



WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 5 (No. 1) March 2003

What can we learn from the rise and fall of Marxism

(by Jiri Polak)

Like linguistics (see the previous issue of this Newsletter), even *political science* or *politology* can study phenomena within its field of research from two different points of view. It can simply describe these phenomena, their historical background and the ideas giving birth to them. This is the *descriptive, historical, and ideographic* approach. The other possibility is to inquire into the *functions* of the phenomena under scrutiny. The bulk of western politology proceeds in the former way. There need not be anything wrong with this method if the researchers maintain principles of intellectual honesty. Most of them, however, do not cross the limits of apologetic opportunism. Political science becomes thus political essay-writing without any impact on practical politics. Marxism, on the other hand, although it has long since been accepted as a legitimate theoretical approach, has also played a tremendously important practical role for political systems and processes as well as for recent human history. So what is the difference? Previously, I pointed out that Marxism is a sort of structuralism (i.e. functionalism) and as such, it has been consonant with the deepening insight pervading most sciences since the early twentieth century. But this is not the main reason. Students of political science cannot miss a certain characteristic omnipresent in almost all politological works: A sort of cold detachment that treats even the worst crimes committed by political leaders as something natural and inevitable, due to the fact that these people are supposed to only obey patterns fostered by supra-individual entities, i.e. the *State*, or the *system*. In older politology as well as contemporary journalism and popular discussions, both scholars and the man in the street often speak about the *State* as if it were so-

TO INTEGRATE OR NOT TO INTEGRATE - THAT IS THE QUESTION



Beside the Iraq problem, in the early 2003, European integration is perhaps the most topical subject matter, at least for the Europeans. The Third Conference of the NDDIE (November 2002 - see the previous issue of this Newsletter) was focused on *The European Referendum Campaign* and three *Visions for Europe*. In the very interesting and important second 2002 issue of **Europa-Magazin** (Zürich), the problems raised by the current integration drive are examined in a way revealing deep insight and expertise. Two opposite, but hopefully not irreconcilable, standpoints are presented and discussed there: the conditioned integration-friendly approach advocated by *Mehr Demokratie*, and the Euro-sceptic approach defended by Dr. *Paul Ruppen*, the editor of the Magazine, as well as Mrs. *Ulla Klötzer*, Finland (Mrs. Klötzer attended the Bratislava Conference).

What can we learn from the rise and fall of Marxism

(cont. from p. 1)

something abstract, independent of concrete persons. The USA does this, France wants that, China is opposed to Japan, and the like. States pursue their "national interest" and that's something we can't do anything about. Later on, political scientists began to use the word *System* instead of the word *State*, and treated it as if it were something **organic** (e.g. Easton) or even **cybernetic** (Deutsch). All these approaches dismiss the concept of *power* as the basic motive force of politics. The only exception among the classics, as far as I know, is H.Lasswell's **distributive analysis** (Who gets what, when, and how). But Lasswell's influence seems to have been very limited and he hasn't gone the whole hog.

Marxism, by contrast, before becoming the ideology of a new power elite, in addition to being a structuralism, is also a passion. The book of history is written by passionate people, not by detached theorists. And yet, Marxism has failed. This was due to its *transcendent* conception of power. Marx believed that power is evil only if it emanates from private ownership of the means of production. The source of evil lied, according to Marx, in a system transcending the power structures he condemned. But the behavior of elites who abolished private ownership of the means of production has shown that this aspect of power is not essential. The decisive factor is the **degree of power concentration**, not its **source**. This is the lesson to be learned from the history of Marxism. In the next issue, I'll try to formulate an *immanent* theory of future democracy, careful to avoid the pitfall of systemic *transcendence* mentioned in the preceding lines.

TO INTEGRATE OR NOT TO INTEGRATE - THAT IS THE QUESTION

(cont. from p. 1)

The *Mehr Demokratie* and *NDDIE* standpoint could be summed up in the following way: European Integration is unavoidable and not undesirable in itself. But its formation and functioning must not be decided upon by the elites without citizen participation. Citizen activity should focus on the following areas: 1. A better distribution and delimitation of ranges of competence within the EU; 2. Simplification of the instruments of the Union; 3. More democracy, transparency and efficiency within the Union; 4. Citizen participation in the compilation of the EU Constitution. *Mehr Demokratie* propose these two topics for discussion: Firstly, the demand of referendums in all member states concerning the results of the Convention; secondly, guiding principles for the right to I&R in the EU.

The euro-sceptic standpoint expressed by Dr. *Paul Ruppen* is the following: To begin with, we should ask these questions: 1. Is it possible to realize the above proposals if we consider the real distribution of power? 2. Is it desirable, from the viewpoint of DD, to realize these proposals in a construction such as the EU? "Without such an analysis, we risk to endow the really existing EU with a legitimacy it does not deserve." We should not be deceived by

the rhetoric defining the EU as a "peace project". In reality, it is an organization the hidden purpose of which is to strengthen the power of multinational corporations and the respective governments by weakening parliamentary democracy in the field of economy. Within the EU, governments can more easily elude control exerted by parliaments. EU's transnational military forces can be put at the corporations' disposal instead of being used for peace-keeping purposes. In this respect, the USA is a deterrent showing that power concentration results in a brutal superpower policy that only respects international law if it serves its selfish interest. For these reasons, the building of a European superpower is undesirable.

As to the feasibility of the establishment of I&R instruments, Dr. *Ruppen* points out: "All historical examples show that DD has always asserted itself from bottom to the top. In the USA, the highest level has not been reached, in spite of the fact that many states have had DD instruments at their disposal for about one hundred years. It is highly questionable to believe that in the EU, DD can be introduced straight away, without corresponding political traditions on the member states' level."

The chief argument in favor of the EU is a presumably better economic performance benefitting most Europeans. Under the heading *Wirtschaftliche Effekte der europäischen Integration*, an analysis put forward by *Dr. Patrick Ziltener* shows that, within the period of 1950 to 1990, no measurable impact of the integration upon the economic growth of the respective states can be proved.

On the basis of her experience from Finland, *Mrs. Ulla Klötzer* stresses negative impact of the integration on the public sector (supposed to guarantee welfare), on the promotion of peace and sustainable development, as well as on grass-root political activity of the citizens. For these reasons, Mrs Klötzer insists on the necessity to submit all steps increasing the degree of integration to binding referenda.

Europa-Magazin, Postfach, 8048 Zürich, forum@europa-magazin.ch, <http://www.europa-magazin.ch>

INTERNATIONAL

USA

Information from *Mr. M. Dane Waters*,

IRI Washington:

31 October 2002: Information about referenda to be held in the following countries: *Slovakia, Nigeria, Venezuela*. The last mentioned one is of particular interest. IRI brings an analysis published by the Associated Press.

1 November 2002: A Wall Street Journal Editorial (Review and Outlook, 11-1-02): "War on the Initiative - Our politicians like to praise democracy, but this year more than a few are trying to subvert it. They've helped promote ballot measures next week that would make it harder for citizen-sponsored initiatives to get onto future ballots. Once voters give up this right to direct democracy, they will find it difficult to get it back."

6 November 2002: Mr. Waters wrote: "In this update you will find the Institute's initial thoughts on the outcome of yesterday's votes on statewide ballot measures as well as links to various news articles dealing specifically to statewide ballot measure votes. You can access our full post-election report at <http://www.ballotwatch.org/2002POSTReport.pdf>.

In this update you will also find information on how "open space" ballot measures fared on Election Day.

8 November 2002: Mr. Waters sent us a sampling of editorials and columns on the I&R process that had appeared in the last week. (*Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor* and *Boston Globe*).

29 January 2003: Mr. Waters wrote, "In this issue you will find information on the Federal Government and the issue of their "immunity" from state campaign finance laws as well as a very interesting tidbit of information about who amend state constitutions more often - the people or the government."

27 February 2003: Mr. Waters wrote: ..."We have

updated and upgraded our website - www.iandrinstute.org. We have expanded our research section, added a library where you can find books on the I&R process and totally redesigned our new page. ...

We have also added a new donation page that will allow you to make donations to us via credit cards. We have a lot planned in 2003 and your donations are critical in helping us accomplish our goals as well as make it possible for this website to exist.

After looking through the site, I would appreciate your comments as to what should be added, deleted or changed. We still have things to add - more specific state information so that you can contact groups within your state, a links page, more books to the library, and to finish upgrading our ballotwatch site."

March 2003: *Mr. Lee Gottlieb* drew our attention to his newly edited website

<http://www.acthum.net> - METAMORPHOSE:

"Let's form a new political party and take the government away from the men who abuse its powers! Americans are deeply divided on the question, "Should we go to war with Iraq or not?" It's the wrong question. It will solve none of our nation's most basic problems.

What we should be asking ourselves is, "Do we continue to use a political system that has allowed those in power to arbitrarily send our boys off to die in wars which they, themselves, instigate? Do we continue to use a corrupt political system that has allowed some men to squander the wealth of the nation, bankrupt both the federal government and state governments, and place chains of indebtedness upon our children and children's children?".....

CANADA

24 January 2003:

Information from *Mr. Miroslav Kolar*:

"Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham today (1-22-03) extended an invitation to all Canadians to participate in a national dialogue on future priorities and

the direction of Canadian foreign policy. As the basis for discussions, the Minister made public a paper entitled *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*, which includes a series of questions for Canadians to consider. Through a unique partnership between the byDesign eLab (and its civil society partners) and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canadians have the opportunity to participate in this dialogue on-line, in either official language, over the Internet.

Individuals with access to the Internet can read the discussion paper and comment, participate in on-line discussions, or simply observe this innovative project by going directly to <http://www.foreign-policy-dialogue.ca>

Also on the site are resources to consider, and details for netcasting of related events, including town halls and electronic roundtables organized as part of the dialogue. In June, 2003, Minister Bill Graham will report to the Government and the public on the results of the foreign policy dialogue following the conclusion of the consultation process on May 1, 2003."

New initiative: <http://etches.net> -"Representative Held Referenda Democracy now!"

"Direct democracy now with a new style of representative democracy."

A subscriber to the **Global Outlook** magazine has bought several hundred copies of *Michel Chossudovsky's book War and Globalization - the Truth behind September 11* and sent it to all members of the American Congress and the British Parliament. (www.globaloutlook.ca)

SWEDEN

A report recently published in the Swedish press:

"For the first time, the Social Democrats will introduce direct democracy inside the Party. All members will get the opportunity to influence the party line concerning important matters. ... For some time, the Social Democrats have been losing members and the party organization has been rigid, interposing several levels between the local cell and the Congress, which fact has made it difficult for ordinary members to be noticed. Individual members will be allowed to send proposals and comments directly to the Party Headquarters."

An interesting development takes place on the communal level. In about one half of the town councils, decision-making does not follow party lines, being based on inter-party cooperation for the benefit of the whole community. In 44 communes, the local re-

sidents have obtained the right to directly put forward proposals concerning communal matters.

DEMOEX (Democratic Experiment), a local DD organization, intend to found a DD party proposing candidates, to begin with, on the communal level, but proceeding eventually to the national and even European level.

In the latest issue of this Newsletter, I reported the establishment of a DD party named *Direkt-demokraterna*, focused on a rather long-term systemic change. This party and Demoex have started preliminary cooperation discussions.

The Swedish political situation is very favorable for such initiatives. Participation in elections diminishes all the time. In the latest parliamentary election, only about 53 % of young voters (who had acquired the right to vote for the first time) actually participated. Commentators speak about "a democracy crisis". As a matter of fact, this is incorrect. What we are witnessing is a crisis of the legitimacy of party political power monopoly, which is the direct opposite of democracy. The undemocratic character of the current system is illustrated by the way the coming plebiscite concerning the Government's drive to join the EMU is being prepared: Two informal *ad hoc* organizations have been established: "Yes-to-EMU" and "No-to-EMU" Both have got a few millions to brainwash the citizens with their respective propaganda materials. The confused citizens are doomed to cast their votes on the basis of impressions evoked by the theatrical performance of protagonists of either side. In a truly democratic system, the option would be presented for assessment by a series of *Citizen Juries* or *Planning Cells* according to very successful models developed in Germany and the USA. The recommendations presented by these miniature "ad hoc parliaments" would then serve as guidance for voting.

GERMANY

*30 January 2003: Dr. Wallace-Macpherson sent us two comments on the issue of *Volksab-stimmung auf Bundesebene*:*

"In den letzten Jahren gab es in der Bundesrepublik einige demokratisch gesehen ganz gute Entw., z.B. die Einführung 1995 kommunaler direktdemokratischer verfahren per Volksabstimmung in Bayern.

Der Vorschlag der rot-grünen Koalition, Initiative und Referendum auf Bundesebene einzuführen, ist m.A. sehr wichtig und verdient mehr Unterstützung. Es ist bei der Bevölkerung viel zu wenig bekannt, dazu in der ersten r-g. Wahlperiode 1998-2002 zu spät in den Bundestag eingebracht. Die Opposition hat es

gestoppt. Mit der jetzigen Parlament hat das Gesetz vielleicht eine Chance, wenn die Politiker seitens der Wähler/innen nur genügend Interesse spüren.

Die pro-demokratische Kampagne muss im Lande gestärkt werden."

"The 1998 coalition agreement of the first social-democrat and green/alliance⁹⁰ government contained a proposal to introduce several procedures of participative democracy at the central federal (country) level, by changing the "basic law". The Proposal included the right of an agreed number of citizens (four hundred thousand) to oblige the parliament to deal with a draft law, and the citizens' right to call a binding referendum (requires the signatures of one in twenty) if parliament rejects the draft law. Constitution (basic law) could also be changed by citizen-initiated referendum, with higher minimum participation hurdles."

4 February 2003: In the Town Hall of Wuppertal, **Prof.Dr.Peter C.Dienel** was decorated by *das Verdienstkreuz 1. Klasse des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Congratulations!

UK

12 November 2002:

Information from **Dr. M.Wallace-Macpherson**:

"There's a model association for more democracy in Britain, see <http://www.iniref.org> and a few other people and small groups who try to promote direct democracy. The liberal-democrat political party and the green party have stated in their election programmes that they intend to introduce citizens' initiative and referendum (I and R). Friends of the Earth in GB (BUND in Germany) appears to support I and R.

But there is NO organized campaign for DD or I and R in Britain and N.Ireland.

Surveys of the general public have reportedly shown that over 70 percent of the population support citizen-initiated referendum.

James "McVotes" McGlynn <http://freespace.virgin.net/jamesimac.mcglynn/> has talked to a lot of people about direct democracy and in recent years has succeeded in being invited to lecture about this to school classes. He finds that young and older people are unsure about the outcome of introducing direct democracy. People do not trust their fellow citizens to make responsible decisions.

My conversations in Britain have shown that most people know nothing or very little about I and R. This applies to university professors as well as general public. So there is a lot of educational work to do. We need to get out with powerful DD arguments and good will onto the streets and into the pubs."

SLOVAKIA and SLOVENIA

3 February 2003: Information from **Mr.Blaz Babic**: "The signature-gathering Slovaks have taken as their model another country, which last autumn was invited to join both the EU and NATO - the former Yugoslavian republic of Slovenia. The parliament in Ljubljana recently named Sunday 23rd March as the day on which Slovenian voters could simultaneously decide both on the EU and on NATO. The two million Slovenians are used to direct-democratic involvement in political decision-making. Although there is no binding citizens' initiative in the Slovenian constitution, the facultative referendum is used quite frequently - most recently on 19th January this year, when in two referendum ballots the Slovenians voted decisively against the privatisation of the state railways and the telecommunication industry.....

On 19th of January we had 2 LEGISLATIVE and therefore BINDING referendums! They weren't facultative at all.

We are not used to DD democracy, since a large majority thinks it's simply too expensive and people in general are not qualified to make "expert" decisions. Since the overwhelming majority of the political elite in practically all the candidate countries are keen to join both supranational organisations, they have been forced for the first time to seriously confront the procedural weaknesses in citizens' rights. In Slovenia, the parliament has passed a resolution to the effect that the results of the two accession referenda - which legally have only consultative status - "will be respected whatever the outcome": what Slovenians decide on 23rd March will therefore count de facto.

It won't count de facto, since political elite is ignorant enough to force specially NATO membership even if the CONSULTATIVE referendum shows majority against NATO.

A decision on legislative referendum has a 1 year binding.

Therefore it's not surprising that 5 minutes ago on most respected TV show "Studio City" 89% callers preferred LEGISLATIVE against 11% callers who would be satisfied with CONSULTATIVE referendum. People know what our political elite is made of."

"9 January 2003: **Dr. Miloslav Hettes** wrote, "Dear Friends, allow me to introduce a new NGO: Agora - A Civic Association in Support of Direct Democracy in Slovakia. We are only one Slovak organization aiming at an improvement of representative democracy, election systems, referenda and other DD instru-

ments. Our long term goal is to introduce a new form of democracy in Slovakia. You can find information in English on our website. This year is the year of referenda in Europe. The majority of EU candidate countries are going to have one. This is the main reason for an international Monitoring Referendum Conference to be organized in May of this year in Bratislava."

AUSTRALIA

28 December 2002: *Dr. Doug Everingham* sent to the *Simpol* discussion channel Chapter 6 of *Peter Lock's* book **THE GREAT HARLOT**. This is a very useful reading for everybody who wants to understand the post-war global economic development and the deep historical causes of modern terrorism. The official propaganda wants to make us believe that vicious terrorists, who hate democratic values, attack without any reason western countries and particularly the USA. Those who fear and condemn terrorist attacks should understand that terrorism, even if inexcusable and horrifying, has been provoked by western arrogance and exploitation of weak countries. It cannot be eradicated by solely using violence. A fairer distribution of global wealth, international cooperation, tolerance and respect for non-western cultures are an indispensable component of a successful anti-terrorist campaign. The *Simpol* strategy is a very useful approach in this respect. Peter Lock's book can provide a valuable insight (*JP*). Quote: "The inconsistencies inherent in today's Favourable Balance Theory need to be put in their proper historical perspective. At Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944, the United States insisted on a trade ideology that favoured its own economic strategies and political aspirations and determinations. Since then, the World Bank and IMF, the International Monetary fund, both of which were initiated at the Conference, have carried this agenda forward."

At Bretton Woods, the USA representatives rejected J M Keynes' proposal to create *The International Clearing Union*, a system of trade accountancy based on long-term inter-national balance of trade and a system of mutual advantages. "The American delegation refused to accept in any way the principle of redressing trade imbalances. America was a major creditor nation, exporting far more than she imported. The sole concern of its delegation was to ensure a continuing favourable balance of trade for the USA." ... "They succeeded in having Keynes' idea of a Clearing Union rejected before the Conference began and with its abandonment, the US proposal

dominated." "The American plan provided that already affluent creditor nations would be allowed to build up further surplus trading revenues and, if they so desired, to exchange these for the much sought after gold held by less fortunate debtor nations." "At this point, at least 70% of the world's entire gold reserves were held by America "... (the dollar) became in effect the international unit of money accounting. This situation received added confirmation when, in 1973 the US unilaterally ended this demand of gold convertibility." "**The Keynesian proposals would have benefitted far more the American people, but they were not represented at the conference. It was US powerbrokers who insisted upon an exploitive financial and trading setup by which they would continually secure their commercial and political advantage.**"

"Unpayable debt was the predicted consequence of the Bretton Woods agreement. In the bitter trade wars which did ensue, nations were led into a desperate competition for world markets. As they are drawn ever deeper into debt, Third World countries have been obliged to submit to the demands of free-market, deregulatory economic policies, forced to cut or abandon spending on education, health and welfare, end support for domestic industry, produce food for export instead of home consumption, and sell their businesses and factories to Western buyers. With the unrepayable debts of the developing nations mostly denominated in US dollars, two-thirds of the planet now finds itself subject to American corporate, financial and economic imperialism whilst the US enjoys an unearned income from overseas poverty."

EUROPE

30 August: Invitation to a conference on **The European Referendum Challenge** (Brussels, European Parliament, September 19th 2002): A Roundtable on the preliminary discussions about future European Constitution. The Roundtable was completed by an in-depth-seminar on theoretical and practical issues around the issue. Convocation sent by *Dr. Bruno Kaufmann*.

5 November: Information sent by Mr. *Thomas Rupp*: "IRI Europe Presents First Referendum Report on European Integration; Report concludes that a pan-European referendum on the Convention outcome is possible."

7 November: Information from *Dr. Bruno Kaufmann*, IRI Europe president, Ms. *Heidi Hautala*, MEP, and Ms. *Diana Wallis*, MEP. Report about the press conference held on the same day at the European Parliament in Brussels, and informati-

on about conferences at Eisenstadt/Vienna (November 15) and Stockholm (November 20).

7 January 2003: *The Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe*

presents **IRI Europe WATCH**, Vol 2, No 1 - January 9th, 2003-03-04

20 January: Information from **Mr. Vladimir Rott**: "The democracy movement 'More Democracy' has chosen former German MP Gerald Häfner to be its new spokesperson. Mr. Häfner has directly called for the right to have referenda to be written into German Constitution. This, he argues, would also prepare the way for having an EU-wide referendum on a future EU constitution." Link to article: <http://www.euobserver.com/index.phtml?aid=8990>

22 January: Information from **Mr. Thomas Rupp**: The new ERC NEWSLETTER Nr 1 and 2 can be downloaded at:

<http://european-referendum.org/en/erc8.html>

see bottom of page.

31 January: Information from **Mr. Heiko Dittmer**: "I already would like to suggest - and strongly recommend as a need to know - the following documentation:

a) How to lobby the national parliament:

www.european-referendum.org/up/reader/doc8.html

(Contributions to the 3. NDDIE Conference - 15.-17. November 2002, Bratislava:)

www.european-referendum.org/up/reader/index.html

b) The most important argumentation can be found in the following documents of the "downloads page":

<http://european-referendum.org/en/erc6.html>

More democracy in Europe; Voices of Europe; Country index. These documents can/should also be given to the parliamentarians and other persons we lobby!!"

3 February: Information from **Mr. Vladimir Rott**: "DIRECT DEMOCRACY FACES BIGGEST TEST" - "In the last analysis, the success of the march of Direct Democracy in Europe will depend on how legitimate citizens experience it to be in practice." (A Euobserver article of 03.02.2003: <http://www.euobserver.com/index.phtml?aid=9227>)

5 February: Invitation from IRI Europe and Ms **Diana Wallis**, MEP, to an IRI Europe Regional Forum on *The European Referendum Challenge* held in February in York, United Kingdom. This forum has been held in several cities in Europe on Initiative and Referendum on the European level. The IRI Europe report "Voices of Europe" presents an analysis on the important role which referendums have

played in European integration. The report also deals with the possibilities of a Europe-wide referendum on the outcome of the Convention, concluding that such a referendum is technically and judicially possible.

6 February: **Mr. Nicolas E. Fischer** drew our attention to the article *Little debate on EU constitution* published in Euobserver (<http://www.euobserver.com/index.phtml?aid=9239>):

"The level of debate among EU citizens on the future of the Union as well as the approach of member state governments to the Convention differs hugely across the EU, a report compiled by the communication unit in the European Parliament has found. Entitled *National debates on the convention on the future of Europe*, the report finds that public awareness of the debate on the future of Europe, though still low, is slowly beginning to grow. Active debate, however, remains very low."

8 February: **Mr. Thomas Rupp** wrote, "Dear friends, we want to welcome you to the new democracy international forum and invite you to a constructive discussion. The forum lives and dies with your participation. So it's up to you to keep it alive. We will do our best to provide a good maintenance. For the beginning we tried to find some challenging topics - linked to Democracy International and ERC - which we hope will attract your interest.

Everyone can read the posts in the forum. But you can only write a contribution and post it if you are a registered user. It is very easy to register. Just click on the "register"-button at the top of page and fill in the required data.

With this link you can go directly to the introduction page and then register at the forum <http://www.european-referendum.org/about/forum.html>

We hope that there will be an interesting debate! All the best, Ronald Pabst and Thomas Rupp"

17 February: Press Release from IRI Europe: *Conference on direct democracy in the UK and the European Union - Bringing Power to the People*

"Last Saturday - the day when dozens of millions of peoples were marching against a war on Iraq - the York Referendum Challenge Forum was making the case for bringing political power back to the citizens by introducing the right to Initiatives and Referendums at all levels. The conference was organized by the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe (IRI Europe) in cooperation with the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR).

At the conference in this historic city in North England, Diana Wallis, a Liberal Democrat member

of The European Parliament stated: "The evidence from Saturday's march is that people want to do something. They want to be involved more directly in the decision-making process or at the very least to be able to influence it. But sadly they feel completely marginalized by our present political system."

After similar Referendum Challenge Forums in Berlin, Vienna, Stockholm and Brussels, the special focus of the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe (IRI Europe) forum in York was on the situation in the United Kingdom. Here the government published last year its long-awaited White Paper on Governance. The paper made a sound case for power to be devolved to the English regions along the same lines as has happened in Wales and Scotland.

One of the aspects of the paper is the potential for an elected regional assembly to be set up through the use of a referendum, where there is a demand from the local population. At the moment the UK Government is taking 'soundings' as to which English regions could be included in the first wave of referendums. One of the regions which could be included is the northern English region of Yorkshire and the Humber."

(For the whole text see www.iri-europe.org)

MISCELLANEOUS

7 February, information from *Mr. Steve Mathe*, Germany, through *Mr. M. Kolar*:

New submission to

<http://democracy.mkolar.org/newURL.html>

LINK:

<http://citizensrightsleague.com/freeservers.com/> -

Re-written web site.

12 December 2002: Information from *Dr. Reuven Brenner*, McGill University Faculty of Management, about his book *The Force of Finance*. "... (The book) deals in depth with direct democracy as solution not only to financial issues linked to governments, but far broader ones (in the nationalism chapter). You can see reviews posted on Barnes and Noble site, or Amazon (shorter excerpts)." Assessment sent to us by *Mr. M. Dane Waters*: "Very fascinating".

22 January: Information from *Mr. Simon Burall*, Executive Director, *One World Trust*:

"I am writing to inform you about the launch of the **First Global Accountability Report: Power without Accountability?** The report describes the innovative framework that the trust has developed to assess the accountability of global organisations. It applies this framework to 18 of the world's most powerful organisations from three different sectors: in-

tergovernmental, transnational corporation and international NGO. It finds clear accountability gaps existing in all three (see below). The report can be downloaded from

<http://www.oneworldtrust.org/Ch99/htmlGAP/report/report.htm>

4 February: *Mr. Robley E. George*, Director, *Center for the Study of Democratic societies* (<http://www.centersds.com>) drew our attention to their latest book *Socioeconomic Democracy: An Advanced Socioeconomic System*. "Socioeconomic Democracy is a theoretical model of a socioeconomic system wherein there exist both some form of Universal Guaranteed Personal Income and some form of Maximum Allowable Personal Wealth limit, with both the lower bound on personal material poverty and the upper bound on personal material wealth set and adjusted democratically by all participants of society."

The book is published by and available from Praeger/Greenwood, as well as from e-Amazon and e-Barnes & Noble.

(<http://www.greenwood.com>)

ANTI-WAR

9 January: *Mr. M. Kolar* draws our attention to <http://thunderbay.indymedia.org/news/2002/12/2599.php>

"According to the research done by some British psychologists, participation in demonstrations, protest movements and political involvement in general is beneficial to the health of the participants."

Canadians organize citizen inspections of weapons of mass destruction possessed by the USA:

<http://www.rootingoutevil.org/index.php3/Home>

<http://www.rootingoutevil.org/signup/signed.php3>

The list of American cities the city councils of which have authorized anti-war declarations opposing unilateral actions on the part of their government:

<http://www.citiesforpeace.org>

MoveOn Peace Bulletin, International Edition; read or subscribe at <http://www.peace.moveon.org/bulletin.php3#sub>

A War Crime or an Act of War? An article by *Stephen C. Pelletiere* published 3 February in THE NEW YORK TIMES. (During the Iran-Iraq war, Mr. Pelletiere was the *Central Intelligence Agency's* senior political analyst and a professor at the *Army War College* from 1988 to 2000.)

"It was no surprise that President Bush, lacking smoking-gun evidence of Iraq's weapons programs, used his State of the Union address to re-emphasize the

moral case for an invasion: "The dictator who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons has already used them on whole villages, leaving thousands of his own citizens dead, blind or disfigured." "...The piece of hard evidence most frequently brought up concerns the gassing of Iraqi Kurds at the town of Halabja in March 1988, near the end of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. ... We cannot say with any certainty that Iraqi chemical weapons killed the Kurds. I was privy to much of the classified material that flowed through Washington having to do with the Persian Gulf. In addition, I headed a 1991 Army investigation into how the Iraqis would fight a war against the United States; the classified version of the report went into great detail on the Halabja affair."

Prof. Pelletiere states that examination of dead Halabja Kurds suggests that it was *not* Iraqi gas that had killed them, because the Iraqi army did not use that sort of gas. It was probably Iranian gas used in the course of a war operation. "Before we go to war over Halabja, the administration owes the American people the full facts. And if it has other examples of Saddam Hussein gassing Kurds, it must show that they were not pro-Iranian Kurdish guerrillas who died fighting alongside Iranian Revolutionary guards. Until Washington gives us proof of Saddam Hussein's supposed atrocities, why are we picking on Iraq on human rights grounds, particularly when there are so many other repressive regimes Washington supports?"

22 February: **Mr. Jerold Hubbard** wrote to the Simpol discussion channel, "...Saddam's invasion into Kuwait was NOT without US prompting and the final push was when the USA administration gave Saddam PERMISSION to invade.

How was this done? When Saddam's administration petitioned the US embassy for the USA's response to his potential invasion into Kuwait, the message from the USA's embassy was in essence, Iraq's invasion into Kuwait would be considered strictly as a domestic dispute. One to be settled between the two countries involved and if this were to happen, **THE USA WOULD STAY OUT AND NOT INTERFERE.**

Any wonder why the USA does not have any credibility with many people through out the world.

25 February: A letter from **WORLD-ACTION, UK**: "Dear Friends, there is great news about the "No Weapons In Space Campaign"! On Feb 17 Svend Robinson introduced in Canadian Parliament our petition to stop the weaponization of space. In a few days we will put together an online petition to go to

the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament.

As we are being dragged headlong in to war against Iraq — and much of our energy is spent in opposing this war, we should keep in mind that since the abrogation of the ABM Treaty preparations are being made for what is called the Missile Defense System — but is in reality a move by the US to weaponize and exploit space unilaterally, as can clearly be seen from the USSPACECOM's "Vision for 2020".

http://www.gsinsitute.org/resources/extras/vision_2020.pdf

For a good background on the issue read this article: http://www.radicalpress.com/writers/pb_article01.html

In this climate of war and fear we are being told that this is necessary for our safety, but commonsense should tell us that there is no safety in creating not only endless war on the planet — but now engendering an arms race in space. This madness must stop!"

.....

26 February: **Mr. Charlie Turk, USA**, sent this letter to the P2DDIntra channel: "Would you like to sign a nationwide referendum on which you vote "no war, yes to jobs, health care, education, etc."? You can do so at the web site: www.VoteNoWar.org/ No computer? Use a friend's terminal! Or go to your local library. The actual text of the referendum is:

The U.S. Congress did not represent me when it voted to authorize George W. Bush to carry out an illegal war against Iraq. Thousands will die needlessly unless the people stop this war drive. I join with millions of people who believe that the \$200 billion planned for war against Iraq should be spent instead to fund jobs, education, housing, health care, child care, assistance to the elderly and to meet people's needs.

You can add your comments if you wish.

Reverse side: Would you like to sign a nationwide petition on which you ask that Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld & Ashcroft be impeached? You can do that at the web site: <http://www.votetoimpeach.org> Info at: <http://www.internationalanswer.org>

The actual text of the petition is: **I want my representative in the U.S. House of Representatives to vote to impeach President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard B. Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, and Attorney General John D. Ashcroft for high crimes and misdemeanors, and to have the case prosecuted and tried in the U.S. Senate.**

Case drafted by Former U.S. Attorney General **Ramsey Clark**

TERRORISM

15 December 2002: **Mr. Bruce A Eggum**, USA, wrote to the *NewPoliticalSystem* discussion channel, transmitting a message from **Mr. Dick Burkhart**, *Global Peoples Assembly Network*: "Better than WAR! Killing many people is not peace."

"This proposal has been attracting favorable attention locally, so I thought I would distribute it globally. It is directed primarily at US voters and representatives but may serve to stimulate broader debate as well. Feel free to make comments/suggestions and to pass this on.

Needed: A New Middle East Policy

The United States itself has sown the seeds of global terrorism by its past actions in the Middle East. Current US policy is only throwing fuel on the fire. Dousing these flames will require a new US Middle East policy that addresses the root causes of Al Qaeda terrorism.

First we must admit that the US led "war on terrorism" has failed. Not only has widespread international support for the US evaporated within a year of the 9/11 attacks, but the recent terrorist actions in Bali and Kenya show that Al Qaeda is back in full force.

To see why, consider the principal justification cited by Osama bin Laden for his attack on the world trade center. These three reasons resonate strongly throughout the Middle East, even among well-educated, pro-western elites: (1) The devastating effects of US-led economic sanctions on the people of Iraq; (2) The US-enabled escalation of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; (3) US economic and military backing of autocratic regimes like those of Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Let's outline a new policy that addresses these issues at a deep level, a policy rooted in our highest values of freedom, democracy, and justice:"

Mr. Burkhart outlines here nine principles of an alternative, non-violent, peace promoting, and humanitarian policy respecting international institutions and ecological imperatives. These principles can only be

dismissed by ignorant, brainwashed people and those who have a vested interest in the current "war on terrorism". (JP)

"The path to global security outlined in this proposal promises to be both less costly and far more effective than militaristic responses which actually aggravate legitimate grievances that are at the root of Middle East terrorism. Let us proclaim our most basic values of freedom, democracy, and justice, not only for us, but for all.

We have drawn on discussions with Dr. Stephen Zunes, author of *Tinderbox: US Middle East Policy and the Roots of Terrorism*, and Middle East Editor for *Foreign Policy in Focus* (www.fpiif.org)." - Dick Burkhart, Task Force on Iraq of the Seattle Local Peoples Assembly (dickburkhart@attbi.com, <http://globalpeoples.cjb.net/>)

- Dick Burkhart, Task Force on Iraq of the Seattle Local Peoples Assembly (dickburkhart@attbi.com, <http://globalpeoples.cjb.net/>)

14 February: **WORLD-ACTION** wrote, "STOP THE REAL WORLD TERRORISTS!

A) An important item to investigate is how much terrorism is actually by the ethnic people alleged to be the perpetrators - and how much is actually done by covert 'intelligence' agencies of the USA and UK to further their plans for world domination.

B) Of the remaining terrorist acts actually carried out by ethnic peoples, how much is retaliation done in frustration and desperation by these underprivileged peoples due to the callous military and industrial aims of expansionist, war-mongering countries, such as the USA and UK?

World-Action enumerates some events the real causes of which seem to have been covered up. In some cases, the explanations suggested might turn out to be unfounded conspiracy theories. But some should not be dismissed lightly, particularly the suspicion that the US Army spread chemicals in the atmosphere for military purposes ("Chemtrails"). This allegation should be investigated by impartial inspectors. If verified, it would be a case of a horrible crime against humanity.

Yearly subscription 10 \$.

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WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 5 (No.1), March

Published by **MDD - Movement for Direct Democracy**, Bellava 15, Brno, Czech Republic.

Responsible editor: **Jiri Polak**, Design: **Bohuslav Binka**, Picture: **Katka Svehlova**, Print: **Studio Contrast**.

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