Business Day newspaper column a year ago that Mbeki and his colleagues in Kananaskis were ‘apparently intent on selling out the continent under the rubric of a plan crafted by the same technocrats who wrote Pretoria’s failed Gear economic programme, under the guidance of Washington and the corporate leaders of Davos... It is past time for us to insist that president Mbeki rise off his kneepad and assume the dignity of an African leader, or face ridicule.’

Unfortunately, Mbeki continues to ignore the advice.

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