

Silke LECHNER:

ATTAC

Another World is Possible



How many people could a conference featuring workshops like "How to Reform the International Financial Architecture" or "The Economic Crisis of

Argentina" mobilise? Until recently probably just a handful of people - attending the congress of ATTAC Germany at the beginning of October was one of 2500 participants. How amazing!

BERLIN CONFERENCE

With this article I would like to introduce this fast growing international movement to you - I am aware that to many of you ATTAC is well known and you may be even involved actively. However, publishing an issue of MOZAIK on "globalisation" at this moment, ATTAC cannot be left outside.

THE STORY OF ATTAC

ATTAC has started in France: an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in December 1997 following the Asian financial crisis called for an application of the "Tobin Tax" on currency transactions. As a response to this article hundreds of letters from the readers were sent to the newspaper, people wanted to take up this issue. The idea of creating an organisation came up and in 1998 ATTAC was founded. The acronym stands for "Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financiers pour l'Aide aux Citoyens" - Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions in Aid of Citizens. ATTAC France now has over 30.000 members and about 220 local committees.

ADDRESSING

CORPORATE-LED-GLOBALISATION

At present day ATTAC organisations exist in some 30 countries, including some in Latin America and Africa. The government as in Tunisia may persecute them. ATTAC has not yet spread to the "Anglo-Saxon" world, however there are many counterpart organisations in Britain, the US, Australia and others (and ATTAC UK is about to be launched). While there is no formal "ATTAC International", members from different countries meet regularly and share the same goals. The Tobin Tax (see extra box) is still central to the agenda, but this agenda now addresses corporate-led-globalisation much more broadly and takes in the international financial institutions and the WTO, financial markets and pension funds, tax havens,

Tobin Tax

Today's international finance can be compared to a global casino, where investors seeking quick profits bet huge sums around the clock. Up to \$2 trillion a day is traded, and only 5% of all foreign exchange trading is necessary for financing trade in goods and services. All the rest is speculative activity. James Tobin, a Nobel prize-winning American economist, first proposed the Tobin Tax in 1978. The idea is to put a very small tax, say of 0,25%, on all foreign exchange transactions. This would deter speculation - short-term transactions would not be profitable any longer. The productive long-term investment, however, would remain intact, the tax would be of no consequence to this type as higher profits than 0,25% are usually expected. The dangerous volatility of global financial markets would be reduced, more stability provided. Apart from this effect which could help to avoid financial crises of which we have seen so many in the 90s (e.g. South-East Asia in '96/97) a Tobin Tax would have yet another positive effect: it would raise revenues (estimations say between \$100-300 billion a year) which can be used for social development and poverty reduction all around the world.

For more information check:

www.attac.org; www.ceedweb.org/iirp
www.halifaxinitiative.org

third world debt and structural adjustment, genetically manipulated crops, hiring and firing policies used by transnationals to increase their stock value, denial of vital medicines to AIDS patients and the like.

TRANS-GENERATIONAL BROADNESS

It is a very broad coalition not only on the international level, but also within every national ATTAC movement. At the ATTAC Congress in Germany, for example, there were people from all kinds of organisations - from groups involved in North-South issues, left-wing political groups, churches etc. And it was not only a broad mixture of organisations but also of people: maybe the movement can be described as a "trans-generational, trans-class, trans-gender and trans-national generation" (Susan GEORGE). For me personally, it has been very exciting to see people of all different age groups united in their aims: there were people who have been fighting for social justice issues since the 60s on the one hand, and many very young people who are still at school on the other. Three generations were present at this Congress in October 2001 in Berlin discussing with each other and sharing their views.

Although the broadness of the coalition may also lead to difficult political discussions, I think this

broadness is indeed the strength of ATTAC, not only in Germany but everywhere. It is no longer lots of different individual organisations working on their own and parallel to each other but organisations and people have joined together to fight for those aims they agree upon. I think the worldwide Jubilee 2000 movement has already worked in this way, ATTAC, however, seems to be even more capable of mobilising and uniting people.

NON-VIOLENT PROTEST

One last aspect I would like to mention concerns the protest forms ATTAC stands for: during the congress in Germany there have been several statements clearly condemning violent means for protesting. If people are demonstrating violently at, say, a G7/8 summit, it cannot be done in the name of ATTAC. I think this is a crucial aspect for us as WSCF and for those student Christian movements thinking about joining ATTAC.

Personally, I hope that this movement will continue to grow and I also hope that it will do so with the support and involvement of SCMerS. In my view WSCF shares the demands of ATTAC and with our tradition of working on economic justice issues we could form a valuable part of this movement. So let us be part of it!

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

To conclude this introduction to ATTAC I would like to quote Susan GEORGE (an excellent scientist, fervent activist and highly admired person by me): "People with knowledge, confidence, numbers and organisation can unmake what some have made, they can undo what some have done. This movement has made a momentous discovery and revealed a dangerous truth: the corporate *coup d'état*, the triumph of rich over poor, market over society, rapacity over nature is not inevitable. And we will be heard."

Another world is possible.



Claudia Patricia Restrepo MEJÍA

Some Days at the Agape Political Camp



We can sense the richness and harmony of the globe in a small microcosm as well. A woman from Latin America tells us about her memories of Agape, a kind of holy place. What does it mean to be a victim in dignity?

AGAPE POLITICAL CAMP

In August 2001 I attended the Agape International Political Camp on the negative effects of globalisation and the collective construction of an alternative proposal.

Medellín (Colombia), two million inhabitants, capital of Antioquia in the Aburrà valley, surrounded by mountains, is my city. My people are kind and welcoming even if we live a daily social and political violence (one of the most violent cities of the world), unemployment, hunger, poverty and armed conflict. These problems are our "daily bread" and affect mostly women.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Before going to Italy, I thought of a tale from my childhood, where a little bear asks its father: "Dad, what's on the other side of the mountains?" This question was in my mind while travelling over the mountains of Antioquia.

In Agape, I met women and men from all over the world (Haiti, India, Indonesia, Czech Republic, UK, Holland, France, USA, Colombia and Cuba and, of course, Italy).

RICHNESS AND HARMONY

Humankind, in its history, fought for power and domination, which have their origin in patriarchy and is nurtured by xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny, racism, class discrimination, etc. But in Agape, there were relationships among "Northerners" and "Southerners", heterosexuals and homosexuals, white, black and "mestizos", young and mature people. How was it possible?

It was a collective experience and research where the encounter is the most important thing and human deepness is considered before any kind of political, religious, sexual orientation, race, ethnic and cultural difference. Diversity becomes richness, not a justification of domination.

WORLD DISORDER

The preciousness of this was the experimental practical democracy, with each one of us express-

