



Jean-Marie de Craene

SI COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS

'The new Europe in an interdependent world - the democratic socialist perspective' was the main theme of the SI Council's discussions when it met at the European Parliament in Brussels on 7 and 8 December, at the invitation of the Group of the Party of European Socialists.

SI President Pierre Mauroy opened the proceedings with some words of homage to Yitzhak Rabin, prime minister of Israel, leader of the Israel Labour Party and a vice-president of the International, assassinated just a month before. 'Rabin', he said, 'will stay in our memories as a courageous statesman. We will not forget that he was a socialist'. He spoke of Yitzhak Rabin's funeral, where he had represented the Socialist International: 'I felt the

emotion of those present. I heard the speeches in Hebrew, Arabic and English. I understood that these different words and different languages carried the same message, which gripped the crowd gathered there and the mourning world, the same hope, beyond our anger and distress, that this death would serve one last time, and even accelerate, the peace process'.

Welcoming the SI delegates to Brussels, Pauline Green, the leader of the PES parliamentary

group, described the European Union as 'a unique, innovative body. There is nothing like it in the world. We are proud of this outstanding example of cooperation and conflict resolution... which the nations of Europe have created'. She said she looked forward to the continuing development of European cooperation, which she hoped would be based on the 'European social model' developed since the Second World War. And she hoped that it would serve as a model for

regional cooperation in other parts of the world (Pauline Green writes on Europe in an interdependent world, page 4).

'We are holding our Council meeting in a place which is symbolic of democracy and European construction', Pierre Mauroy said. He pointed out that social democrats were in government in all but three member states of the European Union and that where conservatives were in power, as in France and Great Britain, there was social crisis. He also mentioned the increasing success of social democratic parties in central and eastern Europe. Looking to Europe's future, he gave qualified support to faster integration for certain countries in the short term, 'because we are convinced that Europe must have enough influence in the world arena so that, tomorrow, a new more stable monetary system and a better organised financial system can be established, in order to reduce speculation and see interest rates fall at last'.

The SI President also talked in his opening address about the International's commitment to peace, in Europe and everywhere. He recalled that 'because socialism is incompatible with all forms of nationalism, because socialism can never be a doctrine, because socialism is against all forms of fundamentalism, we have been the best defenders of peace this century'. He supported the Dayton peace process in the former Yugoslavia: 'We have now to mobilise our towns, our countries and the European Union so that the necessary efforts for reconstruction are undertaken. We have to mobilise our parties and our foundations in order to help our comrades of the democratic

left who are struggling under very difficult conditions'. Furthermore, 'we have to know of what kind of peace we are talking... we are in favour of peace, but not at any price. We favour a peace which is built on the rule of law and, more particularly, on fundamental rights and human dignity'.

'Finally', Mauroy said, 'because we favour a peace which no longer depends on nuclear terror... we firmly condemn nuclear testing'. He said that the recent French nuclear tests, 'go against the logic of disarmament and set the wrong example at a moment when there is a real fear of nuclear proliferation'. The struggle for peace had often been painful, he concluded, as shown by the recent tragic deaths of Yitzhak Rabin and of Embareck Mahiou, of the Socialist Forces Front, in Algeria: 'and we know that there is no better way to honour them than to continue now and forever this fight'.

Another keynote speaker was Portugal's new prime minister, the Socialist Party Leader António Guterres, who told the SI Council that it must 'adopt a very clear political message: that the European Union cannot turn in on itself. Europe must not be obsessed with problems of peace and stability within the continent. The European Union must open itself to the world and participate in the construction of a world order based on peace, on cooperation for development, on more just economic and social relationships between peoples'.

This message', he said, 'is not an easy one for our public opinion. There is today a certain public malaise with regard to politicians and to the European institutions, a malaise

aggravated by unemployment, by the crisis in the welfare state in many countries, by a democratic deficit in the functioning of European institutions, and by a new distrust of the consequences of the opening of European markets to the world, especially in some traditional sectors of the economy'.

He called for strong leadership at European level: 'Europe as a whole, if the Union wants it, if all the governments want it, can launch a solid policy for economic renewal, with employment as a priority.'

He called equally for a European Union policy of solidarity towards central and eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, the United States and Latin America, and especially towards Africa. And he called on the Union to take a forceful part in the reform of the United Nations, so that it could be more effective in peacekeeping and in defending human rights and nations' right to self-determination.

The International's first vice-president, Gro Harlem Brundtland, spoke of enlarging and deepening a united Europe as 'our present historic assignment'. She spoke of Europe's millions of unemployed and of the disaffection of many young people from the political process. In this context, she said, even with the tools of the information and communications 'revolution' it was hard to mobilise support for a shared European project. 'Most of our political institutions were created during serious times, when the seriousness was perceived by a majority. The United Nations was created before the [second world] war was even over.

John Hume

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all the Mediterranean countries and with more distant partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The Council was also warmly welcomed to Brussels by SI Vice-President Philippe Busquin, leader of the francophone Socialist Party, PS, of Belgium, who described his country as 'deeply European' and expressed concern about the speed of progress towards real political, social and economic union among the present EU states. He stressed that such a union should not be seen as excluding stronger links with the countries of the Mediterranean and of central and eastern Europe, which Belgian socialists also strongly supported. However, he was impatient to see the Union more deeply

united and thus more effective on the world stage - such a Union could, he felt, have played a more effective role for peace in the former Yugoslavia.

The foreign minister and deputy premier of Turkey, Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party, CHP, thanked SI member parties, and especially those in the European Union, for their solidarity with the CHP. Whatever the outcome of the forthcoming elections, he said, the coming period would be an important one in Turkey, with vital democratic battles to be won. He described the greatest challenge as that of 'making Turkey's home in Europe', stressing that his party shared all the values of the European Union and saw the country's future there. He

appealed to European socialists to ensure that the Europe of the future was not an exclusive club, but an internationalist, multi-cultural and multi-dimensional entity.

Selim Bezagic, leader of the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats and mayor of Tuzla, was a guest at the meeting. He said that the Bosnian people needed the help of the Socialist International, as they did the help of all those who had supported the Dayton agreement. After the terrible tragedy of 250,000 dead, two-and-a-half million refugees, of countless women raped and children orphaned, the people of Bosnia had every reason to try and make peace work. He said that his greatest worry was whether the conditions for democracy could be built in the one year allowed by the Dayton agreement, and called on the international community to help ensure that war criminals were brought to justice and all refugees could return home, and to give not just humanitarian aid but support to economic reconstruction.

The SI president sent his warmest wishes to the Greek premier and SI vice-president, Andreas Papandreou, who had been ill for some time, before giving the floor to Akis Tsochatzopoulos of Pasok, a senior minister in the Greek government and currently acting prime minister, who in his intervention described Europe as 'a spark of hope for a better future'. He recalled that at the last SI Congress in Berlin, Papandreou had said he hoped one day to see a single Europe, united in cooperation, stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. Moreover, the hopes of the whole world, Tsochatzopoulos said, were vested in Europe, as well as in

NATO, the Western European Union and the Council of Europe and the Coal and Steel Union were created in the wake of Soviet aggression'. In a time of just as serious but less obvious threats, she said, building consensus in favour of European integration and a new outlook on the world was a difficult challenge. She defined three areas where it was crucial to build such a consensus: in security policy, in protecting and improving the fabric of civil society, and in growth and employment. 'We must', she said, 'discuss and explain our goals for society, and why sometimes sacrifices must be made in order to secure a better tomorrow... To complete the grand schemes of enlargement of Europe, which comprise so many aspects and affect the lives of so many people, we must walk decisively into the great struggle for attention. Amidst electronic noise, entertainment and commercials, social democratic ideals must prevail. With persistence we can do that job'.

Among the European party leaders present in Brussels was John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland, of whom Pierre Mauroy said 'we admire his strength and courage and we strongly support all his efforts, together with those of Dick Spring and of the British socialists, to put an end to one of the oldest and most terrible conflicts ever experienced by our continent'.

'For us in Ireland', John Hume told the SI Council, 'the European Union has been a model of conflict resolution... When you study conflict, as you have to when you face it on your streets as I have done and watch human beings getting killed, what is it about?



A very simple thing - it is about seeing difference as a threat... The people of Europe, who had slaughtered one another for centuries, took a very simple decision, that difference is natural, an accident of birth, and that difference should never be a source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is not to fight about it, but to respect it and to build institutions which respect difference and allow people to work together in their common interests; which is the real interest of politics'. The lessons learned by the members of the

European Union must, he said, be learned in every area of conflict: 'the European Union challenges the nationalistic mindset present in so many conflicts with a simple fact, it is people who have rights, not territories'. That it was widely perceived as a symbol of hope, he said, was evident from the priority given by so many countries and regions to developing ties with the Union. He stressed the Union's ultimate aim of bringing in all the countries of central and eastern Europe, as well as the importance of strong links with

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and Pauline
Green*

the US and in some countries of the Asia-Pacific, to relaunch production and stimulate economic development everywhere and to make sure that today's much vaunted 'globalisation' was a good thing for the whole world.

The importance of Europe's future directions for the whole world was similarly underlined by speakers from all parts of Europe and by leading representatives of SI parties on other continents, as well as in the resolution on The New Europe adopted by the Council (printed in full on page 42), which called on the European Union to work for peace and disarmament, to pursue a well-prepared enlargement to the East and the South, and to promote peace and partnership around the world.

After the discussion of its main theme, the SI Council went on to receive reports on the work of the International from the secretary general, Luis Ayala (the secretary general's report is printed in full on page 38) and from committee chairs.

Makoto Tanabe, chair of the SI Committee for Asia and the Pacific, having spoken about the current situation in Japan, reported on the extraordinary meeting of the Asia-Pacific Committee held in Australian in September to focus on the issue of nuclear testing, and the Council adopted resolutions reiterating its condemnation of the French nuclear tests and calling for every effort in the negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and stressing the importance of pursuing complete nuclear disarmament.

The SI Middle East Committee met in Brussels on the eve of the Council and its chair, Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski, reported on that meeting and the

committee's recent work. In the ensuing discussion, the Council was addressed by Yossi Beilin, Labour minister in the Israeli government, and by Yasser Abed Rabbo of the PLO, minister of culture of the Palestinian Authority, and a resolution was approved on continuing support for the peace process.

Recent developments in central and eastern Europe were the subject of a report by Piero Fassino, co-chair of the SI Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, SICEE, and the Council adopted a resolution welcoming the Dayton peace accords and reaffirming the SI's commitment to support for all diplomatic and political action conducive to a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Balkans. A further resolution deplored recent anti-democratic developments in Albania.

Laurent Gbagbo, leader of the Ivory Coast Popular Front, and Santiago Obama, leader of the Convergence for Social Democracy, Equatorial Guinea, spoke about the recent very problematic elections in their countries, which the International had been following with grave concern. Also on the subject of recent developments in Africa, a resolution was passed condemning the executions in Nigeria of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other environmental and human rights activists and calling for international action to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in that country.

SI Vice-President José Francisco Peña Gómez reported on recent electoral and other developments in Latin America and the Caribbean and in particular on the positive developments in political and electoral reform in his own

country, the Dominican Republic.

The chair of the SI Committee on Human Rights, Peter Jankowitsch, reported on the work of that committee, which also met in Brussels on 6 December. The committee focused on the continuing international campaign for universal abolition of the death penalty and a resolution was adopted confirming the Socialist International's strong support for that cause.

Another resolution dealt with the still grave situation in Burma, on which Win Khet, chair of the National League for Democracy, addressed the Council (all resolutions are printed in full on page 41).

Following a report from the chair of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Gunnar Stenarv, the Council adopted a budget for the International's work during the coming year. It also agreed, on the advice of SIFAC, to recommend to the next SI Congress that the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD, Panama (whose membership is currently suspended) be reinstated as a consultative party of the International and that consultative status be granted to the Dominica Labour Party; the Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, Equatorial Guinea; the Party for Democracy and Socialism, PNDS, of Niger; the Romanian Social Democratic Party, RSDP, and the Democratic Party of Romania.

SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS

I
I am pleased to report to this first SI Council meeting to be hosted in Brussels by the Group of the Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament. I want to thank our vice-president, Pauline Green, leader of the PES Group, and all concerned in the organisation of the Council. It is a source of pride and encouragement for all of us to be here at the invitation of our European parliamentary comrades - the largest group in the European Parliament, which also has a socialist president, Klaus Hänsch. The theme of our meeting here in Brussels, 'The New Europe in an Interdependent World,' reflects an international perspective which informs all the work of the Socialist International, of the PES Parliamentary Group and of socialists worldwide.

II
During the period since our last Council meeting in Cape Town in July, the International has carried out some particularly significant meetings and activities.

The resolution on nuclear testing in the South Pacific adopted by the Council in Cape Town reflected the grave concern of all in our International about this issue, particularly in the light of the decision of the French government to resume testing. This concern continued to grow, as the date of the proposed tests approached, and was expressed in many international fora by social democrats throughout the world, not least those from the Asia-Pacific region. An extraordinary meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee was accordingly convened in Sydney, Australia, on 1-2 September. It was chaired by SI Vice-President Makoto Tanabe, of the Social Democratic Party of Japan, and hosted by the Australian Labor Party. Labor Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Environment Minister John Faulkner took part, as did the former prime minister, Gough

Whitlam, and many members of the ALP leadership. Leading representatives of almost all our parties in the region attended, together with a number from European parties.

Our president, Pierre Mauroy, in a statement in August, had condemned President Chirac's decision to resume French tests at Mururoa Atoll as 'against the spirit of the time' and in no way justified by security imperatives. The SI Committee heard reports of global opposition and protests at the tests and a resolution was adopted which called on France, China and other nuclear-weapon states to desist from any further nuclear tests, to honour the decision to extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to fully participate in the pre-negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Unfortunately, the tests at Mururoa Atoll subsequently went ahead, and are continuing. Worldwide opposition also continues, however.

The members of our Asia-Pacific Committee also took the opportunity of the Sydney meeting to review the situation in a number of countries of the region. A resolution was adopted reaffirming support for the Burmese democracy movement. A further resolution deplored the continuing violation of human and political rights in East Timor and called on the Indonesian government to take a number of measures regarding the territory. The Committee also reaffirmed the resolution of our Council in Cape Town which called for a ban on the manufacture and sale of land mines - an issue particularly affecting some countries of the region.

Another significant meeting was that of the SI Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, held in Moscow on 3-4 November. The Committee focused on current developments in Russia and the forthcoming elections, as well as on the situation in the former Yugoslavia. The meeting, which was

chaired by the Committee's co-chair, Piero Fassino of the Italian Democratic Party of the Left, PDS, attracted a large participation, with representatives of all the main social democratic formations in Russia attending, including the leaders of the Russian Social Democratic Union and other members of the Social Democratic Bloc, of the Social Democratic Party of Russia, and of the Party of Socially Oriented Democracy. The Committee also welcomed contributions from individual guests including Mikhail Gorbachev and representatives of the city government of Moscow. Along with delegates of SI member parties in central, eastern and western Europe, guests also attended from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine. The growth of our activities and contacts, and of interest in the Socialist International, in Russia and in the whole of central and eastern Europe, was most evident from this gathering. Whilst in Moscow for the Committee meeting, I also had the opportunity to meet with the prime minister of Russia, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Our Committee for Central and Eastern Europe adopted a resolution underlining the great significance of the Russian parliamentary elections and calling for fair conditions and open access to the media for all electoral lists. It also called on all Russian citizens to exercise their vote and expressed support for all those Russian democratic forces founded on the values of democratic socialism.

Whilst in Moscow, the members of SICEE also discussed the situation in Azerbaijan and passed a resolution deploring the human rights violations and political detentions in that country.

In its resolution on the former Yugoslavia, the Committee welcomed the agreement on

principles signed in Geneva in September and urged a number of specific measures by all sides to consolidate the ceasefire. Since then, of course, there have been further long-awaited positive developments towards the ending of this terrible conflict in the heart of Europe, and no doubt our discussions in Brussels will reflect the firm support of our International for all those seeking a peaceful solution.

As a manifestation of that support, SI President Pierre Mauroy and myself, Jean-François Vallin, secretary general of the Party of European Socialists, together with Michel Thauvin, chef de cabinet of the SI President, and Maurice Lazar, adviser to the SI president, visited Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in November. In Zagreb we met the leaderships of all the social democratic formations in Croatia: the Social Democratic Party, SPD, the Social Democratic Union, and the Social Democratic Action, ASH. We were able to travel on from Zagreb to Sarajevo, where we met the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats and the Citizens' Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as ministers of the Bosnian government and members of the presidency, officials of the Croat National Council and the Serbian Citizens' Council, and officers of the United Nations Protection Force, UNPROFOR. We also had the opportunity to talk with members of the Association of Independent Intellectuals and visited an independent television and radio station.

I then went on to Tuzla, where I met our friend and colleague Selim Beslagic, the mayor of that city and leader of the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats, and other members of the social democratic administration of Tuzla, representing both the UBSD and the SDP.

This visit to Croatia and, in particular, to Bosnia was an invaluable opportunity to see the situation for ourselves and to appreciate the extent of the task of peacemaking and reconstruction now facing the Bosnian people, in

which they will need all our support and cooperation.

III

Turning to the Middle East, the whole of our International has been stunned and grief-stricken by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Whilst joining our Israeli comrades in mourning their courageous leader, our vice-president and friend, we join them too in the commitment to continue on the path of peace opened up by Yitzhak Rabin's government. The new prime minister of Israel and leader of the Israel Labour Party, our friend of many years Shimon Peres, has our fullest support and solidarity. In that context, the SI Middle East Committee is meeting in Brussels on the eve of our Council meeting to review the situation in the Middle East and the Socialist International's contribution to advancing the peace process, as well as to prepare a draft resolution on the subject for adoption by the Council.

IV

The SI Human Rights Committee, chaired by Peter Jankowitsch of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, is also meeting in Brussels. Taking into account the perspectives and priorities it has been developing during the last few years, the Committee will begin consideration of 'A Socialist International Human Rights Agenda for the 21st Century.' It will also discuss the elimination of the death penalty and other human rights concerns. The SICOHR will prepare draft resolutions for adoption by the Council in Brussels.

The SI Africa Committee will hold its next meeting in February 1996 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. In preparation for that meeting, I visited Burkina Faso in October, at the invitation of our member party, the Party for Democracy and Progress. As well as discussing our planned meeting, I was able to see and hear about the situation in that country and to hold extensive talks with leaders of the PDP. Those talks focused very much on the ongoing, and far from simple, democratisation process in much of Africa. This has been at the heart of our discussions, as it will be, no doubt, at the next Committee meeting.

Our concern in these recent months has been particularly for our member party the Ivory Coast Popular Front, FPI. The presidential and parliamentary elections in that country have now taken place, in far from satisfactory conditions. Indeed, such was the disquiet of opposition parties with regard to the electoral code and electoral lists, together with increasing repression of opposition activity, that their candidates, including FPI Leader Laurent Gbagbo, withdrew from the presidential poll. We have also been very concerned about the situation in Equatorial Guinea, where there were strong indications of irregularity in the counting of votes in the recent municipal elections, and we continue to express our support for our friends in the Convergencia Para La Democracia Social. At the same time, we were pleased to note the very strong showing by the African National Congress, ANC, in the recent municipal elections in South Africa.

In Nigeria, the executions of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other defenders of minority rights have produced worldwide repudiation and our International has condemned these acts in unequivocal terms.

A meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean is also planned for early 1996. There have been some significant political developments in the region, which will no doubt be addressed by the Committee. The chair of the Committee, our vice-president José Francisco Peña Gómez, was endorsed in November as presidential candidate of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, PRD, which he leads, and its electoral allies in the Santo Domingo Accord. The election is scheduled for May 1996, following the electoral reforms agreed to by all parties after the unsatisfactory elections of 1994. In Haiti, there is, unfortunately, some disquiet about developments during and since the recent parliamentary and municipal elections, and as it faces the upcoming presidential election. In Argentina, the FREPASO coalition, which includes our member party the Popular Socialist Party, has consolidated its position after its

advance in this year's general elections. In El Salvador, the peace process continues, but full compliance with the accords still needs to be encouraged.

In different parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, our member parties are increasingly involved in the process of economic integration, with the dual aims of promoting economic growth and ensuring that that growth benefits all sectors of society.

The SI Committee for Economic Development and the Environment will meet in the first months of the coming year in Lisbon, under the chairmanship of Portugal's new prime minister and SI vice-president, António Guterres.

Our Mediterranean Committee, chaired by Raimon Obiols of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, will also meet, and will have much to discuss in the wake of the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona. The situation in Algeria after the presidential election will also be of particular concern to the Committee.

All our Committees will be particularly active in the coming months, as they play their usual important role in preparations for next year's Socialist International Congress, and as we consider the expansion of our activities into the sphere of local and regional government.

V
Whilst in the former Yugoslavia with our president a few weeks ago, I saw for myself something of the extent and difficulty of the task which United Nations troops and civilian staff have carried out there. Much of our International's work continues to be related to United Nations activities and priorities. The UN has always had our strong support. We have made our contribution to the debate on the future of the Organisation and on possible changes to its structures. In this 50th anniversary year of the UN, we have reiterated our faith in its principles, our commitment to its aims and our pride in its record. As reported to the last Council, the consultative status of the Socialist International was recently upgraded, increasing our opportunities for active collabor-

ation in the UN's work. In New York on 24 October, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders reaffirmed the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and pledged to give the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. Our International will be doing all it can to ensure that that pledge is honoured.

VI
I can report with pleasure some election successes for SI parties during recent months. In Portugal on 1 October, the Socialist Party won general elections and is now in government, under the premiership of António Guterres, the party leader and our vice-president. The Social Democratic Party of Switzerland increased its support substantially in the general elections held on 22 October, and is now the largest party in parliament. We also learned with satisfaction of our friend Aleksander Kwasniewski's election as president of Poland. The Social Democratic Party of Guatemala was part of a new centre-left alliance that made a respectable showing in the recent general elections. In September the French Socialist Party increased its representation in the senate, in voting by members of parliament, local and regional councillors. Meanwhile, the Nepali Congress Party returned to government in September at the head of a new coalition, formed after the parliamentary defeat of the Communist administration which had been elected last year. And in Venezuela, Democratic Action, AD, made impressive gains in the recent regional elections.

VII
I can also report that since we met in Cape Town I have been privileged to see some of our member parties at work on their home ground. During the recent period I attended the congress of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, where Federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky was re-elected party leader, shortly before the calling of early general elections in Austria. I represented the Socialist International at the annual

conference of the British Labour Party. I attended the national convention of the French Socialist Party, where Lionel Jospin was elected party leader, as well as the congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, where the party also elected a new leader, Oskar Lafontaine, and the congress of our fraternal organisation, the International Union of Socialist Youth, which was held in Italy.

VIII
The Council will be asked in Brussels to approve a budget for our work in the coming year, 1996. The pace and scope of that work will be evident from this report and from the more detailed reports which the chairs of various SI committees will present to our meeting in Brussels. I must reiterate here what I have stressed in all my recent reports to the Council. We carry out an increasingly extensive programme of work within a budget which increases very little. We are proud of being able to do so much, but our task is made ever more difficult by the failure of some member parties to comply with their financial commitment to the International. I appeal most strongly to those member parties which are in arrears to ensure that fees are paid, and draw their attention once again to the relevant articles of the International's Statutes.

IX
The Council should meet next on the eve of the XX Socialist International Congress, to be held in 1996. As we approach that event, the picture is a challenging one. The scope of SI activities is truly global. Our committees are active in every region and on a full range of important issues, and participation continues to grow. More and more parties from all around the world are applying for membership, and I have no doubt that following our XX Congress, the stature of the Socialist International will be yet further enhanced. Our activities do no more than make manifest the relevance of our ideals and the strength of our principles which bring inspiration to so many.

RESOLUTIONS

THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

The Socialist International, believing that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights,

recalling Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948 and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted on 16 December 1966,

convinced that all measures to abolish the death penalty constitute progress in the enjoyment of the right to life,

stressing that the application of the death penalty has irrevocable consequences, forecloses the correction of judicial error and precludes any possibility of changing or rehabilitating those convicted,

deeply concerned by a resurgence of the death penalty not only in the ordinary criminal law of many countries but also as a means of political repression and elimination of political dissent by old and new dictatorships,

recalling that failure to respect the right to life has been, on numerous occasions in the past and present, at the origin of unspeakable crimes against humanity, in particular the crime of genocide,

strongly condemning political executions such as that of the Nigerian human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his associates by the Provisional Ruling Council of General Abacha:

1. Confirms the right to life as the most elementary human right of which no one must be deprived.

2. Appeals to the international community of states to take all steps to abolish the death penalty within their jurisdiction, including military tribunals. No one shall be condemned to such penalty or executed for whatever reason.

3. Further appeals to all states that have already abolished the death penalty not to re-establish it.

4. Invites all states that have not yet done so to ratify international agreements that provide for the abolition of the death penalty such as Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Human Rights Convention or such as the American

Convention on Human Rights.

5. Urges the United Nations and its human rights bodies to complete work on international instruments that lead the way to a universal abolition of the death penalty.

ALBANIA

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Brussels on 7-8 December 1995,

expresses its interest in the recent developments in Albania towards the establishing of a market economy and the rule of law;

observes that, in spite of the great possibilities that the implementation of a multi-party system in Albania has created, many serious problems are noted in the consolidation of the rule of law, problems that need to be resolved;

underlines that the lack of a constitution of modern standards, and the efforts of those currently in power to impose unsuitable projects and illegal procedures for their approval, create a judicial instability that has given rise to many arbitrary and unconstitutional actions;

condemns actions that aim to infringe the independence of the judicial system through political pressures and the arbitrary dismissal of judges as well as those which aim to keep imprisoned for political motives, the representatives of the opposition parties;

considers unacceptable any act that interferes with the guarantee of free and fair elections;

does not agree with anti-democratic laws that, simply for political reasons, deprive free individuals of the right to be elected, in clear contravention of international conventions and the constitutional laws of the country;

expresses its commitment to influencing the Albanian authorities to undertake the necessary steps to correct these violations;

stresses once again that it will contribute to ensuring that the coming elections in Albania are carried out in a democratic climate, directly supporting the Social Democratic Party of Albania.

PEACE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AND IN THE BALKANS

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Brussels, on

7-8 December 1995,

welcomes with satisfaction the Dayton peace accords and the end to the siege of Sarajevo;

urges all of the parties to consolidate the current ceasefire through the definitive end to any forced expulsion of peoples from their own territories, freedom for prisoners of war, and the possibility of free access and communication for civilians to and from each territory;

underlines in particular that granting the rights of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes would constitute a further important step in creating a climate of mutual trust necessary for a full application of the accords;

calls on all of the governments of the Republics born from the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia to avoid any forcible changes to the composition and distribution of the population of the territories;

appreciates, in particular, that the Dayton accords are based on the right of Bosnia-Herzegovina to exist as a unitary state;

reiterates the need to guarantee absolute equality of rights and treatment for all the ethnic and religious communities and for all individuals - whatever their nationality, religion or residence and whatever Bosnia's internal institutional set-up;

stresses that the right to establish 'special relationships with their neighbouring countries' - a right which is granted to the Croatian-Muslim Federation and the Bosnian Srpska Republic - must be implemented in a way which does not compromise the unity of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereby avoiding the ethnic partition of the territory;

believes in the need to create as soon as possible the conditions required to hold elections in all of the territories of Bosnia in full respect of the legal and democratic rights of the citizens;

agrees with the decision by the international community to commit itself with its own peace contingents operating on a UN mandate to guarantee the realisation of the peace agreements and, in this context, considers as significant the common action by the United States, the European Union and Russia in the peace process;

stresses the need for war criminals to

be prosecuted under the law, as a necessary condition for the establishment of reciprocal trust;

hopes for the recognition of autonomy of the populations of Kosovo, Vojvodina and the Sandjak region within the current territorial and legal framework of the Yugoslav Federation;

underlines the need for the authorities in Zagreb to end the trend towards centralisation and give greater powers to local regional authorities, which the peoples and institutions in different regions of Croatia - and in particular in Istria and Dalmatia - have historically enjoyed, and to guarantee the rights of the Serb minority in Croatia;

welcomes with satisfaction the agreement on principles signed in Athens and Skopje for the normalisation of reciprocal relations and considers the end of the Greek embargo and the constitutional changes approved by the parliament of Skopje as crucial contributions to reaching a final accord on good neighbourly relations and cooperation between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

hopes that the European Union will initiate policies of integration aimed at establishing cooperation and association agreements with the Republics of the former Yugoslavia and with Albania, explicitly aimed at consolidating peace and stability;

urges the United Nations, the European Union, the international financial institutions, and individual states to set up special programmes which would constitute a veritable plan of action for the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina;

underlines once more the important work done by the humanitarian and volunteer agencies and the NGOs in their relief efforts on behalf of the populations and the refugees, and asks that all governments ensure the necessary resources for these activities of solidarity;

reaffirms the Socialist International's full commitment, and that of its member parties, to backing any diplomatic and political action conducive to reaching a peace agreement in the region;

reaffirms, moreover, the Socialist International's full commitment, and that of its member parties, to fully support the democratic and non-nationalistic forces - and especially the social democratic and progressive parties whose presence is crucial in order to establish peace, common living and multi-ethnicity;

affirms its commitment to establishing with the institutions and political and social actors in each Republic all contacts necessary for the implementation of peace.

THE SITUATION IN BURMA

Recalling the resolutions on Burma of the Council of the Socialist International adopted in Tokyo on 11 May 1994 and in Cape Town on 11 July 1995, and the resolutions of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee adopted in Manila on 11 February 1995 and in Sydney on 3 September 1995, the Council of the Socialist International,

notes with serious concern that apart from releasing 1991 Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest on 10 July 1995, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has not complied with any of the issues raised by the Socialist International, specifically:

1. Other political prisoners remain under detention;
2. Almost five months have elapsed since the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and yet SLORC has still not entered into a political dialogue with her;
3. SLORC has not transferred power to the National League for Democracy (NLD) that decisively won the 27 May 1990 general elections;
4. SLORC is continuing with the National Convention to draft a new constitution in spite of the fact that the NLD is no longer participating in the process;

5. Full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including ethnic and religious rights have not been restored, and

6. The use of torture, arbitrary arrests, summary and arbitrary executions, forced labour, portering, relocation and conscription, and the abuse of women by SLORC is continuing;

strongly supports Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD in their efforts to begin a direct dialogue with SLORC;

urgently calls on SLORC to resume dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi;

gravely concerned by SLORC's intransigence, its refusal to enter into a dialogue and its continued use of military force to resolve Burma's problems;

the Socialist International appeals to Japan, the United States of America, the European Union and the international community to refrain from renewing ODA assistance until SLORC begins a political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi;

appeals to UN agencies and international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to refrain from renewing development assistance programmes and loans to Burma until SLORC begins a political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi;

calls on the United Nations Secretary General to urgently implement the December 1994 General Assembly resolution to find a political solution in Burma;

calls on foreign companies operating in Burma to fully support the efforts of the Burmese democracy movement to bring about national reconciliation by withdrawing or suspending their operations in Burma until SLORC engages in a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi;

calls on hotel operators, tour agents, and the general public to protest against the use of slave labour for tourist attractions in Burma by boycotting SLORC's 'Visit Myanmar Year - 1996'; and

urges SI member parties and fraternal organisations to fully support and facilitate the efforts of Aung San Suu Kyi and the Burmese democracy movement to bring about a political dialogue for national reconciliation in Burma.

THE NEW EUROPE IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

The Socialist International, convinced that a strong European Union can play its full role on the international scene in promoting peace and disarmament in cooperation with third countries,

underlining that in a fast moving world, the European Union is a unique, innovative body of cooperation and conflict resolution, that has learned the lessons of history and is prepared to change and mould its structures and administration in order to face in a better way its problems of cohesion, of unemployment, of EMU, of social distress or environmental degradation and become a motor in promoting social justice, economic development and respect of human rights, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination within its borders and across the world:

1. Appeals to its socialist and social democratic partners in the European Union who represent the largest political family, to promote the development of Europe's role in the disarmament and peace process throughout the world. Therefore, the foreign, security and defence policy of

the Union must be strengthened.

2. A well prepared and scheduled enlargement of a strengthened Union to the East and South should be seen in this perspective of peace, democracy and stability with those countries who wish to join.

3. Expects the European Union to fully fulfil its role in promoting the peace process in the Middle East, the rebuilding of South Africa into a society of freedom with respect for human rights and social justice, and the building of a real partnership with the 12 states of the Mediterranean basin.

4. Further, expects its socialist partners in the Union to promote just and fair North/South relations, in the spirit of Willy Brandt and Olof Palme.

Therefore expects concrete proposals on a new era of trade relations that respects social justice and sustainable development before the renegotiation of the Lomé agreement at the end of this century.

THE MIDDLE EAST

On 4 November 1995, Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, fell victim to a cowardly murder committed at a peace rally. The world lost a soldier of peace. This reminds all of us of the assassination of President Anwar el Sadat in 1981. Israel lost a prime minister, the Socialist International lost one of its vice-presidents. The Socialist International shares the deep grief of Yitzhak Rabin's family, the Israeli Labour Party and the people of Israel.

Terrorism in the world has continued to spread. The Socialist International expects governments and parliaments as well as the United Nations to adopt the most effective possible action to combat terrorism from any source.

The peace process in the Middle East will be continued. Now, there is even a need to step up efforts. The new prime minister of the State of Israel is a guarantor of a policy of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. The Socialist International wishes its friend Shimon Peres the best of luck and success in his endeavours, and it offers its full support to him and to the president of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat for the implementation of the Oslo II agreement.

The most important objective now is to fulfil the Oslo agreement, including the redeployment of forces, the release of the Palestinian political prisoners and the amendment of the Palestinian covenant, as well as the proper implementation of the agreements and commitments made by all parties and an

early start to the envisaged negotiations on a final peace agreement.

It is also time now for contacts between people who were opposed to each other for years to adapt to the new conditions. The peace made by the political leaders will have to be translated into a peace among peoples.

In 1996, there will be two major elections in the region. On 20 January 1996, the Palestinians will elect their Legislative Council. This election will be immensely important for the stabilisation of the peace process. In autumn 1996, Israel will elect its new parliament. It is important in both cases that the forces of peace win the elections. These elections are crucial for the continuation and success of the peace process.

We are concerned about progress in the peace negotiations between Israel on the one hand, and Syria and Lebanon on the other. While there has been a certain rapprochement, there has not yet been any breakthrough. We expect the negotiations to be intensified - based on the principle of 'land for peace' while safeguarding the security interests of both sides - and to be concluded by a peace settlement.

After the Casablanca conference, the Amman conference has produced additional elements of cooperation in the region. The European Union conference with the Mediterranean countries has also opened a new chapter for this region. For economic development it is of crucial importance that the promises made be kept to the letter.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The Council of the Socialist International,

recognising the fundamental changes that have taken place with respect to international security, which have permitted agreements on deep reductions in the nuclear armaments of the states possessing the largest inventories of such weapons,

mindful that it is the responsibility and obligation of all states to contribute to the process of relaxation of international tension and to the strengthening of international peace and security,

stressing the importance of strengthening international peace and security through general and complete disarmament, under strict and effective international control,

noting with appreciation a number of positive developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and particularly

welcoming the fact that the entry into force of the 1991 Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, signed by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, clears the way for prompt ratification by the Russian Federation and the United States of America of the 1993 Treaty on the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms,

noting also with appreciation the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and acknowledging the importance of the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapons states of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and by all states of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control,

calls for further action by the nuclear-weapons states to carry out their commitment to the elimination of their nuclear stockpiles by adopting a systematic process to achieve that result,

urges all states to adopt and implement measures towards the attainment of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control,

welcomes in this regard the initiative of the prime minister of Australia to advance the goal of a nuclear-free world, including by establishing a group of knowledgeable and imaginative individuals from around the world to produce a report on practical steps to achieve the total abolition of nuclear weapons, to be submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and to the 1996 session of the United Nations General Assembly.

NUCLEAR TESTING

The Council of the Socialist International, recalling its past resolutions on nuclear testing, notably the resolution approved by the SI Council in Cape Town on 10-11 July 1995, in which it called on the French government to revoke its decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific and asked all other nuclear states to maintain the present moratorium,

and considering the resolution adopted by the Socialist International Asia-Pacific Committee at its extraordinary meeting in Sydney, 1-2 September 1995,

expresses deep disappointment at the fact that the French government has conducted four nuclear test explosions

and intends to continue the series with two more tests. A world-wide wave of protest by governments and citizens, the strongest of its kind in the 1990s, has so far not been able to make the French government reconsider its policy and put an end to testing.

Resentment against the tests has been exceptionally deep in the Pacific region where in particular the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fifty years ago and today's environmental and health concerns have sensitised people to nuclear issues. The SI asks the French government to show consideration to the legitimate concerns of the states and peoples of the Pacific region.

The fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations strongly urged the immediate cessation of all nuclear testing in its resolution approved last month. The SI appeals to the French government and the Chinese government to take world opinion into consideration and stop testing now.

At the same time, important negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty are under way. The CTBT, together with the indefinitely extended Non-Proliferation Treaty, will be cornerstones in the efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to achieve nuclear disarmament. The ultimate objective must be the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and thus the further enhancement of peace and security.

An opportunity to achieve real progress in nuclear disarmament after decades of build-up and uncertainty is at hand. It should be seized.

The SI calls on all nuclear powers and other states to fully participate in the CTBT negotiations, in accordance with the commitment made at the NPT Extension Conference, and expresses the hope that the Treaty can be signed as early as possible in 1996, in accordance with the commitment given to this effect in connection with the NPT extension conference.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NIGERIA

The Socialist International, appalled by the execution - after a faulty and illegitimate judicial process - of Ken Saro-Wiwa, an internationally recognised and deeply committed environmental and human rights activist, as well as eight of his associates, strongly condemns Nigeria's Provisional Ruling Council.

As these executions and other violations of human rights suggest the disdain displayed by the Abacha régime

vis-à-vis a world opinion unanimous in its condemnation of its repressive policies, the SI calls for strong and decisive action by the international community to restore democracy in Nigeria.

The Socialist International condemns the failure of the international community to take more decisive action at an earlier stage. We note that concerted action following the annulled elections of June 1993 may well have reduced the abuse of human rights and would have given crucial support to Nigerian human rights campaigners.

While welcoming embargos on arms transfers and certain other measures taken against the Abacha régime by the Commonwealth, the European Union and a number of other countries, the Socialist International considers these measures insufficient and appeals for a more comprehensive system of economic and political sanctions against the Nigerian régime, particularly sanctions on oil exports from that country. However, these sanctions must be introduced in a manner that does not cause unnecessary suffering to the ordinary people of Nigeria.

The Socialist International welcomes actions by citizens' groups against those multinational companies present in Nigeria that are degrading the local environment and are drawing inappropriate advantage from the current situation in Nigeria.

The Socialist International further appeals to the General Assembly of the United Nations to condemn human rights violations in Nigeria in the strongest and most unequivocal terms so as to isolate the Abacha régime and open the way for a return to democracy and human rights in Africa's most populous nation.

The Socialist International, firmly committed to the global promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, will continue to support the Nigerian people and Nigeria's democrats in their fight for freedom and the end of long years of military dictatorship. Like all other people, Nigerians have fundamental human rights that must no longer be denied.

Recalling its resolution on Nigeria adopted at the Cape Town Council meeting on 11 July, the Socialist International therefore repeats its call for the immediate release of Chief Abiola and all other political prisoners in Nigeria, the end of all political trials

and an early transition to democracy, freedoms and the rule of law, including the holding of free and fair elections, internationally supervised, to designate the legitimate representatives of the Nigerian people.

STATEMENT ON THE POLISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The Council of the Socialist International expresses its satisfaction at the election of Aleksander Kwasniewski as president of the Republic of Poland.

This vote - as with the results of elections which have taken place since 1993 in Poland, Hungary and other Central European countries - demonstrates the validity of social democratic principles and also shows that in central and eastern Europe there is space for a strong social democratic presence.

It is perfectly misleading and futile to continue to interpret the Polish vote as 'nostalgia' for the past. In Poland there really is nobody who is nostalgic for communism. The Polish electors voted for the candidate who appeared most credible in guaranteeing economic growth capable of combining modernity and solidarity, the market and social equity.

Kwasniewski won because his social democratic programme has best interpreted the demand for modernity and future prospects of a large part of Polish society, as was demonstrated by the fact that among voters of under 30 years of age, the new President received a very high percentage of votes.

Kwasniewski's success also confirms the public's trust in the government which has been ruling Poland since 1993 with a programme of economic and political reforms of clear and unequivocal social democratic inspiration.

The vote also shows the secular and democratic evolution of Polish society, which did not make its electoral decisions based on the strong pressure from the conservative sectors of the Church and the clergy.

Finally, the Socialist International congratulates Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland - of which Kwasniewski was leader - and prepares to welcome it into the socialist family at the next Congress of the SI.

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