



**European, Latinamerican and Caribbean Social Encounter
Linking Alternatives
Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, 25-29 May 2004**

On the occasion of the Third Summit of heads of state and governments from the EU and Latin America, TNI co-organised an Encuentro Social in Guadalajara, Mexico at the end of May. The Encuentro was aimed at strengthening co-operation between social movements and civil society organisations in Latin America and Europe with a shared interest in the promotion of models of sustainable socio-economic development that put people and not big corporations' profits first. The Encuentro attracted over 300 representatives of social movements and civil society organisations from every Latin American country as well as some key counterparts in Europe. Organisers included key partners in the TNI Alternative Regionalisms project: Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), the Brazilian labour confederation CUT, Rede Brasileira de Integração dos Povos Conheço (REBRIP), Red de Ecología Social (REDES)/Friends of the Earth Uruguay and many other members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. On the European side, the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America (CIFCA), Transforme Italia, Espaces Marx, France Amérique Latin and the Heinrich Boell Foundation were represented.

Several presentations to the four-day Encuentro concerned critical analyses of the EU's current free trade agreements (FTAs) in Latin America and its negotiations with Mercosur as a regional bloc. Similar to what is apparent in Africa-EU negotiations and agreements, these FTAs are strongly criticised for attempting to accelerate liberalisation and are dubbed the EU's "WTO+plus" strategy. The overarching theme for the forum was "Exchanging Alternatives". A number of presentations were concerned with questions of how to construct "another world", focusing on the potential for people-centred regional integration strategies in the South. Venezuela and Cuba featured prominently on the agenda of both the social forum and the official inter-governmental summit.

TNI Fellow Brid Brennan, presented a paper at the conference, as did TNI Young Scholar, Claudia Torrelli of REDES/FOE Uruguay. RMALC is currently compiling a book based on presentations to the conference. The Social Encounter also produced a declaration and an outline of a Plan of Action, which will be put to the Social Forum of the Americas in Quito in July, the European Social Forum in London in October and the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January next year. The event attracted substantive media attention internationally and REDES reported thousands of hits on the website of Radio Mundial which covered the event fully.

Thousands of Mexicans joined a colourful demonstration on the final day, though this was marred by the actions of provocateurs, police violence and many subsequent arrests of activists.

Co-conveners

Guadalajara: Promotion group "Another May in Guadalajara", Mexican Institute for Community Development (IMDEC), National Revolutionary Union of Euzkadi Workers, (SNRTE), Jalisco Ecologist Collective (CEJ).

Mexico: Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC), DECA-Pueblo Team, Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Centre on Human Rights (Centro Pro), Authentic Workers Front (FAT), Mexican Union of Electrical Workers (SME), National Gender and Economy Network (REDGE), World March of Women-Mexico, Citizens' Movement for Democracy (MCD), National Association of Agricultural Product Trading Enterprises (ANEC), Labour Investigation and Trade Union Advisory Centre (CILAS).

Latin America and Caribbean: Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), Chilean Alliance for Just and Responsible Trade (ACJR), Friends of the Earth (Uruguay) Brazilian Network for the Integration of the People (REBRIP), Jubilee South, Latin American Network "Women Transforming the Economy" (RMTE).

EUROPE: Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and México (CIFCA), Transnational Institute (Netherlands), ATTAC, Latin American Collective (France), Transform Italy.

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