

International VIEWPOINT

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**Chirac buffeted by new wave of struggles
The stakes at the Vietnamese CP congress
Aquino opens new stage in Filipino politics**

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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A step forward for IV

THIS ISSUE marks the end of the period we set for our subscription and fund drive. Our objectives have been achieved. More than 5,000 US dollars have been contributed to the magazine and the total of subscribers has risen by at least a hundred (we do not know the exact total since many arrived in the mail over the holidays).

Basically, the success of the fund drive is thanks to a relatively small number of enthusiastic supporters. Some of them contributed several times. We intend eventually to thank all of them individually.

At the moment, we do not know exactly how much of the increase in subscriptions represents a continuation of the general increase we have been experiencing and how much is a result of the campaign. There is no clear evidence of an organized campaign for new subscriptions anywhere yet except in Denmark, where the results are quite encouraging. The Danes achieved their results by sending out sample copies of the magazine to a selected list and subsidizing introductory subscriptions.

But this is the first attempt to build an international campaign of support for *International Viewpoint* and it takes time in most countries to get a campaign going. We hope that our supporters will continue their efforts.

Already, thanks to the support we have received, over the next few months we will be in a position to raise the production of *IV* to a higher level through the use of computerized word-processing and typesetting equipment. In this way, we will be able to improve the variety and balance of the magazine and hopefully widen its appeal, without weakening the in-depth analysis that has won us such devoted readers.

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Chirac buffeted by new strike wave

NO SOONER had Jacques Chirac's government begun to breathe a sigh of relief that things were returning to normal after its ignominious defeat at the hands of the students, than another wave of strikes appeared to threaten it. (1)

This time it was the turn of tens of thousands of public sector employees, led by the railworkers, to launch a counter-attack against the right-wing coalition government's austerity and restructuring programme.

HILARY ELEANOR

Although it had become common currency for the left in France to predict that the exemplary and victorious students' struggle would inspire the workers' movement, the rapidity and breadth of the strikes took everybody by surprise. And although the strikers' did not win their main demands on pay and conditions outright, they did succeed in forcing some limited concessions from the government and the management's of the nationalized industries.

The strikes began from a call put out by train drivers in the SNCF (the national railway company), in particular from the Gare du Nord depot in Paris and in the Paris-Sud-Ouest region. Railworkers had already rejected a three per cent pay offer for 1987, not surprisingly as their pay had been falling behind the inflation rate since 1981. Under the rubric of running the SNCF profitably, management were proposing job reductions and cuts in services, greater flexibility of Sunday and rest-day working and reductions in bonuses.

But it wasn't just the question of basic wages — and the related issues of bonuses and conditions — that led to the initial walk-outs. The SNCF bosses were also proposing bringing into operation a new merit-related promotion scheme that would replace the present seniority system.

It was this proposal, coupled with the defeat that the youth had inflicted on the government less than two weeks previously, that sparked off the unofficial action on December 18. The strike spread rapidly through the SNCF's 94 national depots, but for the first four days was mainly

restricted to the train drivers who make up 18,000 of the 230,000 railworkers.

There were a number of factors that led to this becoming the longest-running rail strike since 1968, lasting over three weeks. Perhaps the most important factor, as mentioned already, was the atmosphere of hope opened up by the students' victory. For the first time in many years, it seemed as though it was possible to fight a struggle and win — always an important factor in shaping combativity and militancy.

Another important factor was that the strike was started and in general led by rank and file workers, and not by the traditional union leaderships. This in part can be attributed to the class-collaborationist approaches of the two main trade unions, the Communist Party-led CGT and the CFDT, whose leadership is pro-Socialist Party. (2) In a country that anyway has a weak level of trade-union organization, the claimed membership of the CGT has fallen from two and a half million in 1975 to just one million today, and the CFDT claims 687,000 members. Only 10-12 per cent of the working population in France belong to trade unions.

The attitude of these union leaderships to the strike at the beginning was not to welcome it with open arms and to throw their support behind it. The CFDT were wary of rocking the boat with only a year to go before next year's presidential elections, and with Socialist President Francois Mitterrand doing quite nicely in the public opinion polls. The CGT were suspicious of a movement that was outside of their bureaucratic control.

But it wasn't long before the national unions were singing another tune. At the base, trade-union militants who were members of the CGT or the CFDT in some areas began to organize and even lead the strikes, and when it became apparent that the movement was not going to be a flash in the pan, the unions did an about face and made the strike actions official.

But by this time it was too late for the official union machinery to take over the running of the strike on a day to day level. Local depots had already set up democratically-elected strike committees, controlled by daily general assemblies of all the strikers, both unionized and non-unionized. Learning lessons from both past disputes and from the organization of the student movement, the railworkers grew in strength and self-confidence through relying on these democratic forms of self-organization. It was truly the general assemblies of the strikers who led the strike, from decisions to continue the action to the day-to-day organizing of picketing and so on.

Through these mechanisms, the strike grew in momentum in the run-up to and throughout the Christmas holiday period. The strike caused chaos for travellers over Christmas, but the workers' demands still gained sympathy from wide sections of public opinion in spite of attempts by the TV and the media to whip up hysteria against them.

National strike coordination

As the strike began to spread among all the railworkers, unions on the Paris metro and bus networks began the first of a series of sporadic strikes around pay and grading demands on Monday, December 22, this one lasting for four days.

The rail strike gained another boost when the train drivers organized a national strike coordination on December 28, with delegates being sent directly from local or regional strike committees. This was the first time in the history of the French workers' movement that a national coordination has been established outside the control of official trade-union channels.

Throughout this first period of

1. On the December student strikes, see 'International Viewpoint' No. 111, December 22, 1986.

2. CGT — Confederation generale du travail, General Workers' Confederation; CFDT — Confederation francaise democratique du travail, Democratic Workers' Confederation.



CRS police used to intimidate and attack striking railworkers (DR)

the strike, the government was determined to remain intransigent. Prime Minister Jacques Chirac in particular could not afford to be seen to give in to the strikers after his government's humiliating climbdown following their attempts to reform the universities. But there wasn't just the problem of face-saving, with Chirac's popularity sliding and the presidential elections drawing closer. The right-wing coalition government headed up by Chirac's party, the RPR, and the UDF led by Raymond Barre, had other problems, not least of which was France's economic performance in relation to its main capitalist competitors.

Thatcher-style economic restructuring

The government's long-term project can be summed-up as a Reagan or Thatcher-style restructuring of the economy — in other words a major offensive against the working class in order to make French industry more profitable and attractive to overseas investment. Among the suitable places to make a start was first of all the education sector — hence the doomed proposals that sparked off the student mobilizations. Next for the chop was the rest of the public sector, with the primary target being the rail industry.

France's state-owned sector is one of the biggest in Western Europe, with an estimated four and a half

million employees and a budget equal to 30 per cent of the total gross national product. The railway system has a government subsidy of 30,000 million francs a year, and made a loss of over 3,400 million francs (500 million US dollars) in 1986. Aiming to reduce public spending, Chirac had announced a government ceiling for wage rises in the public sector of two per cent for 1987, with three per cent rises where wage increases were tied to productivity deals.

Taking up the paring knife where the previous Socialist government had left off, Chirac targeted the railways for public spending cutbacks. Hiding behind the SNCF management, the government chose "not to intervene" openly into the dispute, although undoubtedly the SNCF bosses were just carrying out instructions from their bosses in the ministry of transport.

But the government could not keep up its public stance of "non-intervention" for very long. As the strike began to bite and pressure built up in support of the strikers' demands for negotiations, they were finally forced to intervene as it became apparent that the strikers were digging in. On December 29, Junior Transport Minister Jacques Douffiagues announced that the SNCF proposals for the merit-related pay structure would be withdrawn, and he named a mediator to begin a process of negotiations with the unions.

But these manoeuvres failed to

defuse the rail struggle. Railworkers continued to organize, and, in an attempt to stop the small minority of scabs running trains, began to occupy platforms and signal boxes, and organize sit-downs on the tracks. There were many local confrontations between the strikers and the CRS riot police.

The day after Douffiagues' announcement, metro workers in Paris began another strike, with workers on the Paris suburban transport system, the RER, following hot on their heels in pursuit of a better wage offer and to protest against proposed job losses threatened by a productivity plan.

Towards the end of the first week of January, the rail strike began to run out of steam slightly, with the first signs of a small but significant return to work. In an attempt to outflank their union rivals, the Communist-led CGT announced an all-out strike in the public sector for Wednesday, January 7. But this move by the CGT came too late. It was a cynical attempt to regain some credibility by putting on a radical left face at a time when other unions were throwing in the towel, and when there was no danger of being outflanked.

New strike wave

However, a new wave of strikes began on January 7. On the Paris metro and the RER, stoppages continued, severely disrupting transport in the city and the suburbs. Power cuts heralded strikes by electricians for higher wages, and there were also renewed stoppages in the docks and naval shipyards against job cuts.

The following day, January 8, the SNCF announced further concessions on promotion rights and fringe benefits, and the next few days saw more railworkers drifting back to work. The following weekend, January 10-11, three of the tiny, unrepresentative and rightist electrician and gas workers' unions signed an agreement for a return to work. The largest union involved, the CGT, denounced the deal as a capitulation.

Monday, January 12, saw the beginning of an all-out return to work on the railways, with workers at some of the most militant depots voting for a return to work. Only parts of the Paris metro were still on strike, but this did not last after the right-wing Force ouvriere (Workers' Strength) union had called its members back to work, new negotiations were opened up and after the rail strike had collapsed.

As a wave of snow and ice enveloped France, it almost seemed as though

the change in weather had marked the end of the strikes. But the arctic weather did a job as thorough as any mass pickets could have in disrupting road, rail and air transport, putting several nuclear power stations out of operation (the water-cooling systems were frozen) and preventing many people from working. Braving the cold in Paris on Monday, January 12, a couple of thousand right-wingers and shopkeepers sang the *Marseillaise* at belated demonstrations against the strikers called by the UDF/RPR and the fascist National Front.

If all these problems weren't enough to worry Chirac, another crisis had been building up. As a result of the student struggles in December and the current strike actions, the franc had begun to slide uncontrollably downwards to its lowest-ever level in the European Monetary System (EMS). (3) An emergency meeting was held in Brussels on January 11 to try to salvage something of the situation. The French government pressed for a devaluation of the Deutschmark, blaming its rise for their own currency problems, and wanting desperately to avoid a devaluation of the franc, which would have in effect wrecked the government's anti-inflationist policies. In a touching show of anti-working-class solidarity, a compromise was reached at Brussels by revaluing the Deutschmark and the Dutch guilder by three per cent, and the Belgian and Luxembourg francs by two per cent, thus temporarily taking the pressure off the French currency.

Although the railworkers won some concessions out of the SNCF management, the strike was a partial failure because of misleadership by the national trade-unions, combined with the limitations of the national co-ordination. Although the train drivers organized nationally, they represented just one section of the SNCF workers. Without an alternative leadership with a perspective of linking up the demands and struggles of all the strikers, the movement could not go much further. The next task is to build such an alternative inside the labour movement.

But this will not be the end of the story. Wage negotiations for the public sector begin at the end of January — next in line will be the metro and bus workers in Paris, teachers, civil servants, dockers, miners and postal workers. It promises to be a long, hard winter for the Chirac government.

3. The EMS is a mechanism used by many leading member countries of the European Community to maintain fixed exchange rates against each other's currencies, and to maintain a floating rate against outside currencies.

Lessons of the strikes

IT IS AN INDEX of the rapidly changing situation in France that a major shift in the political and social climate has to be noted before the new year has hardly begun. The train drivers, metro workers and electricians have not emerged victorious from their tug of war with the government. But despite their obvious relief, the bourgeois parties that regained control of parliament on March 16 last year have not come out of this test any stronger.

CHRISTIAN PICQUET

In fact, the government's hard line took a hammering. While they could not win their major demands, the railway workers did not go back to work empty-handed. They forced the management of the SNCF [Societe Nationale de Chemins de Fer, the National Railway company] to withdraw a table of wages supposedly designed to permit advancement on the basis of individual merit. Transport Minister Jacques Douffiagues will have to get an extraordinarily favorable relationship of forces if he wants to present another scheme like this in the future.

In the same way the state bosses

of the electricity board [EDF] and the Paris metro authority [RATP] had to run hard to save the guts of their wage policy. They wanted to impose a two per cent ceiling on wage increases this year. And they were forced straightaway to give three per cent increases, their top limit. This was certainly a paltry concession in view of the steady erosion of buying power. Nonetheless, this is the first time in more than a decade that a government has had at least to go through the motions of negotiating. Premier Jacques Chirac's arrogance and authority have been badly buffeted. The latest *SOFRES-Figaro*



magazine poll shows that his popularity has dropped by seven points.

The strikers very nearly created a fully-fledged political crisis. No one should be fooled by the civil-war language or the appeals to what the right has to offer by way of muscle, enraged bosses and small shopkeepers nostalgia for May 30, 1968. [The demonstration of the "silent majority" called by de Gaulle in an attempt to counter the worker-student mobilizations.] The anti-strike hysteria only proves that force is the only language the right knows and that nothing can be won without a fight.

At the same time, we should not overlook the discordant notes within the majority. On the one hand, we have Raymond Barre [leader of the "moderate" right UDF] advocating "social dialogue." On the other, we have fire-breathing from the likes of Toubon [chair of the premier's party, the RPR]. While the industry minister Alain Madelin fulminated against "anti-French strikes," the minister of labor Philippe Seguin was appealing for "strong and responsible unions." There is a lot more than nuances involved here. These discords reveal how afraid the bosses are of a social explosion catching them by surprise.

"Nothing will be the same again," the students said at the end of their mobilizations. The same sort of thing is being said now by those who led a more than three-week-long strike. By showing that the government could be forced to retreat, the youth opened up a breach. The rail, electricity and metro workers have widened it. Their failure, because there was one, was not this time because of insufficient commitment by the workers. In the categories concerned, the mobilizations were among the biggest since the Liberation.

The strike wave was broken only by the refusal of the union leaderships to give the struggle an outlet corresponding to the stakes involved. Jose Perez, a member of the coordinating committee of train drivers, explained the problem quite clearly in an interview published in *Le Matin* of January 12: "the national unions lacked the will to organize a big united action."

It is a good bet that this lesson will be remembered. In fact, one of the outstanding features of these last weeks is undoubtedly the determination of the ranks to take their own affairs in hand, not to rely any longer on the apparatuses whose practices they know too well. The strike committees and coordinating committees in the SNCF and the general assemblies in EDF helped to make the strike massive and united.

These organizations were so im-

portant to the workers that in many SNCF depots one of the reasons for suspending the action was to preserve this cohesiveness. While the concerted maneuvers of the government, the unions and the parties succeeded once again, it might very well not happen that way the next time.

More battles on the horizon

Overall, today, we are seeing a complete change in the social climate of the country. The workers and the mass movement are regaining confidence in their strength. They are relearning the traditional methods of collective struggle. One index, among others, of this new climate is the inability of the right to whip up public opinion against the strikers. When the parties of the right — the RPR, the UDF and the National Front — brought a few thousand people into the streets to demonstrate against the strikes, a poll by *Le Figaro* [the most authoritative right-wing Paris daily] revealed that only a minority of Parisians were up in arms against "abuses of the right to strike." And they were most affected by the work stoppages.

All of these aspects are important advantages for the battles that loom on the horizon. Finance Minister Edouard Balladur's deflationist policy is not going to extricate French capitalism from its crisis. On the contrary, dark clouds are building up. The last months of the old year were marked by a flagging of the growth of production. The OECD's economic forecasts indicate that this will continue in 1987, in the context of a more difficult international environment resulting from weak and unbalanced growth rates and cut-throat competition in trade.

In this situation, far from promoting a revival of productive investment, the measures taken by the finance minister will mainly stimulate speculative investment and lead to a new and tougher round of austerity.

Is this another one of the catastrophic scenarios that those revolutionary Cassandras are supposedly so fond of? Consider the facts. The readjustment of parity among the European currencies on January 11 points clearly to the contradictions in which the government is floundering. It can take comfort in a procedure that saved the franc's official position. But it is no less true that the revaluation of the Deutschmark, the guilder and the Belgian franc mean devaluation of the French currency. This will be reflected in higher prices for imported goods

and logically by a new rise of inflation.

Moreover, the turmoil on the financial markets comes at the same time as the revival of oil prices and is combining with the inevitable effects of the freeing of prices in commerce and the services ordered by Balladur a few months ago. Following time-honored prescriptions, the authorities will call on the workers to tighten their belts further, and the workers will find their social benefits and buying power being cut. Balladur is already threatening that "if necessary, I will take measures to contain inflation."

In the two months that have gone by, the students, railway and metro workers have marked out the way forward. It is a way by which the majority can escape having to pay the price for a policy in the interests of a small minority of exploiters. It is a way that will put them in a better position to block the attacks that are being prepared against their living standards and working conditions or against their social benefits. It is a way by which they can force the government once and for all to withdraw the harmful schemes that it had to postpone at the time of the student uprising, starting with its xenophobic reform of the Nationality Code. It is a way finally that will enable the majority of the population to get rid of a government that represents war on the working people, to oust Chirac and his team.

This way stands in radical opposition to the consensus politics of the "political class," to polite cohabitation [between the Socialist Party President Francois Mitterrand and the rightist majority in parliament], in the name of "fighting inflation." This way means building a relationship of forces that can force the enemies of the working people in government and management to retreat, it means returning to the traditional methods of class struggle.

From this standpoint, there will be no lack of tests, in particular in the public sector, where wage negotiations are to open soon and where the potential for struggles has shown itself to be so great. Everywhere there is the same exasperation against the bullying moves of the rulers. It is clear that a coordinated struggle of government workers would have an excellent chance of succeeding where the isolated battles in SNCF, EDF and the RATP failed.

Such a confrontation would spur private-sector workers to go into action, which is the precondition for a real working-class counter-offensive. This is the important lesson that has to be drawn from the battle that has just been fought.

A watershed party congress

THE SIXTH National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party met in official session from December 15 to 18, 1986. It clearly did not mark the end of the battles over orientation that have been going on now for nearly ten years. Despite the death last July of the party's previous secretary, Le Duan, and the retirement of three other historic leaders, this congress did not usher in any radical rejuvenation of the leadership bodies. It left to the Seventh Congress the task of adopting a new overall program on the paths of transition to socialism. It adopted only a limited number of concrete reforms, most of them concerning the economic targets of the 1986-90 five-year plan.

Nonetheless, the Sixth Congress promises to prove a watershed in the history of Vietnamese communism. Given the gravity of the situation in the country, it was an occasion for still sharper self-criticism than the previous congress in 1982. The congress took more radical steps than ever before to renew the leaderships. It represented an important stage in the conflict between the "renovators" and the "orthodox," with the former strengthening their positions. On a deeper level, this congress made a break with the party's traditional theoretical framework of reference, a break whose long term portent it is still impossible to evaluate.

PIERRE ROUSSET

The Fifth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) was already a self-critical one. (1) At this one, four years later, Le Duan's successor as general secretary of the VCP, Truong Chinh, minced no words in the speech he made to the 1,129 delegates. He explicitly laid the responsibility for the failures at the door of the leading bodies as a whole, rather than putting the blame on those who implemented the policies.

"We frankly analyse and bravely admit the serious and longstanding shortcomings and mistakes as concerns major viewpoints and policies, strategic guidance and the organization of the work . . . Responsibility for these shortcomings and mistakes rests first of all with the party Central Committee, the Political Bureau, the Secretariat and with the Council of Ministers. The party Central Committee would like to seriously criticize itself for its own shortcomings before the congress." (2)

The political resolution adopted by the Sixth Congress briefly hailed the

"achievements of these last years," claiming that they were the result of the party line laid out in the Fourth and Fifth Congresses (respectively in 1976 and 1982.) (3) But it very quickly turned to a self-critical tone: "We realize clearly that the present social and economic situation in our country is marked by acute difficulties . . . Overall, we have not been able to achieve the general objective set by the Fifth Congress, which was to essentially stabilize the socio-economic situation and the people's living conditions.

"Without underestimating the objective difficulties, the congress points up severely the subjective cause of this situation, which are the errors and failings in the leadership and management exercised by the state . . . The errors are grave ones concerning the big options and policies, strategic leadership and implementation."

Thus, it is clear that the criticism was not just of defective implementation of policies considered in them-

selves to be correct. It also put in question a certain number of "big options and policies and strategic leadership."

This is not the first time that the VCP has made a solemn self-criticism. It did so in 1956, after the disastrous failure of an overly authoritarian and drastic agrarian reform; and in 1982, after the failure of overconfident policies put into practice after 1975-76. But the self-criticism presented to the Sixth Congress was nonetheless unprecedented. Among other things, this was a reflection of the gravity of the crisis that the country is going through and of the extent of the problems of leadership and orientation posed.

The crisis is indeed a serious one and it is asserting itself in every area. An editor of *Graffiti*, the organ of the Union des Jeunesse Vietnamiennes de France [Union of Vietnamese Youth in France], summed it up in the following terms:

Crisis of confidence

"Vietnam is going through a real crisis today. There is an economic crisis, owing to a botched implementation of reforms, especially the currency reform. There is a political crisis, owing to the coexistence within the leading bodies of lines that have today become irreconcilable. And there is a crisis of confidence among the population, who are waiting now for real changes and little by little losing their confidence." (4)

If the crisis is so grave, it is because the first already belated attempts at reform failed, and many people think that that was because of conscious obstruction in the national leadership bodies. Since 1978-79, the bankruptcy of the "dogmatic and voluntarist" orientations have been patent: agricultural production is below the level of 1976!

Reforms have been officially introduced, after having in fact been put into practice in various provinces. In September 1979, the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee institutionalized the policy of *khoan*'s, "fixed

1. See 'International Viewpoint' No. 12, August 2, 1982: "Self-criticism at fifth congress of Vietnamese CP" by Pierre Rousset.

2. Quoted by Murray Herbert in the 'Far Eastern Economic Review' of January 1, 1987 and by Keith B. Richburg in the 'International Herald Tribune' of December 16, 1986.

3. The quotations from the political resolution are translated from the version in French sent out over telex.

4. 'Graffiti,' Nos 25-26, August-September 1986, p. 3.

contracts" that favor family initiative in the framework of the rural communes. [That is, the farmers agree to deliver a certain quantity of a given produce to the state at a set price and get the right to sell what they produce over that, either to the state at renegotiated prices or on the free market.] In 1981, the *khoan* policy was introduced into industry. Priority was given to light industry and agriculture, no longer to heavy industry.

These reforms ran into sharp opposition. They were delayed. It was only in 1982 that the *khoan* system was really applied in agriculture throughout the country. In 1983, the "quest for profit" (an element in family contracts) came in suddenly for denunciations. Tendency struggles have been intense in the party apparatus.

However, the new policy seems to be bearing fruit in production. Agricultural production, which averaged 13.3 million tons of cereals for the period 1976-80, came up to an average of 17 million tons during the following five years. Vietnam's chronic and dramatic food deficit is being reduced.

In July 1985, the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee decided on a major reform of wages, prices and currency. This meant in particular abolishing the system of subsidies in kind — ration tickets — which were a heritage of the war period. Such payments were to be incorporated into money wages, and a growing autonomy was to be accorded to state enterprises.

The forced socialization of agriculture in the South was gradually dropped. Small private trading and crafts enjoyed the best conditions for development. New rights were given to the provinces of import and export, an area traditionally reserved for the national level.

Everything was thrown out of kilter by the September 1985 currency reform. This was a general changeover of the currency that was supposed to uncover hidden fortunes. Absurd in conception (it assumed a strict secrecy impossible to assure and an absence of corruption within the regime, where it is in fact rampant), it was also botched in application. The result was catastrophic — a general disorganization of exchange and a galloping inflation that reached 1,000 per cent in a year.

This was the straw that broke the camel's back. The economic and political effects of this currency reform were considerable. In the words of *Dai Doan Ket*, the journal of the Fatherland Front, these measures provoked "waves of questioning in public opinion, upsetting confidence in the state's capacity for management. The entire population daily felt the negative effects. And a lot more time

will have to pass before we have finished paying the price of this error." (5)

A particularly long and stormy Central Committee plenum met from mid-May to June 9 to draw the balance sheet of the disaster. The "renovators," such as Vo Van Kiet, were apparently opposed to the execution of the currency reform. They strengthened their positions. On June 21, the government underwent a thoroughgoing reshuffle. Seven ministers were dismissed, including To Huu, the official poet, high priest of orthodoxy, deputy premier and father of the currency reform.

Pioneer member of the VCP

It was in this context that the preparations for the Sixth Congress of the VCP went into their active phase. The authority of a number of historic leaders collapsed, starting with that of Le Duan, a pioneer member of the party and general secretary from 1960 to 1986. One of the party's principal ideologues in the collective leadership that ran the party after Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969, Le Duan had worked in the South for a long time before returning to Hanoi at the end of the 1950s. He played a decisive role in formulating the policy of resistance to the US aggression, during which he demonstrated great capacity for leadership and a real political creativity. Discreet, but still endowed with an aura of prestige, at the start of the 1980s Le Duan was reputed to support the "renovators".

However, in the last years of his life, Le Duan suffered a stinging defeat on two fronts. On the level of practical leadership, the crisis of 1985-86 rebounded against him. On the level of basic conceptions, he also took a beating, because he had been one of the VCP's main theoreticians of the transition to socialism. The attack underway on "dogmas," is also a criticism of the heritage he represented. In his old age, he seemed to many to have become a visionary detached from reality.

Le Duan was reportedly ready to withdraw from the Political Bureau at this national congress. His death last July probably helped to accelerate the evolution in the relationship of forces within the apparatus.

For some months, Truong Chinh took Le Duan's place as general secretary. For a long time, he was regarded as the ideological leader of the "orthodox" wing. On several occasions, he opposed the reforms. While not "pro-Chinese," he has a solid Maoist education. Truong Chinh's

party name means "Long March" (his real one is Dan Xuan Khu), referring to the one that Mao led in 1934-35. He is the author of the book *The Resistance Will Win*, the Vietnamese version of the Chinese people's war conceptions. Above all, he bore responsibility for the 1956 agrarian reform, which was carried out with the methods of the "mass campaigns" that Mao was so fond of and which prefigured the disastrous Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s.

However, in the most recent years Truong Chinh finally became convinced of the need for economic reforms. He has a reputation for saying what he thinks and not acting out of opportunism. His turn-about strengthened the authority of the "renovators" within the apparatus.

The first draft of the political resolution for the congress was completed in June 1986 by the Central Committee's propaganda commission. It aroused so many objections that it was rapidly put aside. The discussion took place around a document submitted in July by Truong Chinh. The latter talked about the need for "renovation," which has become a watchword.

On October 19, 1986, in a speech to the Hanoi federal congress that was more radical than his July document, Truong Chinh denounced leadership "blunders," the "desire to develop a heavy industry on a scale far surpassing our real capacities," a "mechanics of management characterized by bureaucracy and a system of subsidies," as well as "infantile leftism."

"On the one hand, we have erred through subjectivism and hastiness, wanting to skip over stages, do too much, too quickly and on too grand a scale. On the other, once the mistakes have been made we have demonstrated conservatism and immobility, wanting to maintain the status quo, not having the courage or the will to correct our errors." (6)

Thus, the preparations for the VCP congress were marked by important shifts. Truong Chinh supported reforms, but in the economic field alone. On the other hand, Le Duc Tho seems to have taken his distance. A key figure for the party apparatus, a wielder of considerable power, Le Duc Tho, like Le Duan, had supported reforms that were generally initiated in the South, where his brother, Mai Chi Tho, was the

5. 'Dai Doan Ket' of April 23, 1986, quoted by J. Lambettini in "La crise de confiance," 'Sudestisie', No. 42, June-July 1986, p. 17.

6. Speech by General Secretary Truong Chinh to the Hanoi federal congress, 'Nhan Dan', October 20, 1986, cited by Tran Minh in 'Doanket', the journal of the Union des Vietnamiens de France, No. 386, December 1986, p. 19.

The leading bodies and their renewal

The new political bureau:

1. Nguyen Van Linh; 2. Pham Hung; 3. Vo Chi Cong; 4. Do Muoi; 5. Vo Van Kiet; 6. Le Duc Anh; 7. Nguyen Duc Tam; 8. Nguyen Co Thach; 9. Dong Sy Nguyen; 10. Tran Xuan Bach; 11. Nguyen Thanh Binh; 12. Doan Khue; 13. Mai Chi Tho; *Alternate member:* 1. Dao Duy Tung;

The old political bureau:

1. Le Duan (dead); 2. Truong Chinh (retired); 3. Pham Van Dong (retired); 4. Pham Hung; 5. Le Duc Tho (retired); 6. Van Tien Dung (retired); 7. Vo Chi Cong; 8. Chu Huy Man (retired); 9. To Huu (retired); 10. Vo Van Kiet; 11. Do Muoi; 12. Le Duc Anh; 13. Nguyen Duc Tam, *Alternate member:* 1. Nguyen Co Thach; 2. Dong Sy Nguyen;

The secretariat of the CC:

1. Nguyen Van Linh (recent member of the previous secretariat); 2. Nguyen Duc Tam (member of the secretariat elected in 1982); 3. Tran Xuan Bach (member of the secretariat elected in 1982); 4. Dao Duy Tung (new member); 5. Tran Kien (member of the secretariat elected in 1982);

The following are all new members of the secretariat: 6. Le Phuc Tho; 7. General Nguyen Quyet; 8. General Dam Quang Trung; 9. Vu Oanh; 10. Nguyen Khan; 11. General Tran Quyet; 12. Tran Quoc Huong; 13. Pham The Duyet.

mayor of Saigon-Ho Chi Minh City. He contributed to the leadership's critical balance sheet. Recently, he published a document that attracted a lot of attention, talking about an "overall negative balance." (7)

Nonetheless, at this most recent congress Le Duc Tho lined up with the "orthodox" against the "renovators." While recognizing the need for a "purification" and a straightening out of the party, he probably fears deeper going challenges.

If the debates in the apparatus are so sharp and the stakes so great, that is because compromise on the fundamental questions in the name of collective leadership no longer seems possible. This is leading to paralysis.

In April, Vo Chi Cong, a member of the Political Bureau, already raised this problem in analyzing in front of the Hanoi cadres the delay with which the reforms were being put into practice: "Because of the leadership and the directives, there is no analysis in depth, no realism, no respect for the ideas of subordinates, no synthesizing spirit, no experience of realistic management that could develop what is good, repair the errors and create an infrastructure and an adequate management policy.

"Thus, we have allowed different points of view on economic management to coexist, and this has led us to discordant lines of action, which in turn have undermined the centralized management of the state and limited the autonomy and the creative power of the population and the Economic Base Units."

In Vo Chi Cong's words, "our management is neither centralist in character nor democratic, but a conservatism that consists of prolonging bureaucratic centralism." (8)

Facing the crisis, the VCP congress registered an unprecedented decision — the simultaneous retirement of three historic leaders from the Political Bureau. They are now to be mere "advisors to the Central Committee." They were Truong Chinh (79 years old); Pham Van Dong (80 years old and very sick, who had been wanting to retire for a long time); and Le Duc Tho (76 years old).

Shakeup on leading bodies

Three other Political Bureau members were not elected: General Van Tien Dung (reputed to be a corrupt careerist), Chu Huy Man (former political commissar of the army) and To Huu, who had already been dismissed from the government. By comparison with the Political Bureau elected in 1982, therefore, the present one includes 7 quite new members out of a total of 13.

The Central Committee Secretariat has also undergone a thorough shake-up, with only three of the members elected in 1982 remaining. (See box) On the Central Committee, of 173 members elected at the Sixth Congress (including 49 candidate members), 80 are new.

The average age remains high. Nguyen Van Linh, the new general secretary, is 71. Born in 1915, his real name is Nguyen Van Cuc. He has also been known under the pseudonym Muoi Cuc. He joined in the struggle against French colonialism at a very young age. He was twice arrested and spent 10 years in prison. For 40 years he led the party organization in the Saigon region. He came into the

Central Committee at the Third Congress of the VCP in 1960.

In 1975, holding the post of party secretary for Ho Chi Minh City, he came into the Political Bureau and the Central Committee Secretariat. Defending all the reforms in 1982, he was excluded from the PB and the Secretariat. In 1985, in an exceptional move, he was coopted back onto the Political Committee and later returned to the Secretariat.

Obviously, the composition of the Political Bureau reflects a balancing act. Pham Hung, the number two, 74 years old and minister of the interior, is seen as a leader of the "orthodox," as well as Do Muoi (number four in the Political Bureau's official hierarchy). The main "renovators" are supposed to be Nguyen Van Linh; Vo Van Kiet, 64 years old, the number five figure, chief of planning and linked with Linh in Ho Chi Minh City; and Nguyen Co Thach, in the eighth position, who was only a candidate member in the preceding Political Bureau.

The weight of the cadres long engaged in the struggle in the South and the center-South, in particular during the American war — Mai Chi Tho, Le Duc Anh, Vo Van Kiet, Vo Chi Cong, Pham Hung, Nguyen Van Linh — is notable. The recent reforms have often come from the South. However, the political lines of cleavage do not necessarily coincide with the party backgrounds of those concerned, as the case of Pham Hung shows on one side and that of Nguyen Co Thach on the other.

The "renovators" once again strengthened their positions at this congress. But the simultaneous resignations of Truong Chin and Le Duc Tho seem in the present context to be a compromise measure, confirmed by the fact that the reshuffle expected in the government bodies has been postponed for several months. It is now expected after the election of a new national assembly.

It is only when the government reshuffles are announced that we will find out whether Vo Nguyen Giap, longstanding chief of staff of the army, will regain a notable place in the leadership. Dismissed from the Political Bureau, he was and remains a member of the Central Committee. An advocate of reforms, Giap, however, remains an outsider in the factional struggles. Having been shunted aside, he was not directly implicated in the recent failures, and is probably still respected by a part of the population.

In these last months, the debate

7. In "The urgent tasks in the work of building the party," *Tap Chi Cong San*, May 1986.

8. *Nhan Dan* of April 23, 1986, cited by J. Lambettini, *op cit*.

has focused essentially on economic choices. In the political resolution, the stress was put on the three following tasks: increasing production of foodstuffs, essential consumer goods and of export products.

Traditionally, the VCP used the formula that priority was given to developing heavy industry, based on the development of light industry and agriculture. It was a double-entry formula, leaving the way open for all sorts of concrete interpretations. It has not been replaced by another general formula. But the resolution tries to forestall any new stick-bending for the benefit of heavy industry.

The "intensification of socialist industrialization" is relegated to a "subsequent stage." For the coming period, the three "target programs" mentioned above "represent the essential content of the 1986-90" five-year plan. Consequently, they should "be assigned a great concentration of human and material resources in order to assure their execution."

Indeed, "these three programs determine the orientation for reorganizing the national economy in accordance with a rational structure, first of all a readjustment of the production mechanism and a major readjustment of the investment structure." Agriculture must "really be made the main front."

Otherwise, the resolution sticks to prudent and conservative formulas. It is necessary to "assure the autonomy of the economic base units," to encourage the development of the family economy, to utilize the positive aspect of the small-commodity-production economy" and even to "utilize the private capitalist economy (small capitalism) in some industries and trades, and at the same time to progressively transform them with the various economic forms of state capitalism."

It is necessary to "eliminate private capitalist trade." In a general way, it is necessary to "assure that the state economy asserts its leading role, that, together with the collective economy, it occupies a decisive position in the national economy and dominates the other components of the economy."

It is clear that fundamentally the choice of orientations remains open, to be decided by a struggle that is not yet over. In fact, a traditional frame of reference has been challenged, perhaps in a radical way, without, however, being replaced here and now with an alternative conception of transition.

It is probably significant that the political resolution calls for "the elaboration" by the new Central Committee "of a complete program

for the socialist revolution as a whole." It is necessary to "work out a strategy for socio-economic development and for scientific-technical development." Such a program is to be "presented to the Seventh Party Congress."

It definitely seems that a deep-going debate over the economic tasks of transition is brewing in Vietnam, impelled by the successive failures from 1975 to today, but also stimulated by the re-evaluations underway in countries such as China and the USSR. It is symptomatic that Nguyen Van Linh is sometimes called a "little Gorbachev," or a "Vietnamese Deng Xiaoping."

Relations with the USSR

The Sixth Congress did not discuss problems of Indochinese and international policy in any depth, at least not openly. It is difficult at this point to assess the consequences for Vietnam of the new policy the Gorbachev leadership is undertaking in Asia. It is evident that Soviet discontent and warnings about waste of the aid granted to Vietnam weighed directly in the preparations for this congress.

In August, Truong met Gorbachev in Moscow. In October, the Vietnamese leader publicly and solemnly recognized that the "aid from brother countries" had been partially frittered away. Given its international isolation, Vietnam remains highly dependent on the USSR. The "renovators" have taken advantage of Moscow's discontent to press their argument that it is urgent to set a new course.

At the congress, the Soviet representative, Ligachev, an important member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, finally guaranteed the Vietnamese increased economic aid, which would amount to 12,000 or 13,000 million US dollars for the period 1986-90. The Gorbachev team seems to look not unfavorably on the wind of reform blowing through the VCP.

The political resolution of this last congress offers no innovations by comparison with the two preceding ones on the question of the political regime. (9) Nonetheless, in any transitional society, the struggle to straighten out production, the fight against bureaucracy and the struggle for democracy are intimately linked.

Here the Chinese precedent is significant: the call for "the Fifth Modernization" (democracy), raised by the activists of the Democratic Movement as a condition for achieving the "Four Modernizations" - economic, scientific, technical and military - advocated by Deng Xiaoping.

The demand for democracy manifests itself in Vietnam, even in a press that remains an essentially controlled one. This is attested to by an article in the *Saigon Giai Phong* where the journalist Xuan Thu recounts the problems he had with censorship during and since the war.

In the face of the backlash provoked by the publication of a section criticizing the bureaucracy, his editor in-chief concluded, "From now on, let's criticize the people who piss in the street and we will have less problems." In Xuan Thu's view, "criticism and self-criticism [the usual modes of debate in Vietnam] cannot be isolated from democratization and the role of the press.

"The press has been a flatterer, written according to the wishes at the top rather than those below. The time has come when the press must become a weapon for the party, a tribune for our people. A journalist has to be able to see the truth and tell it; the press has to be a means of control for society." (10)

How, in fact, can the people "play their role of collective master" (the VCP's traditional formula), if it does not have the right to be informed and to denounce the many corrupt cadres who are amassing personal fortunes?

The Vietnamese communities abroad linked to organizations close to the regime are also in ferment. In Germany, for example, Nguyen An recently published an article in the magazine *Dai Nuoc* ("Our Country") that takes up the fundamental problem of the bureaucracy: "Virtue and vice do not spring from the innate character of human beings. If you think well about it, it is bureaucratic centralism that provides fertile ground for the development of opportunism in all its forms." (11)

Thus, while it was not sparing of words about past errors, the congress was much vaguer about the positive steps to be taken and about basic changes of orientation in the future. Nonetheless, this Sixth Congress seems to mark an important turning point, a break in continuity in the history of Vietnamese communism, and to foreshadow a period of political conflict within the party and outside of it. □

9. See the proceedings of the seminar organized in Amsterdam on June 4-6, 1982, by the Transnational Institute on the "problems relating to the evolution of the VCP's line and the relations between the party, state and the population", and the contribution by Pierre Rousset on this theme.

10. 'Saigon Giai Phong' of June 11, 1986, cited in 'Graffiti', No. 25-26, August-September 1986, pp. 10.

11. 'Dai Nuoc,' No. 49, June 1986, cited by Ha Cuong Nghi in 'Chroniques Vietnamiennes,' No. 1, November 1986, p. 10.

Austerity follows November elections

THE NOVEMBER 15 elections in Brazil were a victory for the government and, notably, for the main ruling party, the Brazilian Democratic Party (PMDB).

The PMDB won around 260 seats out of the 487 that comprise the Chamber of Deputies, and 40 out of 49 seats in the Senate. They now hold 22 of the 23 governor's posts and the big majority of parliamentary deputies in the various states.

JOAO MACHADO

The second largest party is the Liberal Front (PFL), also part of the ruling Democratic Alliance coalition. The only opposition parties, the Democratic Labour Party (PDT) and the Workers Party (PT), together had 45 deputies and a Senate representative elected. But they didn't win any governor's posts, the PDT losing the Rio de Janeiro state government headed by its main leader, Leonel Brizola.

The government immediately interpreted these results as approval for its economic programme and the Cruzado economic plan, and as a vote of confidence for the president of the republic, Jose Sarney. This was in spite of the fact that until 1984, Sarney had been the president of the party representing the former military dictatorship, the Democratic and Social Party (PDS), and that he joined the PMDB in order to be able to become vice-president under Tancredo Neves. (1)

Boosted by the election results, the government introduced some so-called corrections in the Cruzado plan under the name of Cruzado II. These were announced on November 21, less than a week after the elections.

Popular reaction was immediate and astonishing. Violent demonstrations broke out all over the country. The usually calm capital, Brasilia, saw the biggest demonstration in its history on November 27.

Confidence in Sarney rapidly disappeared. Even many PMDB personalities, including some newly-elected governors, criticized the economic measures. The PFL has officially stated that it was not consulted.

Taken together, these contradictory events and sharp changes in public opinion prove that things are more complicated than Sarney thought.

There is little doubt that the main reason for the electoral victory of the PMDB and the government in general was the approval of the majority of the population for the Cruzado plan, promulgated on February 28, 1986. What appealed above all was the ending of inflation through a price freeze. The plan also contained measures to freeze wages, but this was not seen as important, even though it meant an "amnesty" on the wages policy of the dictatorship. Wage rises compensating for past losses were expressly forbidden after February 28.

In fact, the contents of the plan regarding wages were overshadowed by the exceptional growth of the economy (prompting businesses to give bigger wage rises than those foreseen by the plan) and by some governmental measures — light wage increases and a sliding scale of wages to compensate for an inflation rate that had been 20%.

That did not prevent the trade-union movement from fighting on the question of wages. Strikes were more numerous in 1986 than in 1985. But they were more localized and more scattered and, in consequence, had less social impact than in the previous year. Furthermore, the government and the bosses adopted a more flexible strategy consisting of giving in to local strikes that had little publicity in the national media, and cracking down hard on the larger, more important strikes. Even compared with the last period of the dictatorship, the repression of strikes was much more severe. This created the impression that there was a strong government and no alternative.

During the last quarter of 1986, things began to change. Some vital

consumer products began to become scarce, like meat and milk, and the bourgeoisie and traders argued that demand was mounting too rapidly and that costs were rising. To the official inflation rate — a little under 2% per month — was added generalized speculation and huge queues of customers that formed immediately as meat or milk appeared in the shops.

For many, whether economic experts or trade unionists, it became obvious that the Cruzado plan was no longer working and that the government was preparing austerity measures, which came into force at the end of November.

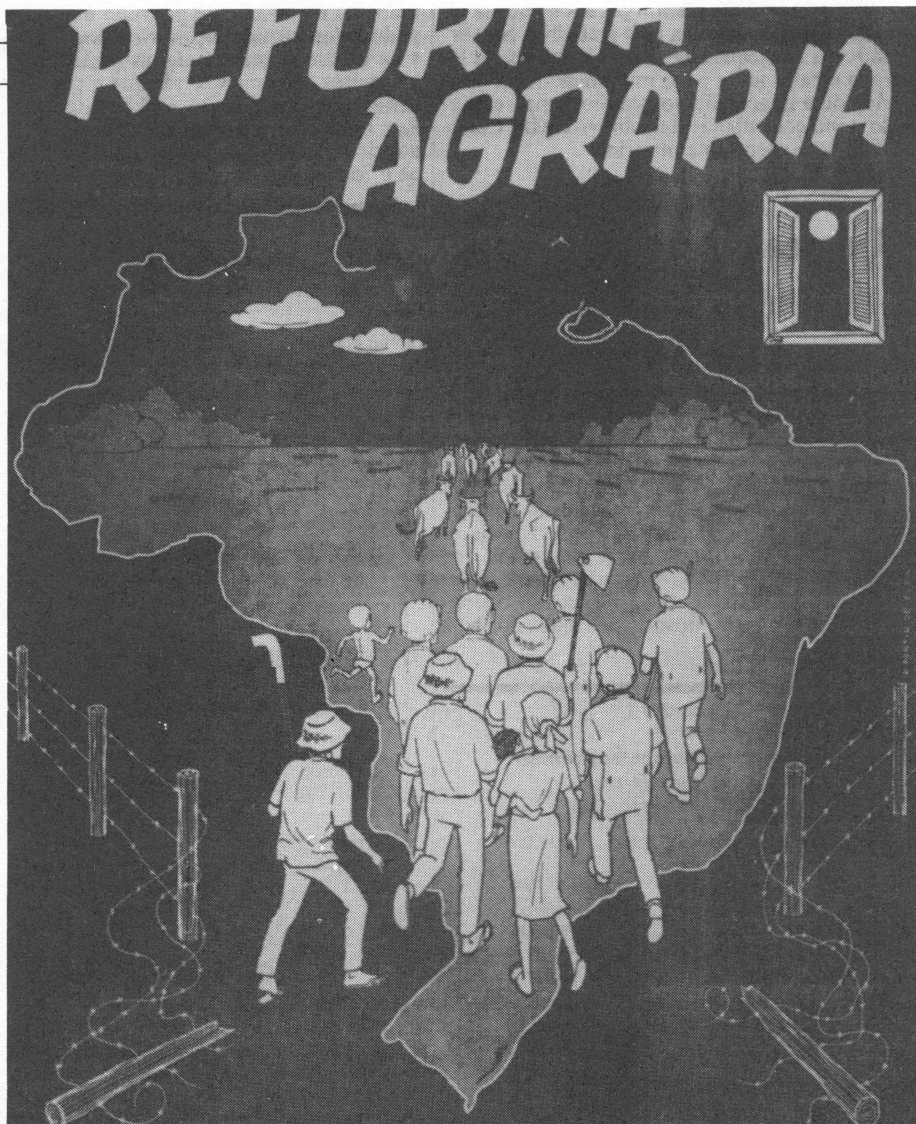
In announcing these evidently unpopular decisions after the elections, the government tried hard to find some scapegoats for the rampant shortages. They chose cattle rearers, accusing them of hiding the "fat cows". After some negotiations that came to nothing, they announced that confiscations of cattle would begin, and that this task would be carried out by the federal police. This police force, trained during the dictatorship to hunt communists and other "subversives", was not really comfortable with its new job of tracking down the big landowners. This comedy did not get a lot of meat into the shops, but it was great for the TV programmes.

Government claims success of Cruzado plan

Likewise, the government made much of the benefits produced by the growth in demand, exaggerating them and saying that they were the result of the Cruzado plan.

A large part of the population therefore had every reason to believe, until the elections, that the Cruzado plan would really be able to end inflation and that all the problems were due to speculators. As for the underlying problems of the Brazilian economy — the foreign debt and the domestic public debt — people had confidence in the government, which claimed that they were under control. The government went as far as holding back the catastrophic figures on October's trade balance until after the elections.

1. Tancredo Neves, the PMDB's candidate, was elected president of the republic on January 15, 1985, thanks to the vote of the majority of an electoral college established by the dictatorship. Dying shortly after his investiture, he was replaced by Jose Sarney. On the "democratic transition" in Brazil and Neves' election, see 'International Viewpoint' No. 60, October 1, 1984 and No. 71, March 11, 1985.



There are other reasons for the electoral victory of the PMDB. The most simple is that it was already the majority party in the country after having its ranks swollen by a large influx of politicians who were members of the Democratic and Social Party (PDS). For example, half the PMDB's candidates for governor's posts had been members of the PDS.

To further reinforce these "established advantages", the PMDB and the PFL pushed an electoral law through the congress that was much less democratic than that at the time of the last general elections under the dictatorship in 1982. Free campaign time on the television and radio was divided according to existing parliamentary representation. In Sao Paulo, for example, where the Workers Party (PT) had the bulk of its broadcasting time, at peak viewing time in the evening it had 2 minutes and 55 seconds as compared with 20 minutes for the PMDB, out of a televised election programme of one hour.

On top of this, as in all bourgeois elections, there was the question of money. The PMDB, the PFL, the PDS and the PTB invested considerable

sums in electoral propaganda, out of all proportion to the amounts spent by the PT or even the PDT.

However, the extent of the victory of the PMDB should be seen in context. There was a noticeable increase in the number of blank and void votes — 10 per cent for the governor's elections and more than 30 per cent for the deputies. The PMDB has gained the majority in the Chamber without having the majority of the votes.

The final factor is that these elections were marked by an overall progression of the Workers Party. Luis Inacio de Silva, "Lula", was the candidate who gained the most votes in the country, with 651,763 votes against 590,873 for the second-placed Ulysses Guimaraes, president of the PMDB and of the Chamber of Deputies.

If support for the government paid off for the PMDB, and to a certain extent for the PFL, the situation is very different for the parties of the left who supported the government, as it also was for the so-called left of the PMDB itself. In general these parties supported the candidates of the PMDB.

For the Brazilian Communist Party

(PCB, pro-Soviet) and the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdB, pro-Albanian), the election was a catastrophe. This isn't hard to explain.

Until 1982 these parties were in the PMDB. They used to criticize very strongly those like the PT who had an independent policy, accusing them of dividing the movement. They presented the PMDB as being the guarantors of the "democratic transition". They supported President Sarney, the Cruzado plan and the governor's candidates of the PMDB.

Where the PCB and the PCdB had their own lists, where they did not have electoral coalitions with the PMDB (which did not always accept such coalitions), and where they did not have candidates on the PMDB slates themselves, not a single candidate from either of these two parties was elected.

Bad results for PMDB "left"

On the other hand, in a couple of states where the PCB and the PCdB were able to make coalitions with the PMDB, they managed to elect two federal deputies. The PCdB had an extra candidate elected in a state where it had affiliated to the PMDB. It is probable that this also happened in the case of the PCB.

The Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), the other left party that supported the government, also obtained very bad results. In practice this organization hardly exists — rather it is a grouping of social-democratically inclined personalities very close to the PMDB. Where it had its own slate the PSB had elected no candidates. Where it stood in a coalition with the PMDB, it won two seats, one of which was in the Senate.

In general those who claimed to represent a left within the PMDB got very bad results. It is not yet possible to make an overall assessment of those elected from this party, but what can be said is that practically all those deputies known as "the left of the PMDB" were not re-elected. This includes those who left the PT in 1985 to join this party.

This marginalization of the left of the PMDB is logical. It is the sign of the consolidation of a patronage system in a party that lives mainly off handouts from the government, and which today harbours a large number of old servants of the dictatorship.

In Brazil, the only organizations on the left with any national influence are the PT and the PDT.

The Democratic Workers Party (PDT), weakened by the loss of the

government of Rio de Janeiro, still got 27 candidates elected on the federal level. The disillusionment caused by the Cruzado plan II will no doubt help to strengthen it. Finally the PDT has Brizola, or it would be more accurate to say the PDT is Brizola, one of the most charismatic political leaders of the country along with Lula.

The PDT should be considered a bourgeois party, although it is linked to the social democracy of the Second International. The PDT also enjoys a small trade union influence and supports the United Workers Confederation (CUT). But its links with sections of the bourgeoisie are much stronger. It has recruited quite well among politicians of the dictatorship. An example is the president of the PDT in Sao Paulo, Ademar de Barros Filho.

In one of its most important constituencies after Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, the PDT made a coalition with the PDS. This alliance, moreover, was a total failure for it. By this policy it lost many more votes than it won, all the more so because in Rio Grande do Sul the PDT is dominated by the big land-owners.

In these elections, the Workers Party (PT) got rather good results, although they were less than the actual possibilities and its social weight in the country should have allowed. Nationally, the PT got around 6.5% of the vote, compared to over 3% in 1982. (2) At the time of the municipal elections in 1985, the PT had an average national vote of just over 10%, but these elections were held mostly in just the state capitals, which makes a comparison difficult.

The most significant factor is that the PT showed a clear growth outside of the state of Sao Paulo, which, in 1982 alone accounted for 71% of the party's national vote. PT's national average of 3% of the vote in 1982 covered up some major fluctuations: 10% in Sao Paulo, 3% in Rio de Janeiro and 2% in Minas Gerais — states where it won some seats. But it took less than 1% of the vote in all the other states.

In 1986, while the PT stagnated in Sao Paulo — although thanks to the rise in blank and void votes it won more seats — its strength grew in the other states. On average, outside Sao Paulo, the PT's votes were multiplied four-fold! The PT has therefore become a national party, and no longer essentially just a party of Sao Paulo winning some votes in other states in the south-east or south of the country.

The PT strengthened itself even inside some states. It has always been

strongest in the capitals and the big industrial towns, but in these elections it also got good results in the small municipalities, getting a lot of votes from agricultural workers. Significantly, a number of PT deputies are agricultural workers coming from the interior regions of states.

The Cruzado plan II essentially consisted of price rises, a policy of nearly daily devaluation of the cruzado in relation to the US dollar, limiting the mechanisms of the sliding scale of wages and changing the official price index.

The price rises — 60% for petrol, 80% for cars, between 45-120% for cigarettes, 100% for drinks, 25% for sugar and so on — were all accompanied by tax increases on the same products. The government also profited from raising the charges for public services — 35% for electricity and telephones and 80% for postal charges. The change in the official calculations of the price index simply meant no longer taking account of products like petrol, drinks and cigarettes whose prices had just leapt spectacularly.

The explanation given by the government to justify these measures was extremely simple. It was that with the implementation of the first Cruzado plan, demand grew too much and it was necessary therefore to reduce it. To achieve this, the government had raised the prices on products essentially consumed by the middle classes because its aim was precisely to maintain income redistributed by the plan.

Basic economic problems not tackled

However, this time the people were not so naive as the government thought. Everybody understood that the price freeze was over and inflation had returned. It is wrong to say that only the middle layers were affected. The price increases also affected the mass of people, and it took a bit of nerve to claim that the price rise for a product such as petrol did not have an impact on other prices. Likewise, everybody understood that the government was beginning a policy of cutting wages by limiting the operation of the sliding scale and changing the method of calculating inflation, a common practice under the dictatorship.

Everyone could see that the big economic problems of the country were not those that the government talked about. Along with the impossibility of having a real price freeze in the framework of a market econ-

omy, the Cruzado plan has not tackled basic problems like those of the enormous external debt, the budget deficit or the internal debt. (3)

Brazil's external debt, which has risen to more than 100,000 million US dollars, obliges the country to pay more than 10,000 million dollars each year simply in interest charges. It has been possible to pay out this amount over the past years because there has been a large surplus trade balance. But to do this the government has had to issue money, thereby aggravating inflation.

With the external debt was mixed up the question of the internal debt and the budget deficit, permanent sources of inflationist pressures. In fact, a large part of the internal debt arises simply out of the need for paying the staggering external debt.

The Cruzado II plan is in fact a recognition by the government of the failure of the first plan. The only points that they have in common are a refusal to grapple with the problems of the external debt and other key economic questions. Cruzado II is a classic austerity plan, with price and tax rises to reduce demand, wage cuts and other measures to stimulate exports.

A very complex period is opening in Brazil. The governmental parties have complete control of the country at the institutional level, of the federal government and of the states, with an absolute majority in the national congress, which will have constituent powers. But this government has also lost much of its prestige, and popular trade-union struggles, constant since the beginning of the "New Republic", seem to be on the rise.

After the big popular demonstration in Brasilia on November 27, a national day-long strike was called for December 12. This was relatively successful, since according to the National Information Service (SNI), nearly 10 million workers were on strike. The national trade-union federation, the CUT, claimed 25 million strikers. This was the first ever general strike in Brazil.

But if the social movement is growing, so is the repression. The police moved hard against the 24-hour strike, notably making a number of arrests. We are heading for some sharp class confrontations. □

2. These percentages do not correspond to the percentage of those elected because the electoral law gives advantages to the strongest parties and the most underpopulated states.

On the electoral campaign and the PT's results in 1982, see 'IV' No. 1, March 1, 1982 and No. 17, November 15, 1982.

3. On the debt question in Latin America, see the article by Ernest Mandel in 'IV' No. 98, May 5, 1986.

Growing pressures in the Basque country

IN JUST A FEW months major changes have occurred in the Basque country, which were reflected in the results of the November elections for the Basque autonomous parliament. The following article by a leader of the Fourth Internationalist organization in the part of the Basque country in the Spanish state, the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (LKI - Revolutionary Communist League), takes stock of the new situation.

JOSE BIKILA

One of the key developments in these last months was undoubtedly the split in the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which occurred shortly after the June 22, 1986, general elections. In this poll, the PNV lost 80,000 votes by comparison with the 1982 elections that put the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) in power in Madrid, and 150,000 votes by comparison with the February 1984 elections to the Basque autonomous parliament.

One explanation for this sharp setback has to be sought in the legislative pact the PNV signed with the PSOE branch in the Basque country in December 1984. This was correctly seen by the party's traditional voters as representing an alliance with Spanish centralists at the expense of the interests of the Basque people.

The new organization that emerged from the split, Eusko Alkartuna (EA - Basque Solidarity), led by the former president of the Basque government, the "lendakari" Carlos Garaikoetxea, made a spectacular appearance on the electoral scene in the November election, getting 15.85% of the vote and 14 seats.

While the PNV remains the leading party in the Basque country, it now represents only 23.64% of the vote, as against 41.70% in 1984, and it has lost 15 seats. This party was founded 90 years ago by Sabino Arana, who is considered the father of Basque nationalism. In view of the weight it has exercised in Basque society, it is clear how major a development this was!

The second feature of these elections was evidently the advance of Herri Batasuna (HB - The People United), the public and legal expression of the armed organization Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA - Basque Homeland and Freedom). The latter consolidated the score it achieved in the June 1986 general elections, winning

231,000 votes, as against 210,000 in 1982, and electing five deputies and one senator.

It was on the basis of this increased political strength that HB launched a proposal for negotiations with the Spanish government in order to seek a political solution to the Basque crisis. Obviously, ETA would be an integral part of such negotiations.

This political offensive made a significant impact in the Basque country, as shown by the demonstration of support for it organized by HB on October 25, which brought out more than 25,000 people.

This success of this demonstration was all the more striking in view of the following two facts. On that very day, ETA assassinated the military governor of Guipuzkoa, Rafael Ganido Gil, right out in the open on a San Sebastian street, also killing his wife and his son and wounding 12 passers by.

ETA military actions stepped up

On the same day, the PNV held another demonstration to protest against the kidnapping of one of its best known members, the industrialist Lucio Agerinagalde Aizpurua, who was seized by ETA to press demands for payment of the "revolutionary tax." But this demonstration brought out only 10,000 people.

In recent months, ETA has stepped up its military actions, showing that it could strike in the capital of the Spanish state itself. On July 14, it exploded a bomb in a Guardia Civil bus right in the heart of Madrid. And a week later, on July 21, ETA's "Spanish Command" launched a mor-

tar attack on the Ministry of Defence!

These military actions were a stinging rebuff to a government that regularly boasts of having dismantled the revolutionary nationalist organization. They were no doubt greeted with sympathy in Euskadi itself, which is subjected to emergency, so-called anti-terrorist laws, and a veritable police occupation.

On the other hand, ETA's execution on September 10 of Maria Dolores Catarain, known as "Yoyes," a former leader of the armed organization who had accepted the government's offer of "rehabilitation," (1) caused profound social and emotional shock in Euskadi. (2)

Nonetheless, the HB's gains in these last elections show that the radical rejection of Spanish centralism and its institutions represented by ETA is a factor in the Basque question. What is more, it would be wrong to think that this rejection is limited to the most radical strata. It should not be forgotten that in the referendum over Spain staying in NATO, Euskadi voted 65.17 per cent "no," a result that cannot be compared with that in any other part of the Spanish state.

Today, in Euskadi no party holds a majority. The PSOE's Pyrrhic victory has obliged it to try to negotiate with the PNV, for the moment without success. The crisis is continuing.

Imitating the expression of the Russian revolutionists about Czarist Russia, Claudio Maurin, a Catalan communist, the founder and leader of the Workers Party of Marxist Unity (POUM), called Spain a "prison house of peoples." (3)

One of the first Basque communists, Larranaga, wanted to find a proletarian internationalist answer both to the Spanish centralist right, which said that a "red Spain" was better than a "dismembered one," and to the nationalist right, which said "all Spaniards are anti-Basque, regardless of whether they are on the right or on the left."

Larranaga deliberately chose a

1. The rehabilitation operation consists of offering exiled or imprisoned ETA activists a chance to get out of prison or return to the country if they pledge to respect the law and renounce the armed struggle. It is an operation designed to break organized resistance at a time when the government says that it is unwilling to negotiate with ETA or grant the right to self-determination.

2. Nonetheless, HB got 23.79% of the vote in Yoyes own village, Urdizia, becoming the leading political organization in the locality.

3. The POUM, a Spanish revolutionary organization, was formed in 1934 out of a fusion of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc led by Maurin and the Communist Left led by Andreu Nin, who was murdered by the Stalinists in 1937.

provocative answer: "A red Spain would be a dismembered Spain, because a socialist revolution must put an end to the reactionary alliance of ruling classes that created a state oppressing workers and nations alike under its despotic yoke."

Both of these communists were right. The Spanish state is the product of the alliance of ruling classes, both those that grew out of feudal vestiges and those thrown up by the fitful first starts of capitalist development on this peninsula.

This alliance includes Basque big capital, which had an interest in the "Spanish national" market for its products and capital and in the protection it could get from the central government against financial or military powers regarded as foreign.

The longstanding backwardness of the Spanish economy closed off the possibility for a transition from the old power structures inherited from feudalism, which occurred in other European countries when national states were formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Partly as a result of this, the weak Castilian bourgeoisie abandoned the idea of creating a nation state, either in the Jacobin centralist way of revolutionary France or through a federalist solution, which could have been achieved through a junction with the Catalan nation.

The Catalans had in fact a history and consciousness of their own, but also a national economic development more advanced than that of the Basques.

The result of the Castilian bourgeoisie's incapacity was reflected by the forced assimilation of various peoples, who found their special characteristics, their culture and their own institutions being liquidated in the name of a fictitious "Spanishness," an imperialist oppressor mystique.

The subsequent evolution of this state in the form of Francoist dictatorship violently aggravated this problem. After the end of the dictatorship, the setting up of autonomous authorities in 1979 by the bourgeois democratic state — reflecting the modernization of Spanish capitalism and its integration into the international capitalist market — did not eliminate the problem of national oppression.

The so-called national reconciliation, on which the post-Francoist transition has been based, has never existed in Euskadi, since the legitimacy of the Spanish nation and the institutions on which it is founded are challenged. Out of this denial of legitimacy to a Spanish nation has developed a distinct alternative conception, a consciousness of different nationhood.

The Basque working class has grown both out of waves of immigration from other parts of the Spanish state and from the proletarianization of extensive layers of the original Basque population. In this complex and sometimes contradictory process, it been remolded in a way that at the moment is not reflected by a single identification with respect to its national consciousness.

This phenomenon is still more prominent in its political expressions. There are unions that justify their existence on the basis of the national question. (4)

No radical changes after fall of dictatorship

Since the working class is at the center of the national question in Euskadi, its unity and class independence are linked to its taking a revolutionary position in favor of the emancipation of the Basque people, whose social and political vanguard it must aspire to become.

The so-called Spanish transition has aroused a deepgoing frustration among all those who saw the fall of the dictatorship as meaning radical social, economic and political changes. From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, this operation was conducted in a masterly way. It is an object of admiration now to all the ruling classes that have to face the problem of carrying through a major political change, or a transition from dictatorship from parliamentary democracy.

But from the standpoint of the workers, of those fighting to end the manifold oppression of bourgeois society, the Spanish transition should serve as a lesson about the policy of the traditional working-class leaderships, and especially social democracy.

The PSOE has never understood anything about the national question. It has always regarded it as an irritant to be neutralized by political concessions. Today, it is shamelessly taking up the most rancid values of a bourgeois nationalism scarcely refurbished from the days of Francoism.

"The interest of Spain" proclaimed by the PSOE is nothing more than a bare-faced defence of the interests of the ruling class, of its rapaciousness both at home and abroad. This is shown both by the PSOE keeping Spain in NATO, its policy of austerity and its repression of the revolutionary Basque patriots.

In some respects, the PSOE has gone further than the Center Democratic Union [UCD, which led the government that made the transition from Francoism] in its Spanish nationalist language, in attacking

Basque revolutionary nationalism and even in steadily cutting back the margin of autonomy previously granted to the bourgeois Basque nationalists. (5)

To understand what is happening in Euskadi, it has to be remembered that the Spanish constitution, the Carta Magna — which put the final stamp of legitimacy on the pact and consensus of all Spanish political forces with the system — was not approved in Euskadi, while it was adopted in the rest of the Spanish state by a "yes" vote of 59.4%.

At the time of the referendum to ratify this constitution on December 6, 1978, the PNV called for abstention, saying that this constitution ignored "the historic rights of the Basque people." The left nationalist forces and the revolutionary communist forces called for voting "no." The results of the referendum were very clear — the Basque people rejected the constitution.

Shortly after this, revealing their basically weak-kneed character, despite occasional gestures of rebellion, the bourgeois nationalists and the moderate nationalist left, that is, the PNV and Euskadiko Ezquerria [EE — Basque left, a group originating in ETA that evolved to the right] concluded a regional autonomy pact with the central government within the limits of the constitution. (6) In so doing, they hoped to acquire a certain margin of maneuver in assigning and using the powers to be transferred from the central state.

Thus, the Gernika Statute of Autonomy, ratified by the October 25, 1979, referendum, came into being, as the product of a post-constitutional pact between the UCD and the PNV. It was backed by the rest of the forces in parliament, but not by HB. This alliance gave its assent to the transfer of certain powers within the strict limits of the constitution.

4. The results of the recent trade-union elections in Euskadi are significant. LA-STUV (close to the PNV, moderate Basque nationalist) got 31.8%, as against 26.54% in 1982; the UGT (dominated by the PSOE) got 20.8%, as against 22.28% in 1982; the Workers Commissions (in which the Communist Party has historically been the dominant force) got 17%, as against 17.58%; and finally the LAB, (close to HB) got 10.4%, against 6.79% in 1982, which now gives it the right to participate in collective bargaining discussions.

5. The UCD is the party of Adolfo Suarez, the politician who carried out the transition after Franco's death in 1975 and signed the Moncloa Pact in 1977 with the PSOE and the Spanish Communist Party, the pact that sounded the death knell for hopes of radical changes in Spain.

6. Euskadiko Ezkerria (EE) was formed initially by former ETA activists, the "politico-military" wing, who abandoned the struggle. This organization has subsequently evolved more and more toward reformism, absorbing a large part of the Basque Communist Party.

The actual extent of these powers was to be determined by the vicissitudes of politics and the evolution in the relationship of forces between the central power and the Basque people. What cannot, however, vary because it is inscribed in this statute is acceptance of the Spanish state, the monarchy, the "indivisibility" of Spain — that is the denial of the Basque people's right to self-determination.

Coming to power in mid-1982, in the wake of the attempted coup d'état of February 23, 1981, by Tejero and Milans del Bosch, the PSOE began to take on the task of slowing down the extension of powers to the autonomous governments, interpreting the statute in a restrictive way. This centralist tightening up was to touch off a crisis within the PNV, which had pinned its strategic identity on the statute and on the development of autonomous authorities.

Radical nationalism gains strength

The PNV staked its political future on the autonomy statute. For the PNV, the pact was a path that could lead to growing powers for the autonomous government. By following this course, it thought that at the same time it could head off any overly turbulent national awakening.

Unfortunately for the bourgeois nationalists, the history of the statute became a tormented one. The problems started right after it was signed, even though for some time the PNV was able to maneuver skillfully and thereby gained prestige among very broad sections of the Basque population.

With the passage of the Basic Law on the Harmonization of the Autonomization of the Autonomous Authorities (LOAPA), the social democratic steamroller started to roll (7). The process of autonomy started to flag, along with the conviction that this transfer of powers could last for very long. Parallel to this, radical nationalism gained strength, occupied more ground and appeared as leader of anti-centralist and nationalist resistance actions.

Malaise grew and sharpened in the PNV inasmuch as while it was showing itself incapable of responding to the centralist encroachments, it was also encountering frictions between contradictory political and economic interests engendered by the provisions of the statute itself.

The Historical Territories Law, which legitimizes the powers of the Basque government and the provin-

cial authorities, assumed its full importance. It was this law that determined the division of powers between the government of the Basque autonomous area and its component provinces. This brought on a split between the party and its representatives in the provincial authorities' apparatus and in that of the Basque autonomous government.

This gave rise to many political zig-zags and personal clashes and finally led to political paralysis leading finally to a split and the formation of the EA.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude from this that there are now two parties with two distinct political lines and occupying different political spaces. One of the features of both organizations, the PNV and EA, is that they have a very hard time putting forward distinctive strategic perspectives of their own, other than verbal clashes or vote-hustling rhetoric,

ETA was formed in 1960, during the dictatorship, in reaction against the paralysis and conservatism of the PNV, which left the field open for a new young radical nationalism.

Rapidly, ETA's radical message and its forms of armed resistance came to be influenced by a working class that was very active in that period and put forward the whole range of social and political demands. This working class action made it possible for class-struggle tendencies to develop within ETA, some of which led to the splits. (8)

At the end of the dictatorship in 1975, ETA enjoyed an indisputable and deserved prestige, a broad social and political influence, although it was divided into several branches. The political transition that led to the dashing of the workers' aspirations enabled ETA, through continuing the armed struggle and at the same time creating political instruments such as the Patriotic Socialist Coordinating Committee (KAS) and HB, to organize and give political and electoral expression to the broad mass movement that followed it. (9)

With the ebb of the working class and its political atomization after 1977, the role that ETA played, not only in the national but also in social and political resistance, increased.

Today, around ETA we find a mass current that upholds radical positions of opposition to the present constitutional process, which has experience in social, environmentalist and workers' struggles and which exercises a strong power of attraction for vanguard activists of various origins.

Of course, the resistance to centralism is not limited to HB and ETA. There are revolutionary communist

working-class organizations such as our party, the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea and the Communist Movement of Euskadi (EMK). (10) There are also social movements that have arisen out of the fight against women's oppression, the struggle against NATO and the working-class opposition to the bosses' plans for restructuring.

However, it is an objective fact that HB forms the basic backbone of nationalist resistance. The same phenomenon operates on the electoral level, where HB represents the resistance to the system, a practical option for casting an effective radical vote.

Another question seems important. All the forces in the regime accuse ETA and HB of lacking any mandate to be the standard-bearer of the "Basque people's interests" and to use methods of struggle — armed struggle, among others — that they consider incompatible with democratic conditions. As we all know, democracy must be based on dialogue and the rules of democratic behavior, of which of course only the ruling bourgeoisie is the judge! This charge has no validity from the standpoint of elementary democracy.

The facts that the constitution was not ratified in Euskadi and that the Autonomy Statute was presented as "a first step toward progress" remove all doubt about the legitimacy of the struggle for the right of self-determination. The debate then has to be over the political means to be employed.

Furthermore, it is absurd to claim that ETA is unrepresentative. Everyone knows that it is the spearhead of a mass current that can carry out successful general strikes when necessary, as it did at the time of the murder of Santi Bruouard, an HB leader; as well as after murder of Zabalza, who "disappeared" while in the hands of the Guardia Civil. It is the third largest electoral force in Euskadi, and with the crisis of the PNV it is certainly the biggest in some

7. Under the pretext of "levelling out" the various autonomous authorities, this law, passed in 1982, was designed to reduce the powers of the Basque and Catalan autonomous governments. It was clearly a concession to the armed forces, an attempt to show them that the "message" of the February 21 attempted coup had been understood.

8. The result of one of these splits, the one in 1970, was ETA-VI, which later fused with the Liga Komunista Revolucionaria (the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state) to form the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (Revolutionary Communist League), our party.

9. The KAS is a political program that HB put forward in that election. Its three most important points are the following: self-determination, reinclusion of the province of Navarra in the Basque area, and amnesty.

10. The Spanish Communist Move-

Basque provinces.

However, above all, ETA is a genuine political-military force, to some extent a counterpower. With its armed capacity, it combines mass actions and electoral campaigns, thereby gaining a far greater weight than would be indicated by each of its activities taken separately.

All of this makes ETA a rare phenomenon in Europe, one that presents similarities with the IRA. It has nothing to do with the typical terrorism of small armed groups — such as the Red Brigades in Italy or the Red Army Faction in West Germany — that have attempted to apply tactics of urban guerrilla warfare in the hope of having an impact on social resistance movements, or of becoming catalysts.

Organizations anchored in processes of national and social liberation — in the case of Europe, in Euskadi and Ireland — have managed to root themselves in a complex process combining manifold forms of resistance, including armed resistance. Sentimental and social ties have formed that create a special consciousness.

It is no accident that for the thousands of people who support ETA the activists of the Basque organization are seen as *gudariak*, Basque soldiers continuing the fight that their forbears waged in 1936, and successors as well of those who in their own way, even if it was wrong, defended Basque liberties during the Carlist wars. (11) This is a whole melange of patriotic traditionalism and anti-capitalist revolutionary ideas, incomprehensible if viewed through the narrow spectacles of prejudgements. But they constitute an original revolutionary experience, if communists can understand its potential and introduce their own point of view into this general process of national and social liberation. For us in Euskadi, this is at once a challenge and a hope.

I already pointed out that the present situation is characterized not only by the forms of bourgeois centralist aggression and the role of revolutionary nationalism but also the working class losing its social and political leading role. The Basque working class has been pushed back into its strongholds of resistance, having dissipated its strength by relying on a vote for parties that offer less and less of an alternative. (This of course is not true of those workers who vote for HB on their own or in response to the appeals of revolutionists.)

It is in the context of this resistance struggle precisely that some of ETA's strategic limitations show up most clearly, in particular certain tendencies to put military considera-

tions above political ones. This is particularly striking when the question arises of the relations, both inside and outside of Euskadi, between the Basque revolutionary nationalist organization and strata of the population that are not in principle either for or against negotiations. Every time ETA carries out attacks that are hard to understand or provoke negative reactions, such layers become vulnerable to government manipulation.

The execution of Yoyes was a typical military response to a delicate and complicated problem — how to combat politically the lure of "rehabilitation"? Moreover, the assassination of the military governor of Guipuzkoa on the very day when HB had called for a demonstration for negotiations favored the development of a psychological climate that threatened to reduce the size of the demonstration.

Basque people need solidarity

In fact, a whole series of specific features of ETA's ideology impel it to subordinate the needs of social struggles to its military strategy. It is this subordination that is the fundamental problem, not any so-called substitutionism for mass action, because ETA has always sought to mobilize the masses, in which it has a compelling interest.

Today still, as in the dark days of Francoism, the Basque people need solidarity. Some 500 Basque militants are in the prisons of "Spanish democracy." The refugees in France face a desperate situation. Stepping into the breach opened up by the French Socialist Party when it was in power, the right-wing Chirac government is trying to expel all the refugees from northern Euskadi (wrongly called the French Basque country by some) and from French territory in general.

The refugees are being expelled to Africa, to Latin America, where more than one has been interrogated by the Spanish police, and above all extradited them to the Spanish state. Following a plan drawn up long ago, the Spanish government treated the first refugees to be extradited well. It even made a show of relatively fair trials and released some unimportant prisoners in order to show that human rights would be respected. But now this policy is over.

Today nobody is getting out of prison. Being brought before a judge is a mere formality. And all the prisoners without exception are suffering ill-treatment, if not torture. One

of the last to be extradited, Augustin Azkarate, told the judge that he was "on the brink of death during his interrogation." In view of his lamentable physical state, the judge ordered his transfer to the prison hospital. At first, the police tried to prevent this but they were finally forced by the judge's insistence to accept it.

Torture, this violation of the most elementary rights of the person, is common in the Spanish jails. It is, moreover, creating a lot of tensions among the Basque population and the majority of Basque judges. (12) The latter are faced with this reality every day and cannot avoid it.

One of the most recent conflicts was over the fact that Judge Elisabet Huertas noted that the Guardia Civil command was obstructing an inquiry into a complaint of torture lodged by the father of a Basque refugee. The judge then resorted to citing 60 members of the Guardia Civil. This challenge touched off a resounding scandal in police circles. The colonel in command of the Guardia Civil, the minister of the interior and the minister of justice all sought to get the judge's order quashed. This attitude aroused the unanimous opposition of the judges, who saw it as a violation of the independence of the judiciary.

The government responded by pushing through a bill that limited the powers of the regular courts by creating a special tribunal for the forces of order. This law is deemed unconstitutional by the Basque autonomous government.

Such is the real face of the "democracy" offered by a government that enjoys the support of all the European bourgeoisies. It is important that the working people of Europe understand that this government is loathed by many thousands of Basques because of its undemocratic character. For the majority of the Basque people, it is suspect, because if it represents anything, it is only state centralism and certainly not the Basque people. □

ment's organization in the Basque Country. Our comrades of the LCR have consistent relations with this organization in the rest of the Spanish state.

11. *The Carlist wars were nineteenth century civil wars, waged with particular persistence and violence in the Basque country, in opposition to modernization of the Spanish state. An aspect was the defence of local particularisms accepted within the feudal system but unacceptable to those who wanted to build a state on the model of the bourgeois nation states. — IV.*

12. *The demonstration for negotiations was initially banned by the civil government of the province of Vizcaya. HB opposed the ban, and the judge concerned granted its petition, arguing that this ban was in violation of freedom of expression. This case was interpreted as a new clash between the executive and judicial branches over the Basque country.*

“A union-sponsored lockout”

IT IS NOW over a year and a half since workers at the Hormel meat-packing plant in Austin, Minnesota, began their strike against wage cuts and changes in work practices. The strike has become a national focus for workers wanting to fight for jobs and a living wage and against undemocratic and bureaucratic trade-union organization. (1)

Ben Stone interviewed two of the strikers on November 20. Jim Guyette was suspended as president of the strikers' union branch, Local P-9, when the parent union placed it under trusteeship. Ray Rogers is the director of Corporate Campaign, which acts as a consultant body to unions under attack from corporations.

Question. Since the history of P-9 has been pretty well publicized, let us open with the question as to where P-9 stands right now in its struggle with the Hormel Company?

Guyette. Well, the struggle involves not only the Hormel Company, but the United Food & Commercial Workers' International Union (UFCW), which is doing the bidding of the company at this point. The company and the international officials are both saying that the boycott of Hormel products has to stop, which tells us that the boycott is having an effect on the company. We know the company is laying off people in other plants. We know the company has sharply reduced its production in the Austin plant and other plants.

The company refuses to put anybody back to work. And it's the international union which has now admitted in a letter that they did not negotiate anybody's jobs back and don't anticipate anybody getting back to work, as well. The international union has been in bed with the company for too long.

The situation now can be best characterized as the first-ever union-sponsored lockout. We have an international union that is going to the courts to circumvent our democratic local and destroy the strike itself; that is taking donations sent to us by other unions; and which pays people 40 to 50 US dollars a week to cross picket lines.

Rogers. The UFCW has put P-9 into receivership. We want to get that reversed, get our building back and get the democratic process going again. There's no question that the

only thing that has allowed this company to hold out so long is the multi-million dollar smear campaign that has been orchestrated by the leadership of the UFCW and supported by the top leadership of the AFL-CIO [national trade-union federation]. If this were just a struggle between the workers in Austin and the company this strike would have been won by us a long time ago.

Q. You say that the heads of the AFL-CIO have given their support to the international union. How do you assess that and how do you plan to cope with it?

Rogers. Well, in terms of assessing it, certainly the leadership of UFCW and the AFL-CIO feel much more comfortable sitting down with the corporate executives than they do sitting down with the rank and file. Their interests are not the interests of the rank and file worker. If they were, they could never be involved in this betrayal of our union.

How to deal with it? A strong message has been going out to the rank and file workers that they have to take away the power of the big banks who have stolen their economic wealth and used it to clobber the workers over the head. The workers have to take back their unions from the leaders who have betrayed them. The rank and file workers must stop allowing five or ten people to come into a national meeting and control the union.

Q. So part of your fight is to educate the rank and file of any union that has a similar bureaucracy to fight

back and bring back democracy within the trade-union movement?

Rogers. I think one of the big things that has come out of the P-9 struggle is that we've really torn away the facade that the top leadership of the unions has put up. You know, reporters have been going to these AFL-CIO conventions down in Bal Harbor, Florida, and they come out and say, "What a waste of time. We have to cover it. But nothing ever comes out of it." It would really be good if the rank and file members who pay their union dues could see what goes on at these conventions. They would see that their so-called leaders have no solutions for their problems.

Q. So what we need are more organizations like P-9 to further this struggle?

Guyette. The P-9 struggle didn't start out this way. It started out as a simple labor dispute and it turned into a much bigger thing because a lot of facades have been torn away. The only argument that the international can use against us is the argument of dual unionism, that somehow we are not marching in step with union solidarity.

I would like to make the analogy of a responsible parent who does not simply bring forth a child but who cares for the child and is responsible for its upbringing. The irresponsible parent may even abandon the child. Now that goes against our grain. Yet people are reluctant to call this international union an irresponsible union for its abandonment of our local union. Not only have they abandoned us but they are doing everything in their power to starve us out.

I think it's time we started calling things the way they are. If there are illegitimate, irresponsible union officials who are more interested in rings on their fingers than they are about representing their rank and file, then let's say that and let's do something about it. Let's clean up our own union movement.

Q. What are some of the things that can be done to clean up the union movement?

Guyette. Well, we come up with two paths that can be taken, one of which is to work from within. Some are doing that. The other way is to create a legitimate labor organization which the workers see as an alterna-

1. For background articles on the strike see "Strike by Local P-9 stirs US labor" by Roger Horowitz, 'International Viewpoint' No. 96, April 7, 1986; "Hormel strike signals growing union militancy" by Nat Weinstein, 'IV' No. 103, July 14, 1986; and "Lessons from the Hormel strike" by Frank Lovell, 'IV' No. 109, November 24, 1986.

tive. That was the seed for the development of the CIO in this country. That is what we are doing in Austin.

The people in Austin decided to set up the North American Meatpackers Union (NAMPU) because they want a democratic union representing the rank and file and to break up the prostitute relationship that exists between the Hormel Company and the international union. Then you will have real collective bargaining taking place.

We must also deal with the problem of the cops and the courts and the Republican and Democratic parties who claim to represent the people. But P-9 is in a situation where it is dependent on people's ability to help them in this struggle through financial contributions, through boycotting Hormel products and through their solidarity and support. Right now the key focus has to be on the two main enemies we are confronted with, the Hormel Company and the international union.

Q. Where does NAMPU stand right now in its quest for certification?

Guyette. There is going to be an election within the plant for the people to vote on who they want to represent them. At this point there are between 800 and 900 people in Austin who are victims of the agreement between the Hormel Company and the UFCW. The only way these people will ever get their jobs back is if NAMPU prevails in an election. People inside the plant who scabbed signed a petition to vote for a new union. The UFCW is delaying the vote because they have made an assessment of those in the plant and know that, if a vote were held today, they would lose the vote.

Q. In the plant?

Guyette. In the plant. Because people have seen what kind of an organization the UFCW is and people don't want any part of it. And the Austin plant typifies what's happening in the meatpacking industry. The UFCW leadership has been unable to organize in the meatpacking industry because people do not want to join a union in order to give concessions. That's why there is so much ferment being generated in other plants and other companies in the meatpacking industry.

Q. Isn't part of the problem overcoming the apathy of the rank and file within the other locals, within the other unions?

Guyette. We think this can be overcome very easily, if there is a will to do it. It was overcome in Austin. Union meetings used to be attended by 40 to 50 people. All of a

sudden there were big meetings attended by hundreds. There can be many Austins.

Rogers: There are some locals that have only one meeting a year. But even in those cases where they may hold more meetings the rank and file is never given an opportunity to get up and say anything. There's never a presentation about the kind of a program that people can believe in, no kind of vision. So that's the situation you have from the international structure on down. And that's because if the rank and file starts taking some interest and wants to do something, it might decide to vote the people at the top the heck out and have a real union, like P-9, where the members decide everything.

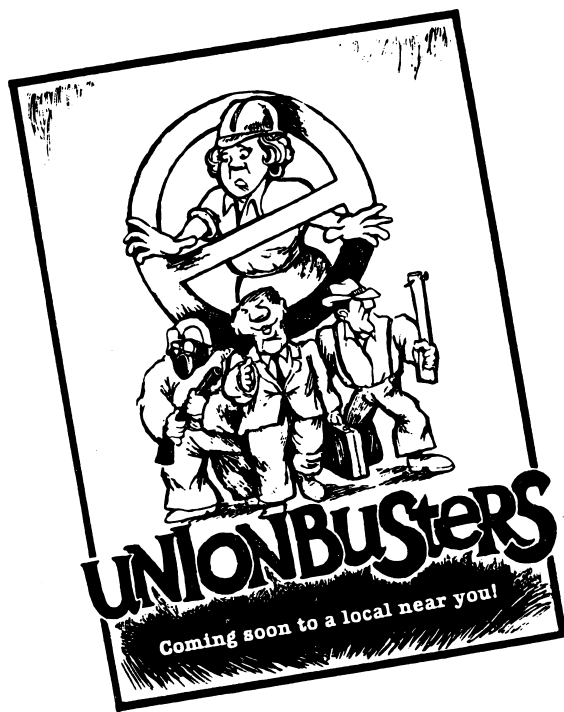
I believe that rank and file workers across the country, everywhere — whether they're meatpackers, or steelworkers, machinists, clerical workers, airline workers — I believe the potential is inherent in all of them to be a P-9.

Q. Did you anticipate the kind of problems that did arise in the course of the struggle with the cops, the National Guard and the UFCW?

Guyette. Well, I knew the international union had made deals in the past and at least was very suspicious of that. I knew they were capable of the harassing phone calls to our homes. They tried to threaten and intimidate us, told us we would never come home alive if we went to certain meetings. They pretended to be other people on the phone in order to trap us into making certain statements. They did many underhanded things. But I didn't anticipate the bigness of it.

Q. Has the support that the P-9 struggle generated throughout the country been able to tip the scales against the Hormel Company, do you think?

Rogers. We generated support from between 3,000 and 4,000 unions from every state in this country as well as support from organizations abroad. We also gained the support of organizations like the National Organization for Women and many private individuals. I think the tremendous support we have generated has tipped the scales against the company. In fact, if it weren't for the multi-million dollar smear campaign waged against us by the top officials of UFCW and supported by the heads of AFL-CIO, I really doubt that we would have needed a strike at all. It is because of that widespread support and solidarity for us, expressed throughout the labor movement, that we have been able to survive and strike back as effectively



as we have. And we are growing stronger, not weaker.

Q. And you still look forward to victory?

Rogers. Absolutely. We have two battles we are going to win. One against the Hormel Company and one against the bureaucratic misleadership that has been undermining our whole struggle.

Guyette. You're only ignored if you're ineffective. We have certainly not been ignored by the cops, the courts, the National Guard, the company or the international union. We must be doing something right.

Q. The question is, will you prevail against all those odds?

Guyette. A lot of unions, civic and religious organizations, many thousands of prominent and ordinary people, are part of our support group, which only keeps getting bigger. The company and the international leaders have been trying every trick in the book to starve us out, freeze us out. It hasn't worked and it will not work.

Rogers. We have a situation where the local was put in trusteeship. Then suddenly a contract settlement is announced. Word is sent out all over the country that the strike is settled. But people everywhere keep saying, "We haven't heard from the P-9 leadership that the strike is over." And nobody believes it's over. We will not allow the company, the international union, or the *New York Times* to decide when the struggle is over. Only the rank and file membership will decide that.

Another promising development is

the tough resistance of the rank and file in unions around the country to those of their top leadership who want to rally around their fellow bureaucrats in the UFCW. For example, William Winspisinger [head of the International Union of Machinists], who is supposed to be such a liberal, progressive labor leader. He really did all he could to put P-9 under. He was put in his place by his own local leadership and his rank and file.

Likewise Vincent Sombratto, head of the letter carriers, who came out very strongly in favor of P-9. But in the beginning, Sombratto really bad-mouthed P-9, but the rank and file of the letter carriers told us, "We put Mr. Sombratto in his place very quickly and he changed his tune." And this was a beautiful thing that happened all over the country. I could cite many more examples of this kind.

Q. Do you think that the charge of dual unionism has had any effect on anyone in the labor movement?

Rogers. The detractors, who are trying to blacklist everybody involved in supporting P-9, claim that we are weakening and undermining the labor movement because we are trying to set up an alternative to the bureaucracy of the UFCW. As Jim has said, the NAMPU situation is not a de-certification, it's a re-certification. NAMPU consists of working people who want to have a legitimate, democratic union to represent them and engages in real collective bargaining to get the best wage and working conditions they can get.

Q. Does this charge of dual unionism bother you?

Rogers. It bothers me that some people are misled by this charge of dual unionism. What was the history of the AFL and CIO? Was that dual unionism? If it was, thank goodness.

Guyette. I don't think the charge of dual unionism has any credence whatsoever. They have made all kinds of charges against us. The more separate they get the more separate the charges. When I first got elected, the officers who got displaced, along with the company, promoted the idea that I was a John Bircher [right-winger] and Ray was a communist. Anybody with any sense could figure out that two such complete opposites could never work together.

Then they attacked me in the local press, which is controlled by the company, as being a socialist and from a socialist I went to a communist. Now the latest is that I'm a Lyndon La Rouche-ite [proto-fascist]. So I've come full circle. This is the mark of their desperation.

Q. You have remarked that the Democratic Governor of Minnesota, Rudy Perpich, sent in the National Guard against P-9 and no Democratic politician stood up for P-9. Does this mean that most strikers have become disillusioned with the Democratic as well as the Republican Party?

Rogers. I can tell you one thing, from talking to the rank and file in Austin I have a hard time believing that anyone cast a ballot for Rudy Perpich.

Q. Is it true that there were some candidates who ran on an independent ticket in Austin?

Guyette. There were some people who ran, but I think that Austin, Minnesota has to be viewed in the context of the American public itself. Ronald Reagan was elected by only 32 per cent of the people in this country; 23 per cent voted for Mondale; 45 per cent didn't vote at all. That means that there are a tremendous number of people who are frustrated and disillusioned in the two-party system.

Look who came to Austin: Jesse Jackson. The idea of Reverend Jackson coming to Austin would have been a foreign idea just three years ago. But it's not so foreign anymore. In fact, it happened.

Q. Jesse Jackson has given no indication that he is ready to split from the Democratic Party. Would it not be better to have an independent political party based on the labor movement - a Labor Party?

Rogers. Certainly. I would like to see a political party that really represents the interests of the working people.

Guyette. I definitely think there is a need for a party to represent the working people, a party to represent the farmers, who are working people. It seems to me that there's something wrong in this country when farmers go broke and working people lose their jobs. We have grain inventories stockpiled and yet the lines of the hungry and the displaced seem to grow and grow. There is a need for change and that is growing day by day.

Q. Is there any kind of publication that P-9 puts out to keep the public informed as to the developments taking place in P-9?

Guyette. Before the trusteeship, we had a publication called *The Unionist* that came out every week. The UFCW has taken that over, which they claim they have a right to do. They have reduced it to a comic book, making caricatures of

Ray and myself. Our support group in Austin is putting out a newsletter which is distributed on Fridays, together with groceries, called the *Support Report*. You can get it by writing to the United Support Group, PO Box 396, Austin, MN 55912.

NAMPU is in the process of putting out its own paper and they've asked me to help out, which I will be able to do in a limited way. The need is certainly there for that kind of a paper, but the primary need at the moment is to feed people so they don't starve and to keep utilities going so they don't freeze.

Q. Has NAMPU been able to draw up any kind of a specific program outlining your perspectives?

Guyette. I believe that is taking place right now. A program is being drawn up by the Charter Committee of NAMPU. I am not on that committee. I did not sign the petition for NAMPU, because I am involved in a lawsuit against the international union, in the course of which I will demonstrate the collusion between the Hormel Company and the UFCW, and it will be brought out in testimony.

Rogers. We look for a good quality of life for every worker. In order to achieve that we have to realize that there is a real financial power behind every corporation and every politician. And certainly we need a political party that is not going to permit poverty in the midst of plenty and is going to eliminate wars of destruction on this earth.

Q. How have your personal lives been affected since the strike first began in August, 1985?

Rogers. A key element of my life revolves around the objectives of Corporate Campaign, to help the unions in their struggles with the corporations. We were hoping to buy a building so we could turn more resources into the campaign. But because of the long, drawn-out struggle, we have turned into a very poor organization, financially.

I have basically lived in Austin for over a year-and-a-half. We put everything on the line down there, including our lives. I have a few more grey hairs. But this kind of a struggle makes you feel stronger and more inspired.

Guyette. We cannot talk in terms of what price has been paid in this struggle. How can you measure price in terms of the friends, supporters and the tremendous solidarity we have garnered in all parts of the country and abroad. Nobody should have to go through what we have had to go through in Austin. Eventually the whole labor movement will benefit from our struggle. □

Landmarks of a new situation

A PAGE IN the political history of the Philippines is being turned over. In November 1986, a cabinet reshuffle was undertaken in dramatic circumstances. A 60-day ceasefire has been signed with the guerrillas and negotiations over essential questions have begun with the National Democratic Front (NDF). Preparations are underway for a constitutional referendum to be held in February.

The year 1986 opened with the "February Revolution," the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship and Corazon Aquino's accession to the presidency. It ended with the breakup of the first Aquino government. The situation remains very unstable. However, the main features of the country's new political geography stand out.

PAUL PETITJEAN

On November 23, 1986, under the shadow of a major political crisis, Corazon Aquino demanded that all the members of her government submit their resignations. She reserved the right subsequently to accept certain ones and reject others.

The cabinet changes were only announced slowly, bit by bit. They are probably not yet ended. But those dismissals, transfers and appointments that have been made public confirm the events of November 1986. The presidency has struck out in two directions.

On the one hand, the administration broke with Enrile and the more provocative elements in the army. On the other, the November 23 presidential coup was also designed to set the stage for a major shift of the government to the right.

Juan Ponce Enrile, minister of defence in the first Aquino government, was one of the first to be dismissed. For months, this former impresario of the martial law regime had been attacking the president's policy. His cronies in the army were indulging in saber-rattling and staging more and more provocations. An attempt was underway to destabilize the government from the right. Enrile went too fast and too far. Threatened with being reduced to a figurehead, Corazon Aquino asserted her determination to take in hand a situation that had badly deteriorated.

Two other members of the government, accused of glaring corruption, were quickly dropped. They were

Public Works and Highways Minister Rogaciano Mercado and Natural Resources Minister Ernesto Maceda. Nevertheless, the president took the trouble to send a personal letter to Maceda, a close associate of hers, assuring him of her esteem.

Governmental changes

It is significant that these two "political" ministers were replaced by high-ranking "technocrats." Vicente Jayme was president of the Philippine National Bank and a former official of the World Bank, as well as head of at least 35 companies. Carlos Dominguez, agriculture and food deputy-minister in the first Aquino government, is also a former bank president. Both are Jesuit trained. Thus, in the new government the weight of "technocrats," linked both to business circles and imperialist financial institutions, has increased.

In early December, Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel lost his post as local government minister. A leader of the political party closest to the president, PDP-Laban, he retains ministerial rank as presidential adviser for national affairs. (1) But his previous portfolio was taken by Jaime Ferrer, who was a member of the Magsayay government in the 1950s. Although a leader of PDP-Laban, Ferrer is known for his rightist views and the excellent relations he has maintained with the

American services. He does not face the same sort of hostility from the military and UNIDO as Pimentel. (2)

Most recently, at the beginning of January, Labor Minister Augusto "Bobby" Sanchez was replaced by Franklin Drilon. Business circles, the US administration and the military had no love for Sanchez, a former human rights lawyer. Although he was politically on the center-left, he was considered too radical, too nationalistic and too well disposed to the labor movement. Drilon, on the other hand, seems to offer the necessary guarantees of reliability. He is a lawyer also but employed by the multinationals and Philippine bosses.

The dismissal of Sanchez has removed from the government one of the main elements who stood apart from business circles and in opposition to military involvement in politics.

In November, Corazon Aquino found herself confronting a political crisis opened up by concerted action of the most reactionary sectors of her own government (represented by Enrile) and the Marcos "loyalists." Despite her populist watchword of "people's power," she did not turn to the mass organizations and the left to solve the crisis but rather toward the general staff and the Americans.

Throughout the month of November, three chiefs of the US intelligence agencies stayed in the Philippines, including now retired General Singlaud, an expert in counter-insurgency warfare; and Ray Clive, former deputy director of the CIA.

As for the general staff, it made its demands known through the ten recommendations presented by General Ramos before coming out in support of the president and dropping the rightist wildmen of the RAM and Juan Ponce Enrile. (3) The latter's replacement as minister of defence, General Raphael Iletto, is a counter-insurgency expert who enjoys the confidence of the Americans.

In this latest political crisis, Washington and the Filipino armed forces clearly strengthened their hold on the country's governmental policy.

If the conflicts within the government came so sharply to a head, it was in particular because the negotiations undertaken with the National

1. A coalition between Pimentel's Partido democratico ng Pilipinas and the Laban (Struggle) Party of Benigno Aquino, the murdered husband of the president. This coalition is headed by the president's brother, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

2. An alliance of various right-wing political groups presented by Vice-President Salvador Laurel. The latter, having lined up with Enrile in the months preceding the November crisis, is for the moment being discreet. UNIDO and the PDP-Laban are the two main parties in the government coalition.

3. RAM, Reform the Armed Forces of the Philippines Movement.



Democratic Front had reached a turning point.

Since Corazon Aquino's accession to the presidency in February 1986, the theme of a return to peace, 17 years after the beginnings of the armed struggle, has become a central political question. Aquino moved immediately to try to occupy the ground, stealing a march on both the revolutionary forces and the military.

Naming two representatives empowered to negotiate a ceasefire — Satur Ocampo and Antonio Zumel and then developing concrete proposals — its initial proposals being maximalist — the NDF gradually regained the political initiative in the battle over peace. The government's credibility in this area, on the other hand, began to be undermined by the evident bad will of Defence Minister Enrile and the general staff of the armed forces.

On August 5, concrete negotiations for a ceasefire were begun. Six weeks later, agreement was in sight. Then, precisely on September 29, the communist leader Rodolfo Salas was arrested by the army in Manila. It was an obvious provocation. The NDF suspended talks. But instead of breaking off the negotiations, it made new proposals, which were more flexible than in the past.

The NDF proposed a 100-day ceasefire with no other conditions than those making it possible to open negotiations on the essential questions. In so doing, it very clearly put the government on the spot. If the ceasefire talks failed, the government would bear the responsibility for this in the eyes of public opinion.

It was in these conditions that the far right, covered by the military,

escalated its strategy of creating tensions. On November 13, trade-union leader Rolando Olalia was kidnapped, horribly tortured and murdered. But the scope of the demonstration at Rolando Olalia's burial — the crowd was estimated at 300,000 people — probably convinced the Americans and the military general staff that, for the time being, it was too dangerous to pursue this course.

The political crisis was defused on November 23 with the removal of Enrile from the government, and the way was opened up for the process of negotiations to go ahead. On November 25 agreement was reached in principle for a 60-day ceasefire. On November 27, the agreement was signed. It went into force on December 10.

The battle of the ceasefire

Aquino could boast that the ultimatum that she threw down for the signing of a ceasefire had had an effect. The NDF accepted new concessions. But the agreement that was signed turned out to be very close to the proposals the insurgent leadership had made two months before.

In December, the revolutionary forces in fact managed to hold on to the political initiative. On the day the ceasefire began, mass demonstrations were held in various urban centers. On that occasion, hundreds of guerrillas came unarmed to participate in the celebrations. In Bacolod on the island of Negros perhaps a hundred NPA soldiers were among the 30,000

demonstrators. (4)

Four regional leaders of the NDF, including two ex-priests, led the march, which was one of the largest in the archipelago. It was greeted by Monsignor Fortich, chair of the National Commission to Oversee the Ceasefire. (5)

On December 11, in Samal, in Bataan province, not far from Manila, an NDF delegation consisting of Satur Ocampo, Tony Zumel and Carolina "Bobbie" Malay was greeted by two columns of guerrillas in arms. This was a response by the NDF, in the form of a challenge, to the war-like talk of generals Ramos and Iletto. The latter had been promising that regardless of the ceasefire they would disarm any NPA soldiers who came out of their mountain refuges.

The NDF opened an office in Manila and now has free access to the media. Since the members of the delegation are former journalists, they know how to use the means of communication. They have been occupying the TV screens and the front pages of the papers. Thus, they are emerging from the imposed shadows of clandestinity and making themselves known to millions of people. This is very important for a movement whose national leaders have often been unknown outside narrow circles.

The NDF thus has an unprecedented opportunity to talk to the middle classes, which since 1983 have been playing an important role in the country's political evolution.

A good many officers, it seems, think that the ceasefire is too favorable to the left because it gives the insurgent movement de facto legitimacy. But General Iletto, the new minister of defence, has recognized that the army itself needed a respite. Faction-ridden, corrupt, isolated from the population, it has to be taken back in hand.

The officers have often set a bad example, Iletto acknowledged in December. During the ceasefire, he said, "one important item is re-indoctrination of the soldiers, their attitude toward service, their discipline, their cooperation with the people." (6)

For Corazon Aquino, the signing of a two-month ceasefire offered a good springboard for her campaign for the February 2 referendum-plebiscite on the constitution. She is going to present herself as the apostle of peace. But she is also preparing for war. Everyone knows that the

4. NPA, New People's Army, a guerrilla force led by the Communist Party of the Philippines.

5. See Philippe Pons' article in 'Le Monde' of December 12, 1986.

6. Interview published in the 'International Herald Tribune' of December 16, 1986.

truce is fragile.

The prospects for peace remain dim. The journalist James Clad noted that Aquino "has few illusions about lasting prospects for peace. Her public pronouncements and privately voiced opinions suggest she wants first to establish the moral 'high ground' before committing the armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) to renewed warfare." (7)

The NDF is well aware that the ceasefire is another way of continuing the fight. In the first interviews he gave in September when he was beginning his job as a negotiator, Satur Ocampo already made his view on this clear. In an interview given to Alain Marc, he said:

"We are seeking a peaceful solution without thereby giving up our concepts of armed struggle. It would be very imprudent for us to lay down our arms now. I think that our strong point is precisely preserving our military capacity as well as our political authority in those regions that we control." (8)

Moreover, Satur pointed out for the Filipino press, "If the direction of the Aquino government's position in the negotiations is for us to surrender, then we don't think there is a basis for talks. We made it very clear from the very start that, in coming to these negotiations, surrender is not on our agenda. There has to be a recognition that we are a political force with a considerable following in many areas of the country, that we have a program that has been to some degree implemented in some areas of the country and found to be beneficial to the people." (9)

The journalist Rodney Tasker wrote, "given the military's ultra-suspicious stance toward the feasibility of a ceasefire, and the left's refusal to lay down their arms, the prospects for a lasting end to the bloodshed are dim indeed. But in some ways, the fighting war on the ground has given way to a more serious political battle: a propaganda war. In this, the left has proved itself to be more adept and sophisticated than the government." (10)

The duration of the ceasefire will depend largely on the way the population, mass organizations and the various components of the Filipino left mobilize over this question. The longing for peace runs deep. It is what forced the army itself to accept the present accord.

With the opening at the beginning of January of the second phase of the negotiations, the NDF is going to try to give force to its conception of a just peace in the eyes of the population. It is now in fact that substantive negotiations are starting on

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the conditions for a lasting peace. It is necessary to go to the roots of the civil war.

The NDF is going to make known the essential elements of its program with respect to national independence, popular democracy and social and economic justice. The government is demanding that the first discussions take up the questions of "food and freedom, jobs and justice."

Aquino's economic program

The government is going to base itself on its legitimacy and the president's popularity. But in the propaganda battle that is shaping up, it risks having to pay a high price for its underlying immobility on social questions.

More generally, Aquino's economic program carefully leaves out any measure for radical social transformation. By comparison with the Marcos regime, it presents some innovations, introducing certain choices that are considered progressive.

These include dismantling the monopolies set up by the former dictator's cronies; giving priority in principle to agriculture, on which

70% of the population depends, to small and medium-sized businesses that create jobs over the main urban centers (Manila!) and big (and costly) development projects; stress on the domestic market and not, as before, on exports; the appropriation of a 10,000 million peso budget to create 3 million jobs, in particular by giving new impetus to public works (such as construction projects) and thereby reviving demand and the economy.

But the regime's daring stops at that point. Despite the superprofits made by foreign companies on such projects as the Bataan nuclear reactor — which amounted to a real scandal financially and in terms of safety — Aquino has decided not to repudiate any foreign debt incurred under the Marcos dictatorship. She is asking only for rescheduling of repayments. However, the service on this debt, which exceeds 26,000 million dollars, is a heavy burden on the country's resources.

7. James Clad, 'Far Eastern Economic Review,' December 11, 1986, p. 50.

8. Alain Marc, Interview with Satur Ocampo, 'Magazine,' (published in Switzerland), September 9, 1986, p. 29.

9. Cited by Benjamin Pimentel Jr. in 'National Midweek,' (Quezon City), December 17, 1986, p. 10.

10. Rodney Tasker, 'Far Eastern Economic Review,' of December 18, 1986.



Better still for international capital, by dismantling the protective devices set up to safeguard the economic kingdoms of the Marcos family's cronies, Aquino is opening up the country to imperialist interests. The IMF's demands regarding tariff barriers are to be respected. State enterprises can be bought out by foreign capital, which is also invited to invest more in agribusiness, the priority area of development for the national economy.

Finally, although agrarian reform is written into the draft constitution, no deepgoing social-reform measure has been put forward. Less state interference, the least possible state interference in economic life — that is the Reaganite credo of the powerful finance minister Jaime Ongpin. Aquino herself seems to have absolute faith in the dynamic laws of the capitalist economy, once a moral presidency assures the necessary climate of confidence in the country.

In October she told businessmen, "The government has completed the groundwork for an economic recovery and . . . it is now up to the private sector to become more active." (11) James Clad has written, "Aquino's strategy is nothing more than letting internal distribution of goods and services work inside a freer economy." (12)

This economic philosophy is supposed to work when the world economic crisis is shrinking markets and increasing competition, including among dependent countries, and when the situation in the Philippines itself is deplorable. Production has fallen 12% since 1984. Enterprises are operating on average at half capacity.

Without a transformation of social relations and a corresponding transformation of the state, the "natural" laws of the system will remain the same: The rich will make the gains.

Investment will flow freely out of the country. Monies spent by the state will be diverted into patronage channels.

But there is desperate poverty, and it is all the more intolerable for being largely of recent vintage. According to Karina Constantino David, deputy minister for social affairs and welfare, "70% of the Philippine population lives below the threshold of poverty, that is, are able to satisfy less than 80% of their nutritional needs." (13) Over the past decade, the proportion of the population suffering from malnutrition has increased by 40%.

Regime's opposition to social change

For the moment, the government is just saying "no" to the NDF's proposal: No to a radical agrarian reform, no to raising the question of the presence of US military bases on Philippine soil, no to selective repudiations of the debt, no to a real cleaning out of the state apparatus.

The Aquino regime's opposition to change on social issues also reflects the constraints of dependence, in a situation of international economic crisis and extreme weakness of the progressive sectors within the local ruling classes. Quite symptomatically, the leadership of the RAM, which could pass for progressive when it was opposing Marcos in the army in the name of democracy, revealed itself, after the anti-dictatorial uprising of February 1986, to be radically reactionary.

This social rigidity worries even the Catholic hierarchy and the Jesuits, who are very influential in the corridors of power. John J. Carroll, a very anti-communist Jesuit

father, director of the Institute on Church and Social Issues at Manila University's prestigious Ateneo, has expressed this concern in no uncertain terms in the international press.

"One anomaly of the post-Marcos era is that no crony of the former president has been imprisoned in the Philippines since the February revolution. The delay in locating and prosecuting those who had a part in the crimes of the Marcos regime goes back to the fact that the old political, military and judicial structures remain intact . . .

"History offers many examples of moderate reformers who failed because they remained too tied to the structures of the past; their successors usually have less concern for human rights and human values. Mrs. Aquino has not yet demonstrated a willingness to attack those structures, and even the new names suggested for her cabinet were middle-of-the-road or right-of-center individuals. Until the government, the Church and the middle classes face up to this challenge, polarization and conflict will be endemic and Philippine democracy will remain a house built on sand." (14)

The purging of the far right and the center left of the Aquino government has not created a homogeneous body. It still includes the army and business people, the Church and rival political parties, technocrats and politicians.

11. Cited in the 'International Herald Tribune' of October 11-12, 1986.

12. 'Far Eastern Economic Review, October 10, 1986, p. 79.

13. Cited by Philippe Pons, 'Le Monde,' January 8, 1987.

14. John J. Carroll, "More Targets for a Tough New Aquino," 'The Los Angeles Times,' and the 'International Herald Tribune' of November 28, 1986.

This government will probably come through its first political test of 1987 without any difficulty — that is, the vote on the draft constitution. But the next three that it will have to face could bring its internal contradictions to the surface again — the evolution of the negotiations with the NDF when the ceasefire period ends (shortly before the constitutional referendum); the need to respond to the opposition pole represented by Marcos' and Enrile's "loyalists," who are now free of any constraint of governmental responsibility; and the legislative elections next May.

There is not likely to be any simple "return to normal" in the short run, either to the norms of Marcos' personal dictatorship or to those of the two-party elitist game that existed before martial law. A lot of things have changed in these past 20 years.

Political forces are striving to create chaos and thereby set the stage for a new recourse to martial law. These are the so-called neo-fascist forces, whose role must not be ignored. They are still powerful and enjoy considerable support in the army and in the various regions. The pressure they bring to bear promotes the activity of those within the Aquino government who want to reduce the "democratic opening" won by the masses in February 1986. The fight for democratic freedoms remains a central task.

Nonetheless, a return to a coherent dictatorial regime similar to that of Marcos would run into major obstacles.

However, the mass movements today are far more powerful than in 1972. The Church is now directly involved in the political life of the country. The Americans have gone through the experience of the disastrous end of the Marcos regime. The Philippine bourgeoisie is on the alert. The army has acquired other means for exercising influence in the political game. The traditional regional pluralism of the islands is on the ascendancy again. The imposition of a new dictatorship would threaten to cost imperialism very dear, unless the situation changes profoundly.

In the present situation, there are elements of a "restoration" to the situation that existed before martial law: The politicians of the 1950s and 1960s are making their re-appearance. They are haunting the corridors of power. The new constitution restores a bicameral legislative, which favors the control of the parliamentary processes by elites. The regional big families have the upper hand.

But here again certain important elements in the relationship of forces

have changed. The dominated classes cannot be excluded from the political game. Account has also to be taken of new actors on the stage who were not present as political forces before the martial law period — the Catholic hierarchy and the army — both of which do not (yet?) have their own parties.

Finally, the international context has definitely changed. The petrodollars have dried up. During her trip to the United States, Aquino got a lot of applause. But after long bargaining, she ended up getting only 200 million dollars in aid — a pittance. American manna is not forthcoming any more. That is going to make it much more difficult to find a compromise among the competing interests of the various pressure groups lined up behind the government.

Constitutional referendum

The Philippines are still passing through a period of structural instability. The vote on the constitution on February 2 threatens to prove a difficult juncture for the Philippine left. This is a real plebiscite offering Aquino an iron-clad hold on the presidency until 1992. In this election, she will be able to exploit her personal popularity to the fullest. The proposed constitution itself is a bourgeois and pro-imperialist one that sanctions opening the country to foreign capital. It also includes a series of democratic clauses to liquidate the heritage of the Marcos period. The draft constitution has drawn sharp fire from the far right. Juan Ponce Enrile has taken the leadership of a crusade to get it rejected.

As the socialist organization Bisig sees it, the essential thing is not the constitution's pro-capitalist content but the battle taken up by the dictatorial forces (represented by Enrile) against the democratic gains of the "February Revolution." (15) In his report to the delegates of the organization assembled to adopt a position on the referendum, Bisig's chair, Francisco Nemenzo, noted, "our decision should be based much more on the present political alignment of forces than on the content of the proposed constitution." (16)

In a statement, Bisig declared, "the discussion on the proposed Constitution cannot be separated from the issue of fascist revival." Rejection of the draft would "pave the way for a neo-fascist dictatorship." For this reason, Bisig "will vigorously campaign for the ratification of the proposed constitution while at the

same time pointing out its inadequacies.

This critical endorsement of the constitution is part of the efforts to protect the political gains of February. At the same time, it is another opportunity to launch an education campaign to politicize the people so that they will not expect their liberation from a bourgeois state, no matter how democratic, and that they will not be misled into thinking that adopting this constitution marks the end of our struggle."

But, despite its anti-fascist character, the draft constitution is, to be sure, "essentially conservative, reflecting the sentiments and aspirations of the bourgeoisie." (17)

The National Democratic Front, according to Tony Zumel, has had a lively discussion on what position to take on the February 2 referendum. (18) The NDF was also preoccupied with tactical problems. Among them was a concern not to cut itself off again from important sections of the middle classes and the unorganized masses, as it did when it boycotted the presidential elections.

Some cadres of the NDF, for example on the island of Negros, seem to have announced that a vote for the constitution would be positive. On the national level finally a decision was taken to vote against it, even if on the day of the referendum this meant ending up on the same side as the extreme-right forces.

The pro-imperialist character of the draft constitution was a reason for this decision. But another, very probably, was a desire on the part of the NDF not to tie its hands during the peace negotiations by formally adopting a document that in many respects conflicts with its proposals.

If the constitutional referendum temporarily puts the left forces in a tricky position, the May 1987 parliamentary elections are going to be a wrenching trial for the government coalition. At that time, the specific interest of every faction making it up will take precedence over the policy of the presidency. But, over and above the constitutional referendum and the legislative elections, the essential thing in this first part of 1987 will probably be the struggles around the peace negotiations between the government and the NDF. □

15. Bisig is the acronym of a Tagalog name meaning "Union for the Development of Socialist Theory and Practice."

16. "Ang Sosyalista," Vol. 1, No. 1 of November 1986, "Plebiscito at Panukulang Konstitusyon, Mapanuring Ratipikasyon, Pasya ng Bisig," p. 5.

17. "Bisig endorses constitution," "Kasarinlan," Vol. 2, No. 2, 4th Quarter 1986, p. 72.

18. "A fugitive afternoon with Tony Zumel," "National Midweek" of November 26, 1986, p. 11.

AROUND THE WORLD



Zambia

Government retreats

FOR THE first time since the country's independence in 1964 large-scale rioting has forced the retreat of the government on the question of prices and the standard of living. It is in the copper mining region that spontaneous demonstrations have just pushed back the project to double the price of maize flour. It is a sufficiently rare event in Black Africa to deserve attention.

Of course the regime explained that the riots were demonstrations of "hooligans" manipulated by "neo-colonialist" forces.

In Zambia 90% of foreign currency returns come from copper exports, and it has been hit head-on by the fall in the price of red metal and by the crisis in the market resulting from the world recession. Furthermore, its foreign trade is dependent on commercial relations with nearby South Africa.

President Kaunda's regime proclaims itself socialist-humanist, and yet remains a completely classical example of a neo-colonial regime — repressive, autocratic and corrupt.

Zambia's relations with the imperialist market do not justify the fact that the richest 20% of the population share 57% of the national revenue, while the poorest 20% only account for 4% of it. They do not explain why agriculture and the peasants have been left aside, why the countryside is emptying so that consequently almost half the Zambian population is concentrated in the towns. It doesn't explain why, out of 18 state farms each with a surface area of 20,000 hectares, only three show any semblance of production according to an official inquiry.

Music-hall socialism and white-elephant projects combine to justify a policy designed to profit an elite and arrogant bourgeoisie. In certain areas, as a result both of a dearth of means of transport and storage and of ineffective trading, a quarter of the harvest is lost. But at the same time Zambian Airways has acquired on lease a huge DC-10 carrier; UNIP, the single party, is building itself a sumptuous office block; and the mining company ZCCM has just moved to Lusaka into a luxurious building lined with marble.

This is why the population has

had enough of being told about sacrifice and austerity in the name of socialism and the national interest. □

Canada

Anti-intervention conference

MORE THAN 140 people took part in the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC) conference, held on November 15-16, 1986. Participants represented different sectors of the international solidarity movement in Toronto, the peace movement, church groups, student organizations and the labour movement. There were also representatives from cities in Southern Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Montreal and the United States.

The conference began with a call for action against United States intervention in Central America. In his opening address, the TAIC chairperson emphasized that "the Pentagon's use of the term low-intensity war is an attempt to hide Washington's involvement in a full-scale war". The conference's aim was to rally all social protest movements across Canada against US intervention. Consequently, TAIC put an emphasis on rallying the entire peace movement around a clear anti-war position. The conference also demanded that the Canadian government go on record against US intervention.

TAIC put forth a plan for action to achieve these goals: cross-Canada demonstrations against intervention on May 9; to support the April 25 demonstrations against intervention in Washington by sending a delegation; a campaign demanding that the Canadian government condemn United States intervention and increase aid and trade with Nicaragua.

The key conference debate centred around the plan to hold a pan-Canadian demonstration against intervention in Central America on May 9. All the speakers emphasized the need to conduct united mass actions and to better coordinate our work across Canada.

Finally, all the delegates present approved the TAIC plan for action with some changes, and formed an Ad Hoc Liaison Committee with representatives from TAIC and other Canadian cities, with a mandate to publicize the conference's plan for action and help build May 9

on a pan-Canadian basis. It is essential that the entire labour, peace and solidarity movement take up the call and organize demonstrations against US intervention in Central America this coming spring. □

Alain Bernatchez/Barry Weisleder

Britain

Alliance for socialism

THE SECOND "Building an Alliance for Socialism" conference organized by supporters of the newspaper *Socialist Action* in London on November 22/23 drew over 600 people.

The conference was opened by a range of British and international speakers. Joining Member of Parliament Tony Benn on the platform were Marc Wadsworth of the Labour Party Black Section, Ann Pettifor from the Labour Women's Action Committee, John Ross for *Socialist Action*, striking printworker John Lang and speakers from the South African ANC and the FMLN/FDR of El Salvador.

Tony Benn captured the mood of the weekend when he said that what people were interested in discussing was not rhetoric but the systematic hard work that the left was doing. This sentiment, and the theme of building an alliance for socialism, was given flesh and blood by the wide range of speakers and workshop discussions.

Saturday afternoon saw Linda Bellos, leader of Lambeth Labour council, Betty Heathfield of Women Against Pit Closures and Ann Pettifor leading a discussion on the way forward for women in the labour movement. Simultaneously, workshops were being held on justice for mineworkers, the fight for sanctions against South Africa and for British withdrawal from Ireland.

These were followed by sessions on the strategy of ANC, Thatcherism and the Social Democratic Party, why Britain must withdraw from NATO, Labour's youth movements, the teachers' strike and Chile since the coup.

Sunday saw workshops on the politics of Sinn Fein led by Sinn Fein councillor Pdraig O Maolchraoibhe, fighting the witch hunt of the left in the Labour Party, lesbian and gay rights and on nuclear power.

Central America, Palestine, the fight for full employment and the environment were also discussed.

The highlight of Sunday afternoon was undoubtedly the session on the fight against racism, attended by around 300 people. The leader of Haringey Labour Council, Bernie Grant, spoke on the need for self-organization and positive action for Black people inside the labour movement and in local communities. While concentrating his speech on the situation in Britain, he made an appeal for an international perspective in fighting racism and oppression:

"When we talk about attacks on Black people and about defending the Black community, as far as Black people are concerned we're talking about the *international* Black community. Unless South Africa is free then Black people in this country are not going to be free." □

Britain

Viraj Mendis must stay!

AFTER LIVING in Britain for 13 years, Sri Lankan-born Viraj Mendis is being threatened with immediate deportation by the Home Office. Viraj had his final appeal against the deportation decision rejected by Tory Immigration Minister David Waddington on December 18. Since then, he has taken refuge in a church in the Hulme area of Manchester, a predominantly Black and poor area, where the majority of the local people are supporting his campaign against deportation. Viraj explained:

"The British government wants to deport me to Sri Lanka because of my political activities, because of my involvement in anti-deportation campaigns in the fight against racism and the immigration laws. In Manchester, the campaigns against deportation have reached a national significance and have been successful the last three years.

"The immigration laws are made in such a way that I can be deported, just because I am Black. At the moment, 50 Black people are deported each week.

"The Home Office will now go to the extreme to deport me to Sri Lanka, where I will face persecution and perhaps execution. Even if I am not a Tamil, I have for many years as a Sinhalese communist supported the Tamils' right to self-determination and their right to use armed struggle in order to achieve that."

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign has won broad support both in Britain and internationally to prevent this deportation, but more is urgently needed in order to force the Home

Office to reverse its decision.

Protest letters can be sent to: David Waddington, Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1 OAA. Copies of letters should be sent to the defence campaign, which can be contacted c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL. Donations to the campaign are also needed. □

Finn Jensen

USA

Socialist Action convention

DELEGATES and guests from all over the country attended the second national convention of Socialist Action at the end of November.

Socialist Action was founded three years ago, and is in political solidarity with the Fourth International. Since then, it has consolidated branches in many parts of the USA.

In a wide-ranging discussion, delegates spoke of SA's participation in building mass-action protests against apartheid and the US intervention in Central America. The San Francisco anti-war coalition's successful work in bringing tens of thousands of people into the streets was put forward as a model for the national anti-war and anti-apartheid demonstrations proposed for April 25 of this year.

Convention reports also noted SA's role in helping to provide food caravans and to build solidarity for the Hormel strikers.

In the political report approved by the convention, SA national committee member Carl Finnermore emphasized that an unprecedented potential exists to mobilize the labor movement in political protests.

An international report, given by *Socialist Action* editor Alan Benjamin, highlighted the recent struggles in countries as diverse as South Africa, Poland, Haiti, the Philippines, France and throughout Latin America.

An international rally was held the same weekend around the theme of struggles in Central America and Europe. Carmen Olivares, a Nicaraguan journalist, spoke on the struggle against the US-backed contras. There were also reports from SA members who had recently visited Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Other speakers at the rally included Al Lannon, president of warehouse workers Local 6, ILWU; Ralph Schoenman, who spoke on the fight for socialist democracy in Poland; and Claudio Giuliano, who gave greetings to the rally from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. □

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even greater practical meaning. Under the impetus of the present situation, the Chinese people must, through broad mass mobilization, force the authorities to grant immediately the following demands:

1. Release the Democratic Movement activists who have been arrested now and in the past and guarantee them a normal life.

2. Pledge that the population can enjoy freedom of expression, publication, assembly, association, freedom of movement and to demonstrate, and that the nation must provide sufficient resources and facilities so that people can exercise these freedoms.

3. Change the electoral law, guaranteeing the people's right to elect their representatives and to be elected as representatives. National representatives and the assemblies of peoples' representatives at every level must everywhere be selected through popular democratic vote.

4. That the members of official bodies be democratically elected in people's assemblies or assemblies of people's representatives. The members of official bodies must be subject to popular control, enjoy no prerogatives and be subject to recall at any time. A system of rotation must be set up.

5. Eliminate the system of direction by party committees. Democratic self-management must be set up, based on assemblies of representatives of organizations in the factories, enterprises, agricultural collectives and the schools.

6. Eliminate one-party dictatorship. Freedom for parties. Every party must enjoy equal rights.

Call for unity

We call on the people of the country to unite, to form national organizations to fight for democracy, to put an end to bureaucratic despotism and to achieve socialist democracy through a long-term struggle.

We appeal to our compatriots in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and overseas to offer active solidarity to the struggle of the people in the Chinese homeland fighting for democracy and for advancing the democratization of China.

The fight for democracy has already advanced a long way in Asia, Europe and Latin America. The people's forces are growing steadily throughout the world.

We are convinced that the Chinese people and all the oppressed peoples of the world will march together, mutually reinforce each other and win full liberation. □

Chinese students lead fight for democracy

IN DOZENS of cities across China, the mass student movement "against dictatorship and for democracy" has come on the scene. *October Review* and the Revolutionary Marxist League (RML - Hong Kong section of the Fourth International) fully support its legitimate demands and its actions, and respectfully salute the great number of students who are fighting for democracy, undeterred by repression. [This statement was issued on December 25, 1986.]

Facing the mass movement struggling for democracy, the bureaucracy has once again revealed its despotic and dictatorial nature. The bureaucracy is not satisfied only with shamelessly rejecting the democratic demands of the student youth, but it has also sought to divide it, slander it and repress it. It has even resorted to using official means to abolish in fact the right to demonstrate, which the constitution grants the people.

Against these authorities who are failing to heed the democratic demands of the masses and trampling on the provisions of the constitution, we express our strong indignation and protest.

It has to be pointed out that the Chinese Communist Party authorities are waiting for a propitious moment to strike at the democratic movement and repress all aspects of it. In the present grave situation, the entire Chinese people must unite and organize in order to defeat the bureaucracy's attacks by bringing a still greater force to bear.

The Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and overseas, as all justice-loving peoples throughout the world, must now extend solidarity actions and support the struggle of the Chinese people who are fighting for democracy.

The student youth are the pulse of the society. "Against the bureaucracy, against dictatorship, against privileges, against exactions," "The facts have to be told, there has to be freedom of information," "We need democracy, freedom, human rights," "Down with the bureaucracy" — the slogans raised by the student youth are also those of the people. This is why the street demonstrations by the student youth have so quickly gained an echo among the masses.

The authorities' attempt to drive a wedge between the people and the student youth is condemned to failure. The workers and the people of the cities are not only supporting the actions of the student youth but joining in the demonstrations. They are taking up demands against inflation and for a better standard of living, as well as the fight for democracy.

By their independent activity, the Chinese people have already begun to break the spell the bureaucracy has cast with its magic words about reform.

Without democracy, the so-called economic reform in fact is no more than blind and irresponsible competition. The result is that investments are not made, that the building industry is collapsing, waste is spreading, foreign trade is in deficit, the economy is becoming disorganized, the prices of goods are soaring, the standard of living of the workers and the urban masses is declining, and the inequalities between the rich and poor in society are widening still further.

Without democracy, the so-called political reform is in fact merely a bit of devolution from the top down of the power [of the central authorities], of the managers of factories, bodies, enterprises and schools that gives an appearance of reducing the bureaucracy's power. Nonetheless, the party committees continue to exercise tight control over the top echelons of power. And the further up you go the more this control is secret.

At every level and throughout the country, the assemblies of people's representatives always bear the brand of the Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy.

Without democracy, there is no guarantee whatever for the rights and

liberty of the people. The constitution becomes a maid of all work for the Communist Party that it can push around as it pleases. Without democracy, the initiative and creative power of the people cannot reach full development, the potential of the country's superior system of production and planned economy cannot be realized, modernization cannot be carried through.

In short, as long as the one-party dictatorship persists the arbitrary rule of the bureaucracy will be perpetuated, and it will be impossible to eliminate the oppression of the people, the disregard for human rights, as well as prevarication and corruption. The facts reveal that bureaucratic despotism is the fundamental obstacle to building socialism. All the types of economic reform the bureaucrats are putting forward are fundamentally only a repetition of old litanies.

Hoping that the Communist Party bureaucracy can genuinely loosen the reins of political power, carry out radical reforms and achieve democracy is building castles in the air. The Hundred Flowers campaign became notorious for its end in "anti-rightist" repression.

Painful lessons

The awakening of the masses after the Cultural Revolution was put to a bloody end by the military. The April 5 Tien An Men event then suffered ferocious repression. The Peking Spring and the Democratic Movement that followed were met with more general repression and ended in arrests.

Painful lessons on a vast scale have opened the eyes of the Chinese people. No matter what bureaucratic clique climbs onto the throne of power, whatever glittering promises they may make at the start, the bureaucracy will always have the same hatred for the masses' democratic demands.

This is why the Chinese people fighting for democracy must reject from the outset any illusion about any clique in the bureaucracy. It is why they must politically and organizationally overcome divisions and the repressive system set up by the bureaucracy. Only then will they be able to forge an independent political consciousness, create their own organizations and broaden the mass mobilization.

"Arise, ye wretched of the earth!" That is the stirring appeal of the Chinese anthem to the people of the entire country. Today this appeal resounds still more urgently and has

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