

## Agriculture by Rosa Tennenbaum and Marcia Merry

### GATT 'disciplines' farming to death

*The result of the talks was to knock down any policy any nation is using to protect its farming and food supply.*

**N**egotiations among the 100 member nations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) concluded April 11 in Geneva, Switzerland, after the major roadblock, differences over agricultural policy between the European Community and the United States, were finally cleared out of the way. A "framework" was ratified in which the world's largest food producers—the United States, the European Community, and the Cairns Group of 13 agricultural exporters—agreed to build "a fair and market-oriented system of agricultural trade."

Nations' agricultural policies henceforth will have to orient more strongly toward "market signals"; trade restrictions are to be dropped, and agricultural trade will be "disciplined" by the GATT authorities.

The new GATT agriculture agreement abrogates sovereign national rights to formulate food and farm policies, in the name of furthering a "one-world market."

For the time being, all national government support for agriculture is to be frozen at current levels until December 1990. In principle, spokesmen for the signatory governments would favor even a reduction in subsidies and protectionist regulations, although the details have not yet been made public. The three negotiating partners mutually pledged to pursue the long-term goal of "substantially increasing cuts in agricultural support and protection." More negotiations must be conducted in the interim, but they must not continue beyond 1990. Agreements will range over "all measures which directly and indirectly

[concern] disruptions of imports and of competition."

The governments have until December of this year to submit to GATT detailed proposals as to how they will achieve these goals. The GATT administration is forming a "monitoring system" in order to guarantee that governments stick to their commitments, and to seek out any violations.

At first, Japan, the Scandinavian countries, and Switzerland resisted this, expressing doubts about the security of their own food supplies. But GATT considers such questions "non-economic aspects," and their objections were swept from the table as irrelevant.

This, along with the settlement of the agricultural policy dispute between the EC and the United States, now clears the way for a "successful" conclusion of GATT's Uruguay Round. This four-year round of negotiations was begun in Punta del Este in 1986, and dedicated to reducing trade barriers especially in agricultural trade. Since the founding of the United Nations-connected group in the 1940s, agriculture had never been placed "on the table" for thorough GATT trade control, but in 1986, then-U.S. Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter made it a priority commitment of the United States. In 1987, President Reagan followed suit, including the demand that all national subsidies to agriculture must be removed by the year 2000.

When the GATT member nations met in Montreal for their "Mid Term Review" Round in December 1988, the talks ended in a stalemate after the

United States clashed with the European Community over the timing of the end to subsidies. The EC delegation said the subsidy reductions should begin immediately, and proceed step by step. The United States countered by demanding a commitment to total reduction on or around the year 2000, before any interim reductions would be made. The meeting ended by scheduling the April talks in Geneva, which have now concluded in agreement.

Whatever the wrappings on the Geneva package, the reality is that GATT is serving the purpose of knocking down any programs a nation may employ to protect its domestic food and farm sectors. The benefactors of this are the international food cartel companies now dominating world trade in food commodities—Cargill, Continental, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge, Archer Daniels Midland/Toepfer, Unilever, Nestlé, Ferruzzi, and the rest. At the Montreal meeting, Cargill sent two vice presidents to represent the U.S. "private sector."

The new GATT agriculture agreement brings the world one step closer to a "one-world dictatorship" by the cartel, under the banner of "market-oriented agriculture policy." This phrase was promoted some years ago as the watchword for agriculture, by the Trilateral Commission, the political arm of the international banks and cartels.

Sicco Mansholt, a longtime European cartel servant, was quite open about this at a public event in northern Germany in early April. Mansholt responded to a question about who controls the GATT negotiations by stating, "The cartels control GATT—especially Cargill, but also Bunge and ADM/Toepfer play an important role. And that's been the case for many years."