

international
VIEWPOINT
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South Africa :

A new phase begins

Debt :

Solidarity between peoples

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Mexico : The new Zapatistas

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FRANCE

ON Sunday 16 January there was held in Paris the largest mass demonstration since 1968. Around 700 thousand people came from all over France in response to the call of more than eighty organisations. The demonstration marched through the city from mid-day to 9pm, the final part (made up of protesters from the Paris area) not even being able to march through lack of room and time.

The trigger for this exceptional demonstration was a hurried vote in the Senate approving revision of the "Fallou Law". This was to permit massive funding of the infrastructure of private schools by local councils, in other words, with public money.

In demanding the withdrawal of the revision, the demonstration was showing its support for state (secular) education and, in a more general way, for the public services which are being more and more threatened by privatisation. Certainly the secular tradition is very strong in France, being connected with concepts of equality and justice. But there is no doubt that the unexpected success of 16 January was linked to the mounting social mobilisation which has emerged independently of the massive Air France strike or the student struggles.

Backdown

The government has had to back down at each confrontation and did so this time. The very evening before the demonstration, even while the Constitutional Council was annulling the principal articles of the Fallou Law, the Balladur government let it be known that it was abandoning its project.

This new retreat before a mass mobilisation will not fail to have repercussions for the forthcoming struggles. The new social radicalisation also thwarted the Socialist Party's attempt to take credit for the demonstration.

The co-organisers of the demonstration, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) and Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR) organised dynamic and colourful contingents despite rainy weather. **Alain Krivine ★**



a second in Geneva in September 1992 which saw significantly broader participation. The aim of the Paris conference is to stimulate the building of a Europe-wide women's movement ready to act in solidarity for the right to choose.

The Conference will be held in Paris on 25-26-27th March 1994. It will examine the current situation of the right to choose, from Norway to Portugal, from Ireland to Germany and Sarajevo, paying particular attention to the different ways in which women's choice is opposed or limited. These range from pressure from religious institutions and anti-choice "commandos" to government health, family and demographic policies, and the weight of

East-West, North-South, women's right to choose everywhere!

ABORTION

Free access to abortion and contraception was one of the central demands of the women's movement in Western Europe in its earliest and perhaps most militant days. So forcefully did it put its message across, and so much did it win on this terrain, that many people today assume that the question is closed and the situation in general satisfactory.

However, not only is the existing situation far from satisfactory when we examine it more closely — limitations run from strict conditions for and time limits on abortion, to denial of young women's right to contraception and abortion without parental permission, to refusal to reimburse the latest contraceptive pills by social security systems — but the current social, political and economic crisis can only lead to further attacks.

At the same time, the continuing changes in Eastern Europe, where abortion — more than contraception — was often relatively freely available by decision of the bureaucratic governments, have led to a situation where this limited right is also being rolled back, as for example we have seen in Poland.

Faced with this situation, the French-National Co-ordinating Committee of Associations for the Right to Abortion and Contraception has taken the initiative to hold a European conference, in co-organisation with the European Network for Women's Right to Abortion and Contraception (ENWRAC). This third European conference follows one held in Norway in 1990, when ENWRAC was founded, and

medical authority and new bio-ethical legislation. It will also advance proposals on practical solidarity and what strategies women in Europe should take, starting from a vision of abortion rights as an indicator of women's place in society.★

For more details or registration for the conference please contact:

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