

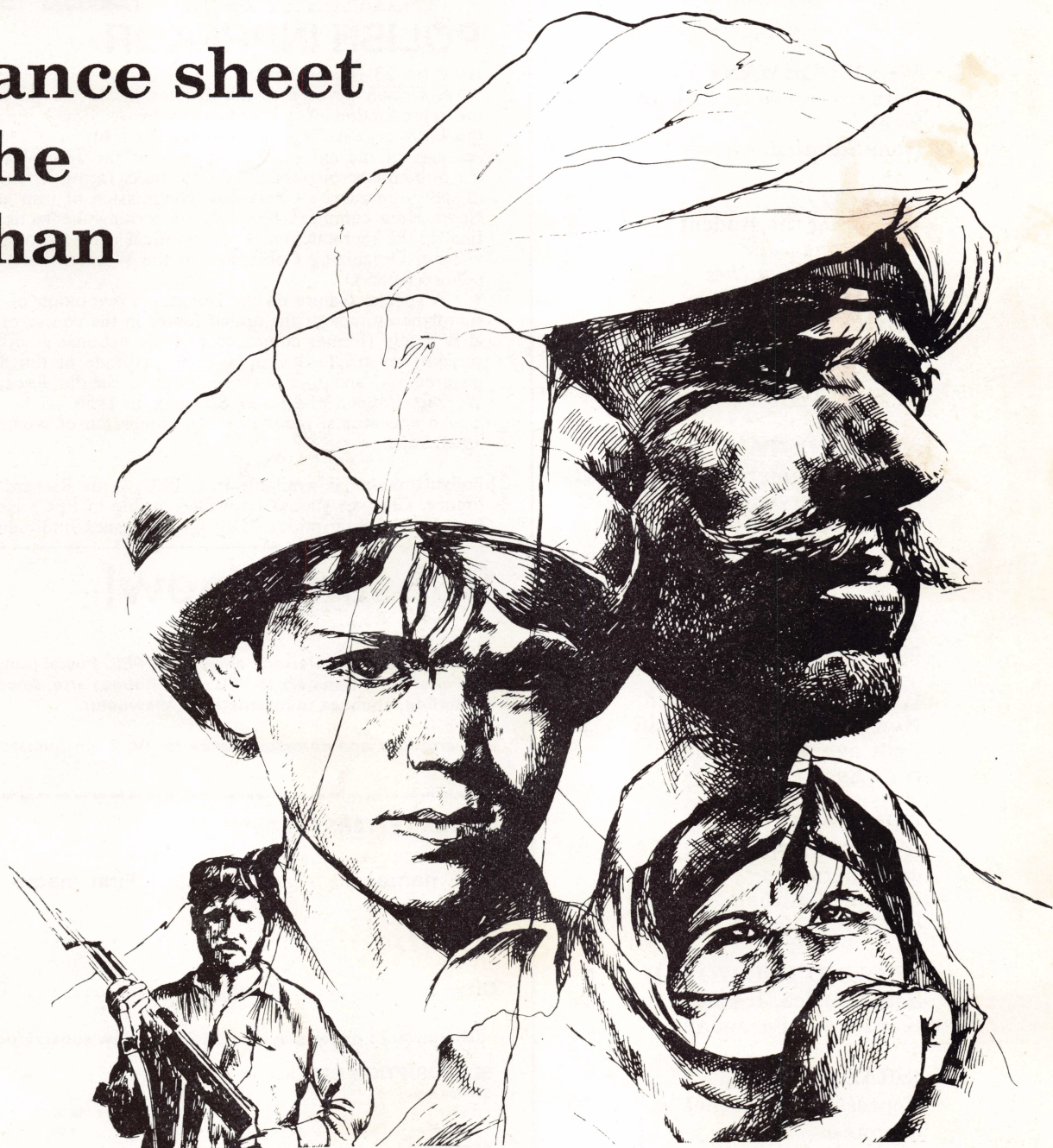
# International VIEWPOINT

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## Balance sheet of the Afghan war



**Victory for Mexican students**  
**A sharp edge of racism in New York**  
**Polarization in the Basque country**

**INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT**  
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# Bourgeois nationalists sink deeper into the mire

A NEW GOVERNMENT of the Basque autonomous area took office on March 12, based on a coalition between the largest bourgeois nationalist faction, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), and the Spanish centralist social-democratic party (PSOE).

GERRY FOLEY

The cabinet is headed by Jose Antonio Ardanza of the PNV, as "lehendakari" (premier), flanked by a PSOE vice premier, Ramon Jaurequi. It includes 12 ministers, six named by each party, although the PSOE chose to give the sensitive education portfolio to an independent, Jose Ramon Recalde. (There has been a sharp battle over integration of the Basque-language schools in the state system, which means state support for teaching in Basque.)

The PNV got the ministries of most interest to its local business supporters — Agriculture and Fisheries, Culture and Tourism, Finance, as well as Labor and Social Security, the Interior, and Justice and Autonomous Development. The PSOE took Urban Affairs, Housing and Environment, Health and Consumer Affairs, Industry and Commerce, and Transport.

The PNV and the PSOE came to an agreement on a coalition on February 23. The deal was consummated with the election of the lehendakari on February 26. It concluded nearly three months of parliamentary wheeling and dealing in the wake of the November 31 elections to the autonomous Basque parliament.

Putting together a parliamentary majority had been made very difficult by the PNV's split. A new party, Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Alliance), led by the former PNV lehendakari, Carlos Garaikoetxea, took about two-fifths of the former PNV vote, getting 13 seats, as against 17 for the PNV.

The PSOE barely increased its vote, but, as a result of the nationalist split, ended up with the biggest single parliamentary fraction with 19 seats. The revolutionary nationalists linked to ETA, Herri Batasuna, got 13 seats; and Euskadiko Eskerra (Basque Left), a group of nationalist origin that has moved toward social democratic positions, got nine.

Given the refusal of HB to make parliamentary deals, there were two possible combinations — PSOE-EE-PNV and PSOE-PNV. Both were tried. The first formula did not work. In its February 28 issue, *Zutik*, the paper of the Fourth Internationalist organization, the Liga Komunista Iraultzailea (LKI — Revolutionary Communist League), I. Madoz gave the following explanation:

"The failure of the three-way pact was blamed on lack of agreement about social security. But I think the real reason was the subordinate position in which the nationalists were left with respect to the PSOE. The PNV hammered away that the tripartite deal was a fact, denouncing the horse-trading with the PSOE and announcing that it was going into opposition.

"Garaikoetxea's coup in reaching a prior agreement with EE forced the hands of the PSOE and the PNV. The offensive had included an attack on the PNV's provincial power centers (change of the electoral law for local governments) that the PSOE initially supported. The model proposed by Garaikoetxea, in fact, was more like the old methods of making demands . . . than like the recent pacts for running the government."

The PNV is actually a localist party. (It originated as a nationalist

party for the province of Viskaya, in fact, and only slowly expanded its vision). That character is reflected, among other things, by its opposition to generalized use of the unified form of the Basque language. The conflict between the PNV representatives on the local level and at the level of the autonomous parliament was a prime factor in the split, which followed the June 1986 Spanish state elections.

In the transition from the Francoist dictatorship to parliamentary democracy, the PNV pinned its strategic identity on developing the statute of autonomy granted by the new regime. That involved both accommodation and pressure to expand the sphere of the autonomous institutions. The latter aspect has been progressively disappearing.

The PNV started to run into trouble when Madrid started taking back its concessions to national rights, with the passage of the Law on the Harmonization of the Autonomization of the Autonomous Authorities (LOAPA), adopted on February 23, 1982. It had the insensitivity, or the bad luck, to form its coalition with the PSOE, which clearly marks another major retreat, on the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the LOAPA.

## Statute of autonomy

The bourgeois nationalist party made its first big step back in December 1984, when it concluded a legislative pact with the PSOE in order to break the deadlock that had existed in the autonomous parliament.

In order to make that shift, the PNV had to remove Garaikoetxea, opening the crisis that led to the split.

In return for the transfer of some administrative powers to the Basque autonomous government, the PNV moderated its opposition to the central government and took a more bureaucratic approach to the statute of autonomy. It turned away from the potential uses of the statute to

*Demonstration in support of Basque refugees (DR)*



expand the national rights of the Basque people.

Thus, the PNV got the support of the PSOE in the Basque parliament, enabling it to pass budgets and laws that it otherwise could not have gotten through. At the same time, the deal opened up the way for the PSOE government to step up repression against the revolutionary nationalists.

The pact, however, was only a *modus vivendi*, and not an outright coalition. The joint government of the PSOE and the PNV thus marks a new stage in the betrayal of the bourgeois nationalists. The virtual disappearance of the right-wing Spanish parties in Euskadi, for instance, reflects the fact that the anti-nationalists have thrown their support behind the social democrats.

Zutik wrote: "This new government is going to increase all the frustrations of the Basque people. It was born under the shadow of the greatest unpopularity and the greatest political and ethical discredit. Nothing can be expected from it but a deepening of the most rotten and unpopular aspects of the previous government.

"We are not suggesting that any other pact would have been better. By no means. In the situation in Euskadi, any agreement that respects the constitution [of the Spanish state] and the statute [of autonomy] could only be a benefit for the central government and a source of national dissatisfaction."

The decline of the PNV has gone hand in hand with the growth of revolutionary nationalism. Against the background of the treacherous parliamentary horse-trading by the bourgeois nationalists, HB stood a jailed young activist facing 64 years in prison, Yoldi, for the post of *lehendakari*. Zutik commented:

"The presence of Yoldi in the Basque parliament has a great political significance. It is a symbol of an intransigent and honest struggle - although we do not share his outlook. Yoldi can be a tribune exposing this new swindle of the Basque people by the craven nationalist parties. Paradoxically, his voice may be the only one that speaks freely in this parliament. The new tactic that Herri Batasuna is starting of attending the parliament is proving very positive."

This prediction seems to have been born out by the impact of Yoldi's speech: "I have come from prison, and I am going back there. But there are a lot of us, and there will be more and more." But it remains to be seen if HB will develop political tactics enabling it to maintain and extend its moral authority. □

## Battle resumes for the 35-hour week

THE CONTRACTS of the two major West German unions that fought an historic battle for a 35-hour week in 1984 run out in the spring of 1987, which opens the way objectively for a renewal of the fight for a shorter workweek. Negotiations between the unions and the bosses began several weeks ago. It is already clear that the metal industry capitalists are no less determined to resist any reduction of the workweek than they were in 1984.

The following article, from the March 12 issue of *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the paper of the United Socialist Party in which German Fourth Internationalists participate, describes the issues and the first rounds of the battle.

IG Metall's overtime ban in Baden-Wurtemberg is beginning to show its first effects. There has also been a good participation in IG Metall's warning strikes.

How necessary mass actions by workers in the metal industry are now is shown clearly by the "offer" that the industry's bosses have made in the fifth round of negotiations in Nordrhein-Westfalen:

\* After July 1, 1988 the workweek is to be reduced by an hour and a half to 38 hours! This rule is to last until the end of June 1991.

\* For individuals, the workweek is to be flexible between 36 and 40 hours.

\* The range over which the working time is to be averaged is to be extended from two months to a year.

\* Saturdays are to be included in the normal distribution of work-time.

\* From April 2, 1987, wages and salaries are to be increased by 2.7 per cent. From July 1, 1988, a further increase of 1.5 per cent is



to go into effect.

With the establishment of the 38-hour week until the middle of 1991, the 35-hour week is to be buried as an issue in ordinary negotiations. Averaging worktime over a year is to make it possible to set the actual worktime in accordance with seasonal variations, which opens the way for a considerable intensification of labor and for smaller work teams.

The transformation of Saturday into a normal workday, along with the lengthening of the period over which worktime is to be averaged to a year opens the way for new schemes for shift work and a major extension of factory operating time.

The wage expert in the IG Metall leadership, Klaus Zwickel, has declared that the union will not obstruct plans for extending the operating time of factories.

Anyone who leaves open the question of longer operating times will soon realize that they are inevitably drawn into a discussion of extending shift work and weekend work. This argument leads you further and further onto the defensive.

On the other hand, however, IG Metall does not have bad prospects for broad support, if it presents the alternatives clearly, instead of obscuring them. The successful actions that have been carried out show that. □

# Victory for the student movement

IN OCTOBER 1968, just before the opening of the Olympic Games, the army opened fire on students occupying the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City. Hundreds were killed. The student unrest that shook Mexico, like many other countries, ended here in tragedy. The ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) ensured that there would be a long period of quiet in the universities.

Last November, the biggest student mobilizations since 1968 broke out. This time the students were victorious, and the government was forced to give in. Edgardo Sanchez, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Mexican section of the Fourth International, explains the background to the students' struggle and the significance of their victory.

EDGARDO SANCHEZ

In the words of President Miguel de la Madrid, 1987 is a "political" year. It is in this context that we have to look at the December-January student movement's recent victory. Leaving aside the journalistic fulsomness of the president's definition, there is little doubt that the coming year will be extremely important politically. It will be a year of electoral campaigning in preparation for the presidential elections in 1988. The candidates for this election will be nominated this year, and in particular we will find out who the PRI are putting up.

The fighting inside the state apparatus and the PRI has already begun over which faction of the bureaucracy will win out in the nomination of the presidential candidate.

Everything happening at the moment in Mexico is strongly marked by this internal struggle of the bourgeoisie, even though it is nearly certain that it will be the incumbent president who will tip the scales in the selection of the candidate.

The five years of Miguel de la Madrid's government have been very hard ones for the workers and the masses. But the current situation is favourable for putting demands. To improve its position for the coming elections, the government may soften its policies towards the workers' movement, most notably on wages.

For a large part of the population, the electoral fraud — which

has taken on incredible proportions in recent years, particularly at expense of the rightist National Action Party (PAN) — has put into question the very legitimacy of the government. This is a new factor. The government coming out of the next elections is in danger of looking illegitimate right from the start. That has never happened before.

For example, in 1982, when the PRT presented Rosario Ibarra as its presidential candidate, we said that there was fraud against the left. But it is one thing to say that there is fraud, and another to say that the PRI's victory was illegitimate, because in spite of this fraud helping the PRI, it was indisputable that they had well and truly won the elections.

However, at present the danger for the ruling party is that large parts of the population consider that the next government will be illegitimate because of the accumulated electoral fraud over the last two years in the local elections. Because of this, there are many in the state apparatus who are ready to make economic concessions. For the same reason, the situation is less favourable for the PRI to directly confront the mass movement with repression. A massive, open repression appears very difficult, and the unfolding of the student movement and the victory it achieved confirms this analysis.

Another, far from minor factor, is the divisions in the PRI: the conflicts with the union bureaucracy.

Most of the Mexican workers' movement is directly controlled by the government via a powerful union bureaucracy that feeds on corruption and on the repression of all independent expressions of the movement. But five years of Miguel de la Madrid's government has left the union bureaucracy in a delicate situation, and it has been forced to take its distance somewhat from the PRI government.

For example, at the end of 1968, the Labour Council — the highest body including all the unions controlled by the PRI — re-elected its chair. Traditionally in years dominated by forthcoming elections it is a veteran trade-union leader, Fidel Velasquez, who takes this position and proposes the PRI's candidate. However, for the first time in many years another member of the union bureaucracy was elected chair — the general secretary of the telephone workers' union. He is not a member of the PRI, a precedent in itself, and while being part of the bureaucracy he represents a union sector that came out of a big struggle fifteen years ago, and which has a history of struggles and mobilizations.

## Implications for the future of the mass movement

From a certain standpoint, this new leadership of the Labour Council reflects the pressure and the blackmail that the union bureaucracy intends to apply on the government to orient in this or that way in relation to the nomination of the next president of the republic.

All these elements have very important implications for the future development of the mass movement, and it is in this context that the student movement sprang up.

The student mobilization was very similar to the various mobilizations of youth that developed in other parts of the world in the last few months. But the Mexican student movement, in distinction from the movements in France or Spain for example, is not a national movement. (1) Only the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) was affected, but it is the biggest in the country.

1. On the French and Spanish student strikes, see 'International Viewpoint' No. 111, December 22, 1986 and No. 114, February 23, 1987.

There are 400,000 people there: 320,000 students, 35,000 teachers and 30,000 administrators organized in unions. UNAM comprises 40 teaching centres and more than a thousand buildings all over Mexico City. The student movement is organized in the various areas of the city, so that nowhere has been left untouched by the activity of the students. Although the movement itself was not nationally organized, it had repercussions on public opinion throughout the country.

As in other countries, the student movement was fighting to defend an open university for the people. Two aspects of the UNAM rector's reforms sparked off the movement: their content and the way they were presented.

The reforms were basically an attack on the right to free education which more or less exists in Mexico on the university level. At the moment, a student pays 200 pesos (0.20 US dollars) in registration fees per year, and all the other university services are extremely cheap. The proposed university reform would have increased fees for registration, exams and degrees. These reforms would also have put an end to the automatic right to go on from the last year of highschool to the first year of university. The purpose of the reforms was clear: to restrict access to the university for the poorest people.

Another similarity with other youth movements was the presence of tens of thousands of highschool youth. The involvement of the school students with the movement in the universities was made easier because the highschools are statutorily part of the UNAM. The attempt to introduce entrance examinations for the university seemed

*The University Students' Council (DR)*



totally ridiculous to the students, because it is the university itself which sets highschool courses and curricula. This is what made the movement so explosive.

In line with the austerity policy of the de la Madrid government, the aim was to reduce public spending on education, by making university entrance more selective.

UNAM was a trial run for the government. It wanted to push through its reforms in the biggest and most important university in the country, and then extend them nationwide. The victory of the UNAM movement was thus a victory for all the students of Mexico.

Another factor in sparking off the movement was the way in which the reforms were decided. Besides the rector of the university, there is a legal institution which is, properly speaking, the governing body of UNAM. As in many other Latin American countries, UNAM is considered to be an autonomous university, self-governing without direct intervention from the state. Of course, there are many ways in which the state can exercise control over the university, but this question of autonomy is important to understand the growth of the student movement now and in 1968. This autonomy is the basis for the demand that the state should not interfere in the university.

### Majority of students not consulted

The governing body of the university is the University Council, which comprises the directors of the different schools and faculties, with a minority student represent-

ation. But the majority of students were not consulted about the reforms. Only two or three student representatives in the University Council opposed the reform when it was slipped through in an all-night session. This made the reforms even more unacceptable to the students. One of the student representatives was a PRT member so the PRT played an important role from the beginning of the movement.

The movement took a lot of people by surprise because, unlike 1968, there were no signs beforehand of anything happening. In fact, there has hardly been any student activity since the 1968 defeat — there were no mass independent student unions, nor any youth organizations linked to the political parties. Some years ago, the PRT tried to form a youth organization at the university, but this failed, owing to the post-1968 decline. Consequently, only a very small number of students belonged to left political organizations.

So this student explosion came as a real surprise, and the astonishment grew as the movement grew.

The first big meeting at the university brought together 30,000 students on November 6. The first big demonstration of 60,000 took place on November 25. Just before the vacation, on December 11, 100,000 students demonstrated. After the holidays, on January 21, before the strike began, 280,000 students demonstrated for the first time outside the National Palace. Two or three days before the end of the strike, on February 9, the last demonstration was organized, with 350,000 people. We saw a continuous and impressive growth of this student movement.

For everyone — the press, political organizations, the government — the constant and obligatory reference was to the 1968 movement because of the combativity and size of this mobilization. Everyone spoke of demonstrations "such as have never been seen since 1968". In some respects, this reference itself was traumatic given the tragic end of the 1968 struggle.

Parallel to this growing mobilization, the movement was organized through the University Students' Council (CEU), a body which grew out of the struggle, and which included representatives from UNAM's 40 teaching centres. They were all recallable, and divided into various commissions. This democratic body gave the mass movement a profoundly democratic character, which recaptured much of the experience of the Student Council created in 1968.

But there were differences with the 1968 movement. First, there were no distinctive political demands. In 1968, it was exactly the reverse — there was not a single demand relating to the universities. Students then demanded the release of political prisoners, the repeal of anti-democratic laws and so on. It was a direct confrontation with the government. Here, on the contrary, the movement started strictly from demands around the university. This does not mean that the movement was less radical than in 1968 — far from it.

In many respects the generation of students who participated in this movement is much more radical, and has a greater knowledge of politics than the generation of 1968. It is true that there was not the same reference to certain political values as there was in 1968, such as the reference to Che Guevara or the Vietnamese revolution, but in some ways the rejection of society is wider and more profound than it was at the start of the 1968 movement.

The second element was the massive participation of the high-school students — of the generation which we call the “crisis generation”. These school students, who were the most active, come from much more proletarian backgrounds than those of 1968. Even the layers who are affected most directly by the crisis — not only the children of workers, but also of the unemployed — were present in this mobilization. And of course, this was reflected in the slogans of the demonstrations. For example, one of the slogans which was taken up most widely was: “Education must first of all serve the children of the workers, and only after that those of the bourgeoisie.” This slogan was chanted very consciously by thousands of students.

Even if it was less immediately apparent than in 1968, the student movement had a clear internationalist consciousness. This is, no doubt, one of the differences with the youth movement that shook Europe. The proximity of the Nicaraguan revolution is, of course, the cause.

The following incident illustrates graphically the extent of this internationalist consciousness. In December, when the confrontation with the authorities was at its height and all discussion was centred on the reform, Antonio Santos, one of the leaders of the student movement and a member of the PRT, proposed at a meeting in the city university a minute’s silence for Malik Ousseki who had just been killed in Paris. It is important to under-



*The December-January movement was the biggest since 1968 (DR)*

stand that the students never miss a chance to express their disagreement with proposals through boos and hisses. But in this case the thousands of students present rallied completely behind Antonio Santos’ proposal, and a few days later a new slogan was added to those that had been chanted until then: “If the law has been repealed in France, why not in Mexico?” In other words, if they have won in France why shouldn’t it be possible in Mexico?

### Public debate between students and authorities

The third extremely important element — since it both contributed to the victory of the movement and also will certainly be taken up in other struggles — was the use of public dialogue. The student movement in 1968 had directly political demands, but for five months it developed without ever having anyone to negotiate with. Remember that at the time, the left did not have representatives or people in parliament who could express the students’ demands. The movement was alone, isolated, and without official spokespeople it was ignored. The movement publicly demanded talks with the government, and the PRI replied by sending emissaries to have secret discussions with some student leaders. But this was never public, as the students would have liked.

This demand has been taken up by the mobilization this year. What was astounding was that they got such a public debate. In UNAM’s main auditorium, named after Che Guevara since 1968, there were two opposing panels. One one side

were seated representatives of the University Students’ Council, and on the other representatives of the university authorities, and they discussed the validity of the proposed reforms. Not only did the authorities agree to a discussion in front of the assembled students, who had no hesitation in booing this or that argument, but they also had to accept that the debate be transmitted live over the university radio and later on the television. This meant that thousands and thousands of people participated in these discussions, not only the students.

It is easy to imagine the enormous impact of this public debate. It contributed a great deal to the confidence of the students, to the democratic organization of the movement and to spreading the arguments against the reforms. The movement’s credibility grew enormously within a few days, while the authorities came out of the affair more or less humiliated.

In the second phase of the movement, the idea took hold not only that the reforms should be repealed but that, in addition, a university congress should be held, with all sectors of the university represented proportionally — thus giving a majority to the students. At such a congress, everyone concerned could discuss what reforms were needed in the university. The administration of the university tried to put the students on the defensive by arguing that they did not have any constructive proposals to put forward, that they were simply “anti-establishment” and opposed to everything. Very adroitly, the movement replied that it did have proposals to make, but that it did not intend to discuss them until the reforms proposed by the university were withdrawn, and that new reforms should be discussed

by those concerned.

The fourth element, which I have already mentioned, was the democratic forms of organization the students adopted. This had very big repercussions. This left the government, which was always looking for "manipulators" to back up its conspiracy theory, rather at a loss.

At every stage of the struggle, the student movement leadership knew how to identify its enemies and put forward the appropriate slogans. It avoided falling into the trap proposed by certain leftist groups of immediately directing the struggle against the government. It understood how to use the autonomy of the university to demand that the dispute be settled within the university itself without any state intervention, in order to have a better relationship of forces.

One of the important aspects of the student movement was that it had a far-reaching impact on the political situation in the country. It managed to break with the parliamentarist and electoralist logic that the left has been caught in over the last five years. Although the situation is different in the countryside because there struggles have continued, the urban masses — except for the earthquake victims — and the trade unions have fallen back on their sectoral struggles. All the actions against government austerity and industrial reconversion have been partial struggles which have, in general, been defeated.

As a consequence of these defeats, there has been a growing fear in the masses of direct struggles and strikes, and the discontent that provoked the government's measures was funneled into the electoral and parliamentary channels. And yet from last year this diversion of struggles toward the electoral arena

showed its limits with the permanent fraud surrounding the elections. Being unable to express their discontent either by struggle, or through the ballot box, the masses were at an impasse.

In some parts of the Mexican left, notably among the reformists, there gradually emerged an extremely pessimistic view of the situation of the left. These organizations maintained that the situation was very bad since the left as a whole was incapable of moving forward electorally, while the right — the PAN — was making notable advances, capitalizing on the opposition to the government. They explained that this absence of electoral headway for the left was due to its division, and that the only real remedy was to unify all the left organizations into one party and so on.

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### A victory all along the line

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The students put struggle back on the agenda, in the same way — but even more powerfully — as the movement of the earthquake victims had.

The victory of the student movement, which even overcame the trauma of the 1968 tragedy, showed that the left was capable of winning and not only of bringing about heroic defeats. Some parts of the left were so caught up in their pessimism that when the victory came, even that did not change them. The authorities met, agreed to suspend the reforms and to call a university congress. This congress was to be discussed and organized by a commission that they proposed, which would include representatives from the CEU, and which must be held in

the coming months. It was, therefore, a victory all along the line!

For two or three days there was a very strange situation. Some of the highschools and the university were celebrating the victory, and some other highschools were still on strike because certain leftists could not believe that they had won.

The student movement had an immediate impact because it was the first movement in five years that had succeeded in partially defeating the government's austerity plan. No other movement or trade union had managed to do this. The only people who had won some demands were the earthquake victims, but this was very exceptional, a reflection of their particular moral authority as victims of a catastrophe.

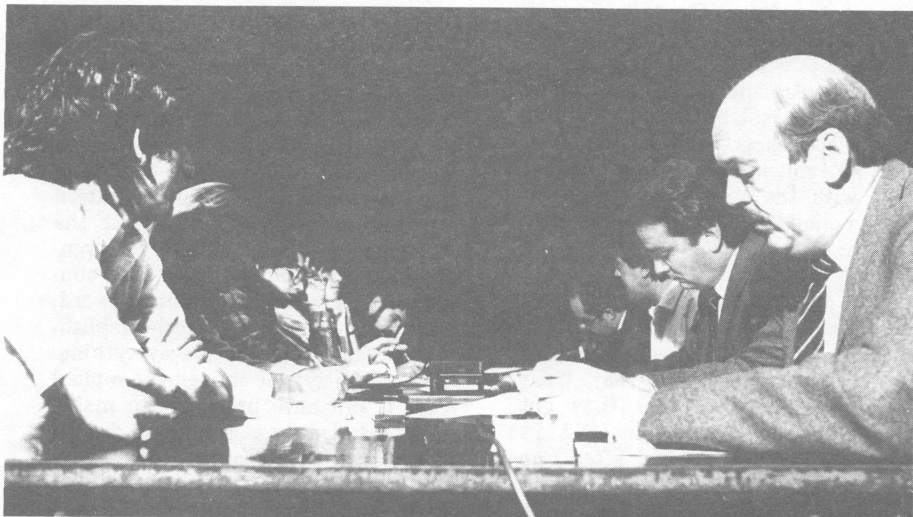
This victory coincided with the shake up in the trade-union movement mentioned previously. The Labour Council, in its blackmailing policy towards the government, had demanded a wage rise for all the sectors organized by the Labour Council. Every six months the minimum wage is revised and increased, but this time the Labour Council demanded that this rise be extended to all wage-earners, whether or not they were on the minimum wage, instead of work place by workplace negotiations, as is usually the case. It went so far as to threaten the government with a general strike — something it had never done before.

But horrified by its own audacity, the Labour Council kept postponing its proposed strike as the date came nearer. One trade union took it at its word though — the electrical workers' union. This union controls the energy supply for the whole of Mexico City. Just to underline what a big step this was, it should be noted that since the beginning of the century this union has only struck twice. One hour before the strike was due to start, the police intervened in the power stations to prevent any power cuts.

The CEU solidarized with the striking electricians. It was PRT comrade Antonio Santos who went to assure the electrical workers' union that the students would be present at the workers' demonstration on March 3. This demonstration was a big success. It is the first time in recent years that there has been a joint demonstration between an independent student movement led by the left and an important trade-union leadership.

The student movement has brought into being a new political generation which holds out a big promise for the future. □

*Face to face — students and university authorities (DR)*





# A racist murder in Howard Beach

ON DECEMBER 21, a gang of white youths chased and beat three Black men in Howard Beach, a section of Queens in New York. One of the Black men ran onto a highway during the chase and was struck and killed by a car. Michael Griffith's death has ignited a sustained series of protests against racism in New York.

ANDY POLLOCK

The murder of Griffith follows several other racially-motivated deaths in the city in the last ten years. Arthur Miller, Willie Turks, Edmund Perry, Michael Stewart and Eleanor Bumpurs were each murdered in racist incidents, either by city police, transit police, or white civilians. The death of each was followed by rallies and marches and the formation of committees to seek justice in their cases. But the Howard Beach incident is also provoking widespread discussion about issues of racist violence, discrimination in the city in general and the role of the various forces involved in addressing these issues.

Within 24 hours after Griffith's murder meetings were called to discuss a response. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) called for a candlelight vigil the following Saturday in Howard Beach. Other groups, including many activists in the Southern Africa solidarity movement and grassroots community organizers, called for a march through that neighborhood. The latter groups intended the march to end at the 107th police precinct in Queens, which had been exposed the year before as the site of torture of Black suspects with "stun guns."

As the days leading up to the march passed, the precinct became more and more of a focus of attention as a cover-up of the incident by the Queens District Attorney (DA) became known. The DA, John Santucci (who a few weeks later was embroiled in controversy for participating in a 14-hour lunch meeting with a local Mafia chief), was refusing to move on testimony by one of the survivors of the incident, Cedrick Sandiford. He said that the driver of the car that killed Griffith, Dominick Blum, was part of the group that chased and

beat the men. Blum was not held for questioning when he returned to the scene after having gone home to consult his father (a police officer), and returned with a different car. No hit-and-run or leaving the scene of the accident charges were filed, and Blum was never arrested or indicted in connection with the murder.

Sandiford, a victim and Griffith's father, meanwhile was questioned more about a robbery which had occurred in Queens earlier that evening than about the Howard Beach incident. As a result Sandiford, who later reported physical abuse at the hands of the police investigating the incident, refused to collaborate further with the investigation.

## Police and media witchhunt

Sandiford's treatment, combined with the failure to arrest or indict any of the participants in the attack other than the three picked up, led his lawyers to demand the intervention of a special New York state prosecutor.

This became the signal for a joint law enforcement-media witchhunt against Sandiford, his lawyers and their supporters in the community, with the aim of taking the heat off the racist gang and the Queens officials. The lawyers, Alton Maddox and C Vernon Mason, have participated in many of the well-publicized police brutality cases in recent years. Mason also served as the lawyer for Columbia students fighting disciplinary proceedings growing out of their anti-apartheid blockade". The two have frequently been targeted by the media as a result. Mason himself ran for Manhat-

tan DA in 1985 in a campaign based largely on denunciation of the complicity of the current DA in hampering prosecution of racial violence.

As the Black community began to mobilize for the march on Howard Beach, media attention focused almost exclusively on Sandiford's refusal to testify. Sandiford and the lawyers were blamed for hindering the effective prosecution of the case. The most strident voice in this campaign was Mayor Koch, who had earned the wrath of Blacks for his defence of racist vigilante Bernhard Goetz, his support for the police who murdered Michael Stewart and Eleanor Bumpurs, his frequent racist comments (he once referred to Black Congressman Ronald Dellums as a "Watusi") and the overall policy direction of his tenure in office. This has favored the real estate interests gentrifying the city at the expense of poor, and especially minority, neighborhoods.

After the Howard Beach incident Koch, denouncing the attackers as a "lynch mob", tried to pose as a champion of racial justice, resurrecting his days as a civil rights lawyer in the South (Mason later claimed these days numbered eight). Koch held several meetings at City Hall with Black elected officials and ministers, calling for tolerance and understanding. Koch combined this pose with a vicious attack on Sandiford and the lawyers, blaming their attempts to expose a police cover-up as hindering the prosecution.

On Saturday December 27, approximately 5,000 marchers, mostly Black, showed up in Howard Beach. They were met by white residents with an overt and vicious display of racism. Howard Beach is a largely Italian neighborhood of middle class and skilled working class single homes. In media interviews after the attack these residents had repeatedly denied any racism in their neighborhood (although some of them followed this up with questions such as "what were those Blacks doing in Howard Beach anyway?"). But on the day of the march hundreds of young white men gathered around the pizza parlor at which the beating occurred and yelled racial slurs and obscenities at the marchers. Police prevented any physical contact between the two sides: the potential for violence was clear.

Many marchers were shocked by the depth of hatred shown, and older marchers said they had seen nothing like it since the actions in the South in the 1960's. Howard Beach has resurrected the geographical designation of New York, among Blacks, as "upSouth".

The NAACP, in the days before the

march, had engaged in secret negotiations with the police precinct over the route of the protest, hoping to avoid a march on the precinct. The NAACP and some Black elected officials were hedging on support for the victims lawyers and sought to defuse criticism of official handling of the case. After a march down the highway on which Griffith was killed, the marchers were led into a fenced-in school playground to hear speeches by civil rights organization leaders and elected officials. Half of the crowd remained outside the gate chanting for a march on the precinct stationhouse. Some militant community and student organizers moved through the crowd trying to organize such an action, and Reverends Daughtry and Butts and C Vernon Mason announced from the platform that after the speeches the precinct would be targeted. But at the end of the program the NAACP representative introduced a police official who gave the crowd instructions for the remainder of the march route (which of course did not include a stop by the precinct). The crowd ignored her directions however and marched chanting to the police station, then returned to the main highway and the pizza parlor, where they were met again by hundreds of screaming racists.

March participants were strikingly militant and determined. The most popular chant was "Coward Beach, haven't you heard, New York ain't Johannesburg." In speeches and informal conversations a consensus was emerging that white residents of Queens, by attacking Blacks passing through their neighborhoods, were establishing a de facto pass law system.

The racism exhibited by Howard Beachers found a subtler reflection in white progressive circles. The *Village Voice*, a liberal New York political and cultural weekly, carried an editorial by the publisher, Jack Newfield, which denounced the victim's lawyers as opportunists and racists, and organizers of the protest activities as criminals and poverty pimps. Newfield also waxed eloquent on Mayor Koch's supposed return to civil rights activism.

Among white movement groups the response, at least in terms of mobilizing outrage to this attack, has not been much more helpful. The percentage of whites at the Howard Beach march and succeeding rallies was very small. Predominantly white anti-intervention [in Central America] groups, women's groups, housing committees and unions have done very little so far to mobilize their members around this issue. In white progressive circles, in fact, more time was spent speculating on

the motivation and wisdom of the lawyers' strategy than in organizing in support of the Black community's protests.

Some attempts have been made to counter this trend, however. A group of white progressive activists built a meeting on 48 hours notice almost entirely by word of mouth and filled a high school auditorium. Harold Mendlowitz, President of Amalgamated Transportation Union Local 1202 (Greyhound Bus workers) organized a press conference of progressive white union officials to denounce the lynching and to express support for the lawyers. Some rank-and-file labor groups, such as Chalkdust (teachers union), Hell on Wheels (subway workers) and the Bellringer (phone workers), as well as the *Labor Notes* supporters network, have begun to address the issue in their publications and meetings.

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### Demand for independent prosecutor

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After the march attention began to focus on the demand for an independent special prosecutor to take the case out of the hands of the Queens DA. The demand was made upon Governor Mario Cuomo, who is being widely touted as a potential presidential candidate. Cuomo refused to intervene at first, refused even to publicly express sympathy for the victims or to attend Griffith's funeral, claiming he was too busy to address the issue. Cuomo then set up meetings with various Black elected officials (some of the same officials who had agreed to meet with Koch), while trying to exclude those Black leaders who had supported the lawyers. The attempts by both Cuomo and Koch to play off one group of Black officials against the other, and against community organizers, has angered the community, and has been the subject of articles and editorials in such Black journals as the *City Sun*.

Cuomo finally acceded to the demand for a special prosecutor (although not before allowing one of his assistants to denounce the lawyers who had demanded this prosecutor as having "zero credibility"), at which point Sandiford agreed to provide testimony.

In the meantime follow-up developments on two previous cases of racist violence have served to remind New Yorkers that Howard Beach is part of a larger pattern. A commission investigating the Michael Stewart murder (Stewart was a young Black graffiti artist and student murdered by transit

police) found that the Transit Authority had not adequately investigated the incident and that the cop who accompanied Stewart to the hospital had not reacted when he saw Stewart had stopped breathing. The day after the commission's report was issued the chief of transit police resigned. Meanwhile, the policeman who murdered Eleanor Bumpurs, an elderly Black woman shot during an eviction attempt, was put on trial after earlier charges were dismissed.

Since the appointment of the special prosecutor 12 of the gang members have been indicted, three on murder charges. Since Santucci had only arrested three originally, and then only sought assault indictments against them, the refusal of Sandiford and the lawyers to cooperate with Santucci has now been vindicated, and the media witchhunt against them is now more widely seen in its true character as part of the cover-up of the crime.

After the march at Howard Beach a series of community meetings and rallies were held in Black neighborhoods in Harlem and Brooklyn in churches and highschools, drawing hundreds, and on at least three separate occasions over two thousand. Various groups and individuals in the Black community next called for a "Day of Outrage" on January 21, a key feature of which was to be a boycott of all white-owned businesses (an idea which was promptly denounced by Koch as racist). On the day several groups leafletted stores in Brooklyn and Queens asking consumers to participate in the boycott. Reminders were made to the community that Martin Luther King, whose birthday had just been celebrated, had used the boycott himself in his struggles.

The idea of a march on City Hall, to expose Koch's complicity in the incident and in the overall pattern of discrimination in the city, was raised as far back as the first set of meetings the day after the attack. The National African Youth Student Alliance (NAYSA), a group formed initially by students active on campus around apartheid, issued a call for a march on Koch's home in Greenwich Village as a centerpiece for the Day of Outrage.

This march, which was composed mostly of militant young Blacks (a large number of them highschool students), began at the Martinique Hotel, a welfare hotel which was chosen to symbolize the link between racial violence and economic forms of racism. The march then wove its way through the streets to Koch's home, where the crowd heard speeches from the more militant community leaders, those who had

supported the lawyers all along and had refused to work with Koch and Cuomo.

The events of the last month have heightened discussion in New York around the general status of minority communities. This has been spurred on by several factors:

\* Within New York itself discrimination in housing, education and jobs has increased in the last two decades. After the budget cuts during the city's fiscal crisis of the early 1970's, leading to hospital closures and education cuts, the "revival" of the city as a center for financial, real estate and related services has meant new jobs mostly for skilled white professionals, accompanied by gentrification throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn (even beginning to encroach on Harlem itself) driving out Blacks and other minorities. *Newsday*, a city daily, ran a seven-part series on racism in New York which documented these trends, including, and perhaps most relevant for Queens, the decades-long tradition of discrimination in the building-trades union.

\* Discrimination and violence against other national minorities in the city is on the rise. This has taken the form of physical attacks on Puerto Ricans in the South Bronx and in Queens. It has also taken the form of increased exploitation of immigrant workers — many from Central America, Asia and the Caribbean — in modern-day sweatshops. In addition, implementation of the new immigration bill promises to curtail the ability of immigrants to get jobs and the civil liberties of all workers.

\* The rise of racist attacks around the country, combined with years of attacks on affirmative action and desegregation by the Reagan administration, are seen as providing a context for the incidents in New York.

The response by Black elected officials in New York to Howard Beach comes in the context of a current crisis in their ranks. This crisis cropped up during Koch's last re-election campaign when a united Black-Hispanic opposition candidacy was sabotaged at the last minute by the announcement of a Harlem Democratic Party leader, Denny Farrell, that he would run, throwing out the possibility of a united effort.

Some Black officials (including, significantly, C Vernon Mason) refused to back Farrell, who was seen as a stalking horse for Koch and as dividing Blacks and Hispanics. Divisions between Harlem and Brooklyn Black Democrats have also surfaced (with the latter playing, all propor-

tions guarded, a more outspoken role).

This crisis among elected officials over Howard Beach also found a reflection in Jesse Jackson's response. Since 1984 Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition has been the focus of much of the discussion on the tactics and strategy of the Black movement. The Coalition's attitude toward the Democratic Party, its alliances with other groups, the choice of issues it addresses, have provided the framework for many activists pondering the fate of the anti-racist movement. A small core of anti-electoralist, anti-Democratic Party activists who disagree with the context of this discussion have tried to argue against the Rainbow perspective and called for the revival of independent mass mobilizations, but until now have been largely isolated and shunned as unrealistic. The response to Howard Beach, however, is giving the independent perspective increasing weight.

### Vacillations of Jesse Jackson

This is due in part to the vacillations of Jackson himself. Jackson was quoted as being first opposed to, then in favor of, the business boycott on January 21. He also tried to sidestep comment on the incident itself, first by claiming it was a local affair, then by saying he would not follow the lead of those who would "divide" people when what was needed was unity against Reaganism.

The first national convention of the Rainbow Coalition in early 1986 had participation not just from Black activists but also from farm groups, presidents of two US unions (and some, more militant rank-and filers, including Jim Guyette of P-9) and some Black elected officials who had not backed Jackson in 1984. With the Democratic Party more openly moving to the right, Jackson naturally felt his chances were improved to be the only pole of attraction for reform elements in the Democratic Party, and hoped to rally the above-named groups behind him. His ability to keep together this coalition, and still appeal to the mass sentiment among Blacks which buoyed his presidential campaign, faltered at its real test in a crisis: Howard Beach.

Because there was a split between the NAACP and most local Black elected officials on the one side, and more militant organizers in community and student groups on the other, over the type of response needed to the lynching, Jackson could not easily find a niche for

himself on this issue. One of his supporters confirmed to the *City Sun* (anonymously) that Jackson was trying to avoid alienating potential backers among the Black elected officials.

Jackson has correctly pointed to the connection between the Reagan/corporate economic offensive against workers of all nationalities and the rise of racist attacks. But his calls for a united response to this economic offensive comes in the context of his characterization of a militant response to Howard Beach as divisive. He has counterposed a united white-Black fight against "Reaganomics" to a militant response to Howard Beach.

Paul Robeson Jr., in a speech at Columbia University during a King Birthday forum, articulated this position in its most vulgar form. In a similar call for a joint response to economic exploitation, he advised Black workers to say to white workers "let's unite around jobs and wages and we'll sort the rest of this stuff out later."

The militant Black protesters in New York, especially the youth, are not willing to "sort this stuff out later." They want an end to racist violence and discrimination now. Furthermore, the more advanced labor activists are beginning to discuss how to *combine* defence of minority rights in the community and on the job with a united response to the corporate concessions drive. (1)

As protests against Howard Beach continue, and hopefully broaden to include attacks on other forms of racism, activists in the various predominantly white progressive movements (anti-intervention, anti-nuclear, women's, labor, etc.) must show their ability and willingness to mobilize their memberships around these issues. Support for actions called by Black community and student groups must be a priority for activists of all nationalities. Labor activists in particular need to discuss how to combine support for anti-racist demands on the job and in the community with organizing efforts against concessions to the bosses.

A golden opportunity to begin this process is offered by the April 25 march on Washington against US intervention in Central America and South Africa. By making the link between US interventionist policies and both economic exploitation and racial oppression at home, solidarity between white and non-white activists can be strengthened. □

1. The push to force the unions to give up gains won in earlier struggles.

# Eight years on from the Soviet intervention

THE LATEST session of the "indirect" negotiations between the Afghan and Pakistani governments, held under the aegis of the United Nations, concluded on March 10 in Geneva without reaching an agreement. The first session was held in June 1982. These negotiations enabled the Kabul and Islamabad governments to come to an understanding in June 1985 on the principal conditions for settling their conflict over the Afghan question.

They were the following: reciprocal noninterference, guaranteed by the United States and the USSR; return of those refugees wishing to; and phased withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Since then, the stumbling block in the negotiations has been the timetable for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

Under pressure from Washington, the Pakistani government was held firmly to the demand for a rapid withdrawal, not exceeding six months. The Soviet government has, through the intermediary of the Afghans, considerably softened its position. While the Afghans initially proposed a withdrawal of the Soviet troops over four years, they are now proposing a timetable of only 18 months. That is, the USSR considers that it still needs 18 months to assure that the regime it set up in Kabul will not collapse on the departure of its troops. Today, it is 87 months since the troops were sent in.

SALAH JABER

Massive intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan began on December 24, 1979. First of all, on December 27, some 5,000 men took care of overthrowing Hafizullah Amin. Then, a few days later, "on the request of the Afghan government" of Babrak Karmal, their stooge, the Kremlin leaders boosted the numbers of their intervention army to 80,000.

Today, seven years later, the Soviet army is still there and includes more than a 100,000 soldiers. And if the latest successor of Stalin to mount Lenin's mausoleum looks genuinely anxious to disengage from Afghanistan, this is far from the simplest of the problems that Leonid Brezhnev bequeathed to him.

If Brezhnev's commitment to withdraw the Soviet forces from Afghanistan "as soon as the causes that brought them there have disappeared" is to be kept, then such a withdrawal is not right around the corner, nor even around the next bend in the road.

In fact, today, seven years after the Soviet intervention, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime installed in Kabul is as weak, if not weaker, than it was before the Soviet troops came in, and in particular from the military standpoint. The rebel forces, on the other hand, are far stronger than they were in 1979, even if they seem to have marked time for two years. Moreover, the support of US imperialism and its allies for the rebels is out of all proportion to what it was before, and there is no indication that it is going to be scaled down or ended.

Bed of quicksand for USSR

Whatever gains may have been scored by the Kabul government and its Soviet protectors over recent

months, the fact remains that for the seven years that have gone by since December 1979 the balance sheet of the intervention of Soviet troops shows an appalling bankruptcy. "The causes that brought them here" have been aggravated by their presence, so that Afghanistan has become a bed of quicksand for the USSR — to the great satisfaction of the American imperialists still traumatized by their Indochinese experience.

For some who take a simplistic view of what is involved, these facts can be disconcerting. How could a workers' state, intervening on behalf of a progressive regime against a medieval reaction, get caught in such a blind alley? I will try to explain it.

While it is true that Trotskyists reject the Menshevik-Stalinist notion of countries that are ripe and countries that are not ripe for proletarian revolution, this refers, of course, only to the ripeness of the socio-economic conditions — that is, to the idea, largely discredited since 1917, that proletarian revolution is reserved for countries with an advanced capitalist development. But the question of the ripeness of the political conditions is another kettle of fish altogether. Disregarding this factor means falling into Blanquism or some other variety of putschism.

On the other hand, while the political conditions are autonomous to a large degree, dependent on domestic and external "subjective" factors, the fact remains that they are conditioned by the socio-economic context in which they develop.

Afghanistan shares with North Yemen the peculiarity of having been the only Islamic country to enjoy a real measure of independence before World War II. It was an independence that bordered on autarky, and the concomitant of that was preserving an archaic society that stood out as a medieval island in a rapidly changing world. A visit to these two countries in the early 1960s was like a trip in a time machine.

The Bolshevik revolution found itself confronting similar societies in Central Asia and on the borders of the former czarist empire. There was a great temptation to export the revolution, disregarding the extreme immaturity of the socio-political conditions. That was what Bukharin wanted to do in his ultraleft period in 1919, inspired by the example of Baskhkiria, where the nationalists had done an aboutface and gone over completely from an alliance with the Whites to an alliance with the Reds. This success contrasted with the difficulties encountered by the revolutionist troops with the Uzbeks (the defeat at Bukhara in 1918) and

in the Muslim territories in the Caucasus.

Ultraleftists and Great Russian chauvinists joined together on the Bolshevik side to call for forcible sovietization of these territories, against the will of the great majority of their inhabitants. Bukharin justified these designs by reserving the right of self-determination to those nations struggling against imperialism. Lenin, whose underlying democratic feelings are overlooked by "disillusioned ex-Marxists," rebelled against this cynicism:

"We cannot refuse any people of the former Russian empire the right to self-determination. Let us admit even that the Bashkirs overthrew their exploiters with our help. But that would only be possible if the revolution were completely ripe. It is necessary to act cautiously so that our intervention will not obstruct the process of the differentiation of the proletariat, a process that we want to accelerate. What can we, then, do for peoples such as the Kirghiz, the Uzbeks, the Tadzhiks and the Turkmenis who until now have been subject to the influence of their mullahs? . . . Can we go and say to these peoples: We will overthrow your exploiters? We cannot do that, because they are completely under the influence of their mullahs. In such cases, we have to wait until the nation involved has evolved, until the proletariat has become differentiated from the bourgeois elements, as is inevitable." (1)

However, in the event, it was not Lenin's point of view that prevailed but Bukharin's — mainly because of the momentum of the war against the White armies and their imperialist allies. Thus, all the Muslim territories of the former czarist empire were reannexed by the Soviet state. And Lenin's warnings also proved correct.

The Bashkirs soon rebelled against the new representatives of the Great Russian state, and joined the Basmachis and other Mujahideen of the time, who made life difficult for the Soviet Republic up until the advent of the Stalin terror at the end of the 1920s. Today, 70 years after the October revolution, the Sufi mystical brotherhoods have more native members in the Muslim regions of the USSR than the Communist Party. (2)

Lenin's concern not to violate the natural course of history was not limited to the problem of exporting the revolution. It was at the root of his polemic against "permanent revolution" prior to 1917. And if Lenin was mistaken in his predictions, as he later acknowledged, the fact remains that the idea of the representatives of the socialist proletariat taking power despite the hostility of



*Soviet troops in Afghanistan (DR)*

the large peasant majority in Russia — a false interpretation of Trotsky's thought, it should be noted — in fact was Blanquist and not Marxist.

Any seizure of power carried out without the active support of a decisive section, if not the majority, of the toiling population can only be a putsch, whatever measures its organizers may later take. Such a regime would bear the marks of that until it was overthrown, either by an authentic revolution or by reaction. Logically, the more the ambitions of the putschists involve transformations of their society, for which it has not been prepared, the more their government is doomed to fall or to resort to external aid.

### Failure of transformations "from above"

We already had the example of the palely republican and Nasserite putsch by Sallal in North Yemen in September 1962. This government could not maintain itself even for a few years against the tribal-monarchist reaction supported by neighboring Saudi Arabia without the massive intervention of the Egyptian army.

The history of Afghanistan itself offers an illustration of the inevitable failure of transformations "from above" in societies with little predisposition to change. King Amanullah, who succeeded to the throne in 1919, was an admirer of the Turkish dictator Mustafa Kemal and signatory of the first Soviet-Afghan friendship treaty. He was, as one historian put

it, "to try to place his country at one stroke in the ranks of the civilized states." He was forced to abdicate in 1929, after five years of warfare against a wide-spread Islamic, conservative tribal rebellion supported by the British.

The seizure of power in Kabul in April 1978 by the putschist faction of the PDPA — known by the name of its publication, *Khalq* ("The People"), and led by Taraki and Amin — was even more certainly doomed to isolation. Equipped with a "socialist-oriented revolutionary program," the PDPA-Khalq had made its putschism into a theory. According to Taraki-Amin, "in developing nations, since the working class is not developed to the point of forming a government there is another source that can overthrow the oppressor feudal government, and it was constituted by the armed forces in Afghanistan." (3) In essence this amounted to a so-called revolution by means of the ruling class's own army, along the lines of what Ethiopia went through shortly before Afghanistan.

This sort of putschist government with radical social ambitions is inevitably led to institute a regime of terror. Its putschist origins reveal themselves even in literacy campaigns and agrarian reform. In Afghanistan these campaigns were undertaken

1. V.I. Lenin, "Report of the Party Program" at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (B), March 19, 1919.

2. See the works of Alexander Bennigsen, particularly his article published in 'Le Monde', November 15, 1984.

3. Cited by Fred Halliday in "War in Afghanistan", 'New Left Review', No. 119, January-February 1980.

in the worst possible ways, those most apt to provoke the hostility of the broad masses, instead of arousing their enthusiasm. (4)

In this regard, it is very instructive to compare the putschist methods of the PDPA-Khalq with the revolutionary democratic methods of the government that emerged from the revolution in South Yemen in 1969. (5) Whereas in Afghanistan, the agrarian reform — to cite only this example — was decreed from above and applied by military force, often against the will of those who were supposed to benefit from it, in South Yemen the leaders of the National Liberation Front were careful not to try to substitute themselves for the peasants and fisher people, and to arm them politically and materially to take control themselves of their own means of production.

Whatever the later bureaucratic degeneration of the South Yemenite regime, the fact remains that it was able to overcome social and ideological resistance comparable to that existing in Afghanistan with infinitely more success and despite a much more hostile environment.

Only 20 months after the seizure of power by the PDPA-Khalq, the rebellion of Islamic, reactionary tribal forces was becoming so widespread that the survival of the Kabul regime seemed very doubtful. Accused of adventurism and ultraleftism for trying to skip “the stage of the national democratic revolution,” Amin did not bow to the Kremlin. Called on to put some (holy) water in his wine and broaden his government to include other forces, starting with the moderate, reformist wing of the PDPA, the *Parcham* (“Flag”) faction, which had been pushed out by the *Kalq*, Amin instead completed the concentration of power in his hands. In September 1979, he eliminated his old companion Taraki, who was inclined to follow Big Brother’s advice. Two months later, Big Brother intervened massively, overthrowing Amin — who was killed — to replace him with the chief of the *Parcham* faction, Babrak Karmal.

“It was not easy for us to take the decision to send Soviet forces to Afghanistan,” Brezhnev told *Pravda* in January 1980. There was no reason not to believe him, although the inveterate anti-Sovieters saw the intervention in Afghanistan as a striking demonstration of “Russian expansionism,” which, according to them, only changed its flag in 1917. To take these people at their word, the Soviet operation was part of a vast expansionist offensive — marked by Angola, Ethiopia and other Soviet or Cuban military involvements — and in this case was heading for the “warm

seas.” According to these completely outmoded strategic criteria, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was only a first step that was to be followed by an invasion of Iran or Pakistan.

In fact, as was well understood by those who do not look on the USSR as “the evil empire,” the intervention in Afghanistan was essentially a conservative, defensive reaction on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy. To make this intervention understandable, it has to be placed in its real historic and political context.

Since 1919, in fact, Afghanistan had maintained good-neighborly relations with the USSR, which accorded a considerable importance to this. Had it chosen to act as a rear base for the Muslims fighting against the Soviet state, the Afghan kingdom — whose independence came from its position as a buffer state between British India and the USSR — could have caused the Soviet regime a lot of trouble.

#### Afghan dependence on USSR

In fact, historical, religious and ethnic factors predisposed it to play such a role. After his defeat at the hands of the Reds, the emir of Bukara took refuge in Kabul in 1920. A number of his Basmachi supporters and other anti-Bolsheviks had also crossed the long Soviet-Afghan border.

Amanullah’s kingdom could have played the same sort of role toward the USSR that Zia ul-Haq’s Pakistan is playing today toward Afghanistan. But it would also have been forced to give up its autonomy from the British, its ancestral enemies. It did not do that. It disarmed the Basmachis on its territory, extracting a juicy quid pro quo from the USSR.

After World War II, Afghanistan became, after a fashion, the Middle Eastern equivalent of Finland as regards its relationship with the USSR. The latter was by far its main source of economic, cultural and also military foreign aid. The Afghan monarchy was equipped with Soviet arms, and the majority of its officers were trained in the USSR.

Afghanistan’s dependence on its big neighbor was, of course, qualitatively increased after the PDPA came to power. This was owing to ideological affinities, naturally, but also to the fragility of the new government, which was going to avail itself of direct Soviet military support well before December 1979.

The growing isolation of the Khalqi regime involved the risk that for the

first time in 60 years a government openly hostile to the USSR would be installed in Afghanistan. A government dominated by forces including some that had accused King Zaher Shah, who was deposed in 1973 by his “republican” cousin, Prince Daud, and later Daud also, of infidelity to Islam and bowing the knee to Moscow.

If you add to this picture the victory of the “Islamic Revolution” in Iran in February 1979, it is understandable how great a fear gripped the Kremlin leaders at the time and impelled them to intervene in Afghanistan before, in their estimation, it was too late. The “Islamic Revolution” had proclaimed its profound hostility to “atheistic communism” and its determination to carry Islamic fundamentalist agitation to all areas, including the Soviet Muslim peoples, who total 50 million, or nearly 20% of the total population of the USSR. In their majority, the latter still identify with Islam, and in their conflict with the Great Russian chauvinism of the bureaucracy do not even have the consolation of being Slavs.

In ordering intervention, Brezhnev and his cohorts were in no way moved by a desire to “structurally assimilate” Afghanistan (according to the term that some use to explain the social transformation of Eastern Europe). Still less could an analogy be made between their intervention and that of the Red Army in Outer Mongolia in 1921, which genuinely liberated the country from the domination of the Chinese and the debris of the Siberian White army, and established a revolutionary government that, overall, demonstrated a certain political tact in directing the transformation of the country.

The idea that Moscow, through “structural assimilation,” could go further than Amin had would imply that the Kremlin had an “ultraleft” interpretation of why Amin failed. But all the Soviet statements point in the other direction. In fact, the Kremlin saw its intervention rather as a repeat of the intervention by Hanoi’s army against the abominable Pol Pot. It expected that in overthrowing Amin its troops would be greeted by the Afghan population with at least the benevolent neutrality that greeted the Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea.

Moscow intended to bring the Afghan regime back to a moderate course of collaborating with the most retrograde social forces, so long as they were well disposed to the USSR.

4. Detailed descriptions of the Khalq regime’s measures will be found in most of the studies devoted to Afghanistan since 1978.

5. See the article by S Jaber in *International Marxist Review*, Spring 1987.

It thought that in this way it could cut the ground out from under the Islamic fundamentalists and other reactionary fanatics.

To perfect this operation, the Kremlin took care at the beginning to use forces made up of soldiers from the Soviet Muslim republics who belonged to ethnic components of the Afghan mosaic, so as to facilitate fraternization with the local population.

How great then was the disillusion of the Kremlin bureaucrats when they saw, from the first weeks, that the massive intervention of their soldiers had produced a result contrary to what they were counting on. Not only were the Soviet troops not greeted as liberators, but Amin himself, who was liquidated in the course of the intervention, suddenly emerged as a martyr of national independence, while Karmal was more isolated than ever his predecessor had been.

The institutions of the PDPA regime broke down, beginning with the army. The reactionary and Islamic fundamentalist forces experienced a massive influx of volunteers and a sudden growth of their popularity, so that while it had been doubtful that the Khalqi regime could survive on its own, it was quite unthinkable from the outset that the Parchami regime could.

Moreover, the international commotion against the Soviet intervention was a lot greater than Moscow had expected, especially among the Islamic and other non-aligned countries. This was reflected by majority disapproval in the UN. There was a similar outcry from many Communist parties.

As for the supreme objective of the intervention, that is, preserving the Muslim republics of the USSR against the danger of nationalist and Islamic contamination, the failure was glaring. Barely a month after the start of the intervention, Moscow withdrew soldiers coming from those republics, to replace them with Russians.

### Hostility to Russian troops

Fraternization with the Afghan population was no longer an objective but a risk to be avoided, since the latter were almost unanimously hostile to the Russians. The Soviet troops had very quickly to be put in quarantine, if only to protect them against the numerous terrorist attacks.

The Soviet-Afghan frontier became more permeable than ever to Islamic, anti-Communist and anti-Russian propaganda. In recent years, several studies have been devoted to the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic nationalism in the USSR. They all agree in recognizing the breadth of the phenomenon, which is reflected, moreover, by an accelerated development of government counter-propaganda and all sorts of measures aimed at holding back the development of Islamic nationalistic moods, such as mixing populations (in other words, still more Russification!)

If there were still some skeptics, December's anti-Russian riots in Kazakhstan, which is the most Russified of the Soviet "Muslim" republics

ethnically and culturally, provided a demonstration of the gravity of the situation.

On Afghan soil, Soviet troops were supposed to put an end to the tyranny of Amin and inaugurate an era of liberty. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this objective. The Karmal government's first measure was to declare a general amnesty and to release thousands of prisoners. But these troops were drawn by the same logic of a minority regime described above to act like an army of occupation.

The Parchami regime, still less legitimate in the eyes of the population than the Khalqi government had been, could only put its "good intentions" (with which, as we know, the "road to hell" is paved) into practice for a minority of the population concentrated in the cities and their immediate surroundings — the "useful part of the country," which the Soviet army could control and where it sought to concentrate the largest possible number of inhabitants through forced settlement.

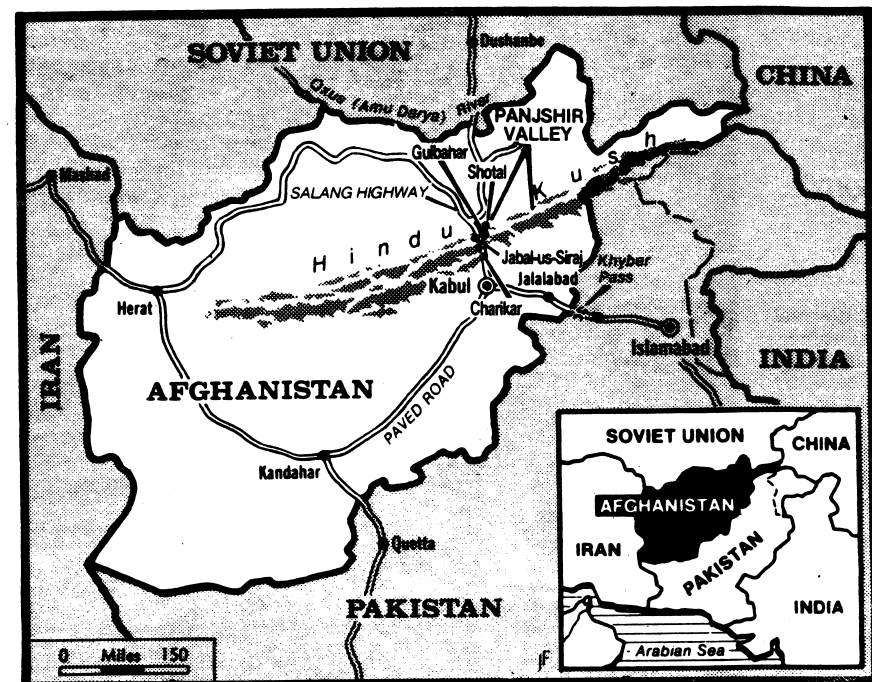
For most of the rural areas coming outside the direct control of the Soviet and governmental forces, what the Soviet army sought to do was to neutralize them by patrolling the main arteries of communications and isolating them from the Mujahideen's Pakistani and Iranian sanctuaries.

Those regions constituting the Mujahideen's main bastions, or their main transit zones, were deliberately depopulated by Soviet bombing and the massive destruction it caused. The result — besides the slaughter inherent in this sort of warfare — was that nearly a quarter of the Afghan population was forced to take refuge in Pakistan and Iran, creating an impressive reserve army for the Mujahideen. (6)

I have spoken of slaughter. That is the appropriate term. (7) To characterize the Afghan war as genocide, as has been done by a certain press seeking to prove that "Communism" and Nazism are twins, amounts to belittling the term that was coined in 1944 to describe an operation of systematic extermination, which bears no comparison to what is

6. In fact, a large part of the refugees in Pakistan and Iran are there for economic reasons rather than political ones.

7. Estimates of the number of victims of the Afghan war vary between 100,000 and a million, the figure advanced by the Mujahideen, which, judging by the number of Soviet soldiers they claim to have killed, is rather fantastical. If you consider that the Soviet army has limited itself to controlling the "useful part of the country" and the arteries of communication and has not used big bombers of the B-52 type, the real number of the dead must be between 100,000 and 200,000, including those killed by the Mujahideen, who have not been inactive either.



happening in Afghanistan today.

Despite its cruelty and its many and inevitable similarities with the US war in Indochina — forced settlement and desertification, for example — the Soviet intervention is still clearly less murderous and destructive than that was, even in relative terms. Pointing up these differences does not mean absolving the Soviet bureaucracy of its crimes. It means simply refusing to trivialize the crimes of Nazism and American imperialism.

The paradox of the Soviet intervention is that the cruelty of the military campaign it has waged is not associated with forced collectivization, combined with a ferocious campaign against religion, as was the case at the high point of the Stalin terror in the USSR. On the contrary, the Kremlin leaders and their Afghan stooges have remained faithful to their initial objective, which was to undo what Amin had set out to do in that respect.

Hardly had he been installed in government before Karmal began stressing his government's determination to assure "a genuine respect for the holy religion, Islam, for the clergy, the noble national traditions and customs, the bases of family life and of personal property." (Message of December 29, 1979.)

In February 1980, the new regime freed the bazaar merchants from state control. And it has not ceased since then to shower boons on private entrepreneurs. Amin's cherished agrarian reform has been in fact annulled since 1980, even in those rural areas controlled by Kabul (except of course, for the lands of landowners liquidated by the Kahlq or who have fled the country). Big landlords, moreover, have rallied to the side of the new regime.

The status of women has returned virtually to what it was before Amin, except for a minority of urban women. The government boasts that it has built, with public money, more than 100 mosques in six years! It is paying fat salaries to collaborationist clerics, and has reintroduced religious teaching into the schools (three hours a week) and established a daily religious program on the radio. Its attempts to outbid the fundamentalists in pious works in fact sometimes border on the grotesque. (8)

Rather than committing itself to transforming Afghan society, the new regime, acting as a proxy for Moscow, is literally trying to buy it. It has been trying to do this not only by stepping up its spending on development in all areas, but also by the more unpretentious practice of bribing clan or tribal chiefs. The latter then, with their arms and their villages, leave the ranks of the Mujahideen and pledge fealty to the central power,

while maintaining their local autonomy. Thus, the so-called "Guardians of the Revolution" militias in Afghanistan have more in common with the armed tribes of the Arabian peninsula than with the militias of Cuba or even South Yemen. Kabul is trying to beat the Mujahideen on their own ground.

### Adept nationalities policy

I should add, finally, that the Parchami regime has practiced an adept nationalities policy, promoting the specific cultures of the various Afghan ethnic groups. This has had the effect of counteracting the unifying role of Islam among the Mujahideen. It has given special attention to the Pushtun and Baluchis. Since these two peoples also inhabit Pakistani regions bordering on Afghanistan, the objective is also to whip up their opposition to the Punjabi regime of Zia ul-Haq, in order to put pressure on him, and in order to divide these populations from the Mujahideen who control the Afghan refugees massed on their territories. (9)

The Parchami regime's tribal policy and its nationalities policy, which are combined, have proven to be by far its most effective weapons. They include a good dose of "special" actions and are directed by the Afghan political police, the Khad, headed by none other than Najibullah, who succeeded Karmal at the helm of the party in May 1986. It was natural therefore for the Khad to be the spearhead of the new strategy that the Kremlin has adopted under Gorbachev.

This strategy has two sides to it: One is "Afghanization" of the war, through broadening the Kabul government's social base and building up its own military force. The other side is the neutralization of Pakistan, in order to end that country's role as the main rear base for the Mujahideen. Progress toward these two objectives is to be accompanied by proposals for a settlement formulated from the position of strength, but not failing to include important concessions, so as to keep the ball in the opponents' court and provoke some defections.

The implementation of Gorbachev's strategy started in 1985, and accelerated in the fall of the same year. In the best traditions of the Afghan monarchy, an assembly of notables (a *loya jirga*) — tribal chiefs, mullahs and other "personalities" — was con-

voked. Then in September, 3,700 delegates attended an assembly of Pushtu tribal and clan chiefs. They included several hundred from Pushtu areas in Pakistan. This did not fail to prompt Islamabad immediately to order military deployments aimed at having a sobering effect on the tribes concerned and to offer enticing counter proposals.

In November Karmal presented "ten theses" confirming this new course of political ecumenism. A system of local elections was instituted, in order to give posts to notables who were not members of the PDPA, including mullahs. The "Revolutionary Council" and the Council of Ministers were broadened to include some notables and mullahs.

Najibullah's appointment in May 1986, which was clearly dictated by Moscow, inaugurated a new phase in this strategy. Karmal had been too discredited since December 1979. His "aristocratic" origins made him even more unpopular. As for the number two man in the regime, Heshmand, he belonged to a Shiite ethnic minority of Mongol origin, the Hazaras, who are despised by the other Afghan ethnic groups (and even by the Persian Shiites). So, Najibullah, the number three, was the man for the job. Along with the know-how that he demonstrated at the head of the Khad, he had one of the best Pushtu genealogies for the new course.

Najibullah's first actions and declarations were devoted to reinforcing the regime's armed forces, the primordial element in Gorbachev's Afghan strategy. Then, in December, from Moscow where he had met with the new Soviet party chief, Najibullah, whom the new ecumenism had made a preacher of "national reconciliation," proposed the "formation of a government of national unity into which can come forces that have found themselves temporarily outside the frontiers of the country." This clearly meant Mujahideen leaders and the partisans of the former king (if not the king himself) who would agree to turn their coats.

In January, the Soviet-Afghan offensive culminated in anticipation of a new round of negotiations between Kabul and Islamabad, under the aegis of the United Nations, for February in Geneva. The proposals formulated in Moscow were confirmed in Kabul: the Revolutionary Council declared a renewable six-months unilateral ceasefire starting on

8. See the description of the regime's measures by J. Steele, in *The Guardian* (London), March 15-17, 1986. These articles were reprinted in *Merip*, Vol. 16, No. 4, July-August 1986.

9. Peshawar, the "capital" of the Mujahideen, is located in the heart of the Pushtun area of Pakistan.





*Without the Soviet intervention, there would be fewer candidates for the Afghan guerrillas (DR)*

January 15 and a general amnesty. Najibullah called on "all the belligerent parties to cease fire and begin a process of national renewal".

At the same time, the pressure on Pakistan reached its peak. Zia ul-Haq's government was already very annoyed by Kabul's agitation aimed at the Pushtun and Baluchis on its territory. It should not be forgotten that Pakistan is a multinational state, separated from India solely on the basis of its inhabitants' adherence to Islam, and that it already experienced the breakaway of one national group in 1971, with the secession of Bangladesh. Now, it faces a veritable "Lebanization" of the country. (10)

All of the ingredients of the Lebanese situation have, in fact, been assembled today in Pakistan. There are ethnic antagonisms (in Lebanon they are confessional) and a large mass of refugees (three million Afghans) under the control of autonomous armed organizations. These armed groups are well financed. And they support a gigantic black market in arms of all sorts, where the local ethnic groups also do not fail to supply themselves.

As in Lebanon, this situation of relative anarchy has opened the way for a spectacular growth of drug production and traffic. Moreover, as in south Lebanon, the areas where refugees are concentrated are more and more becoming targets for reprisals, in this case by the Soviet-Afghan forces against the Mujahideen.

All these problems are being aggravated by the actions of the Khad — in particular bombs planted at carefully selected spots, so that in the Peshawar region the resentment of the refugees on the part of the local people is beginning to assume Lebanese forms. In that area, clashes erupted not long ago between the two communities.

In November, a *jirga* of the Pushtun tribes in the Pakistani provinces bordering on Afghanistan warned Islamabad and the Mujahideen to reach a settlement with Kabul, or else these tribes would take it on themselves to make sure that no military actions were carried out from their territories.

Zia ul-Haq's regime for some time has been hard pressed by the opposition parties. They have been very active since the return in April 1986 of Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of the former Pakistani premier overthrown and executed by the present regime. On top of this, in December, Islamabad had to face bloody clashes in Karachi between Pushtun and Muhajirs (Urdu-speaking Muslims who left India after the partition of 1947). These riots, the worst in 40 years, are another aspect of the "Lebanization" of Pakistan.

Thus, a regime in a very precarious situation at home finds itself caught internationally between the Soviet-Afghan hammer and the Indian anvil, the latter far from being the least of its worries. In January, the

Indian army, without bothering to give notice to Islamabad, opened up large-scale mechanized military maneuvers in the regions bordering Pakistan. This was followed by an explosive rise of tensions between the two states, which was reflected in the concentration of nearly a million soldiers on both sides of the border.

It took five days of intensive negotiations between the two governments before, on February 4, an agreement was reached providing for a limited disengagement "within two weeks." A broader agreement was put off, pending new discussions, which were to take place at the end of the month.

Chance can account for many things. But in this case, it is evident that Moscow was not uninvolved in the behavior of its traditional ally, India, in particular since the Indian threat was hanging over Zia ul-Haq's head, like the sword of Damocles, at the very moment that the negotiations were going on in Geneva.

Thus, Islamabad faces a formidable combination of domestic and external pressures. In Moscow's eyes, they make Pakistan the weak link that has to be broken in order that it can cast off its Afghan millstone. From this position of relative strength, the

10. On this subject, see the article by Ahmed Rashid in *'The Nation'* (New York) of January 31, 1987.

Soviet bureaucracy can afford to emit a stream of soothing statements, which were recently echoed by Henry Kissinger in person in *Newsweek* of March 2, 1987, where he wrote: "I had arrived in Moscow persuaded that the Soviet Union would never permit the overthrow of a regime established by Soviet power . . . I am no longer so sure."

In reality, the former US secretary of state mistook his desires for possible realities. Nothing, in fact, indicates that Moscow is ready to accept a debacle involving its Afghan allies comparable to that which befell Kissinger's Vietnamese allies in 1975. The proximity of Afghanistan to the USSR and the potential source of contagion it could represent are out of all proportion to what Vietnam meant for the US.

The minimum relationship that Moscow can accept with Afghanistan is one of the Finnish type. Within these well-defined limits, the Kremlin is ready to contemplate any sort of socio-political compromise, even a return of former king Zahir Shah from his exile in Rome, if he agreed to play the game.

On the other hand, Moscow could not accept an overthrow of the Kabul regime. That could be accomplished only by the Mujahideen, its sworn enemies. It is only because they consider that they are on the brink of removing this danger that the Kremlin and its proteges are showing flexibility.

If it depended only on him, Zia ul-Haq would probably give in without further delay. But it does not. He has to take account, first of all, of the US attitude. Islamabad is, in fact, Washington's protege. As the kingpin, owing to its geopolitical position, in the imperialist strategic deployment in western Asia, Pakistan has seen its importance grow considerably in the eyes of the US government since 1979.

Thus, Zia ul-Haq's regime unquestionably benefitted from the Afghan crisis before it turned into a source of worry for him. It enabled him to overcome the tensions in his relations with the West created by his Islamic-repressive excesses and his determination to equip himself with nuclear weapons — the celebrated "Islamic bomb," which has made news again recently — and to get a very large increase in US economic and military aid.

In seven years, US aid has gone up to nearly 4,000 million dollars. To this has to be added, moreover, another 4,000 million in supplementary aid spread out over the next six years. And this does not count the US army's enormous direct military investments (bases and equipment)

in Pakistan, or the economic benefits derived indirectly or directly (in part, through diversion) from international aid to the Mujahideen.

Islamabad, therefore, is dependent on Washington economically and militarily. For the Reagan administration, it is out of the question for its Pakistani ally to yield to Moscow. In response to the signs of weakness shown by Islamabad since 1985, Washington stepped up its pressure to make sure that Pakistan took a firm stance in the Geneva negotiations. At the same time, it increased its promises of support (besides, Zia ul-Haq has made his attitude a bargaining card since 1979).

### Reagan administration steps up support

On the other hand, the Reagan administration is also considerably stepping up its support, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to the Mujahideen, especially to those factions opposed to any compromise with Kabul. From a few tens of millions of dollars a year up to 1983-1984, "covert aid" (provided by the CIA) to the "freedom fighters," as the US establishment calls them, rose to 280 million dollars in 1984-1985, leaped to 470 million in 1985-1986, and, according to the figures commonly cited in the US press, will exceed 600 million in the present fiscal year.

This US financing is linked with that of the Saudi monarchy, which is recycling a part of its petro-dollars into subsidies for the world anti-Communist crusade orchestrated by Washington. This has been revealed recently by the Conragate affair in the US. Along with this, there are all sorts of other aid, including from Iran, and the major profits that the Mujahideen derive from all of the traffic in which they are involved.

Washington has, moreover, taken steps toward more official support for the Afghan rebels. The reception of their representatives in the White House last June was preceded by the decision of the US administration in March 1986 to supply them with portable anti-aircraft missiles of American and British makes (respectively, Stingers and Blowpipes).

Does this mean that the US administration is hardly worried by the internal problems facing its Pakistani ally. By no means. What Washington is looking for in reality is not all-out war — although seeing the Soviets bogged down in Afghanistan could only please them, were it not for their own ally's precarious health. Rather, what it wants is a chance to trade a solution to the Afghan crisis acceptable to Moscow for a major Soviet concession, in Central America for example.

In other words, the US administration wants to keep Zia ul-Haq from giving away the Afghan card, in which it has invested considerable sums of money. Facing the weakening of Pakistan and the recent military and political successes scored by the Soviet



*The Mujahideen — organizations more often at odds than united (DR)*

strategy in Afghanistan, it wants to shore up its allies in order to keep the stakes high.

In any case, for Washington the Mujahideen cannot be more than "disposable" pawns. That is the reason for the ambiguity of its attitude. While it has called for firmness on the ground, and it has the means for that, it has given its approval to the negotiations in Geneva. And it has refused to close its embassy in Kabul and give the Mujahideen the diplomatic recognition that they are demanding.

To this end, Tehran is trying to outbid Islamabad and Washington. It rejected the Geneva negotiations, proposing instead a conference of the USSR, Pakistan, Iran of course, and the Mujahideen, without the participation of the Kabul government, which Tehran refuses to recognize, even indirectly. Thus, the Khomeini regime is trying to get in place to succeed Pakistan as the Mujahideen's main handler, if Zia ul-Haq should chose to drop them.

What Washington wants to see come out of the fight of the Mujahideen is not so much victory as an improvement in the overall terms for negotiating with Moscow. With this perspective, the US administration is avoiding tying its hands on the Afghan question.

The attitude of Iran, the Mujahideen's other major backer and rear base, is more radical, although its motivations are similar to those of the US. Tehran wants also to play the Afghan card for the sake of its own interests, which focus today on its war with Iraq. The Khomeini regime wants to get Moscow to cut back, if not suspend, its arms shipments to Baghdad. Without them, the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein could not hold on.

This perspective is not very appealing for the organizations based in Peshawar, which represent the great majority of the forces waging armed struggle against the Kabul regime and the Soviet troops. These organizations (the major ones are in the Islamic Alliance of the Afghan Mujahideen) recruit their members from the Sunni ethnic groups that make up the majority (more than 80%) of the Afghan population. Nonetheless, it is not so much this religious difference that is the problem as it is political and financial considerations.

The Khomeini regime has not, in fact, hidden its ambition to dominate all or part of Afghanistan. (11) It already plays a dominant role in its relations with the Shiite organizations in the Hazarajat (see following article). It is trying to establish similar relations unsuccessfully, with some of the groups in Peshawar, in particular

the most fanatical of them, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, demanding that they break with the Saudi monarchy, which after the US is the Mujahideen's biggest source of funds (and also of Saddam Hussein's Iraq!)

However, the Peshawar Alliance organizations are not only anxious to maintain the relative political autonomy that Pakistan has allowed up till now, but also and above all to keep getting the manna from Saudi Arabia. Some of them, especially the "moderates" (in reality, traditionalists), would prefer a compromise with Kabul and Moscow to domination from Tehran, which would mean their being wiped out.

In that respect, the "moderates" are the weak links in the Alliance, capable of yielding to Pakistani pressure in the event of an agreement between Islamabad and Kabul-Moscow. Najibullah's offers of reconciliation have been directed especially to them.

So the Islamic fundamentalists, the hawks in the Peshawar Alliance, had to react before it was too late. They opposed any suggestion of a move toward coexistence with the Kabul regime, no matter how democratic it might be. That includes the idea of having UN forces supervise free elections in the country. This idea was advanced by some of the Peshawar groups. But it was explicitly rejected by Hekmatyar in a January 14 statement.

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### Transitional measures

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The fundamentalists managed to impose their point of view, getting the Alliance to adopt counter proposals designed to block the Soviet-Afghan diplomatic offensive. These counter proposals were made public on January 17. They turn around two axes. One is programmatic, concerning the future of Afghanistan as the Mujahideen see it. The other is transitional measures designed to prepare the Alliance to play the role to which it aspires. (12)

On the basis of rejecting any dialogue with the "puppet regime," the Alliance demands a "total, unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Russian forces." It calls for armed struggle not only to this end but also for "the establishment of an Islamic order." Thus, the Alliance confirmed that it is not simply waging a nationalist struggle for an eminently reactionary and totalitarian sociopolitical objective. The model, depending on the groups, comes somewhere between the Iranian example and the Saudi or Pakistani one.

Reading the scenario projected by the Alliance is instructive in this regard: 1) "An interim government of the Mujahideen takes power." 2) It supervises "free and honest" (sic) elections, which will lead to an Islamic government and parliament." 3) A "constitution for the Islamic state" will be drawn up that will "guarantee the application of Islam in all individual actions and in the life of our nation".

The transitional measures concern the creation of two bodies: 1) "judicial delegations" (guided by Islamic law, the sharia) "responsible for arbitrating between individuals and armed groups of Mujahideen in order to smoothe out their differences and issue *fetwa* (verdicts) based on the sharia; 2) a commission charged with drawing up rules and procedures for "establishing an interim government." This commission was to begin to work on February 1, and complete it at the end of the same month. Since that time, nothing has transpired in this respect.

Clearly, the Alliance is closing the door to the offers from Kabul and Moscow and trying to acquire the political credibility that it has lacked up until now. First of all, it is seeking to accomplish this by trying to settle the innumerable differences that have led the Mujahideen to fight each other almost as much as they have fought their common enemies through religious tribunals, since Islam is the only common denominator of a heterogeneous alliance. However, while such arbitration can be effective in disputes relating to petty theft and other divisions of the booty, it is highly dubious that it could end the struggle for dominance among the gangs, or the tribal rangles, which are a tradition that antedates even Islam.

The Alliance proposed, subsequently, to set up a government in exile, which would be the only body empowered to represent the Mujahideen. This is a means, especially for the Peshawar hawks, not only to achieve the unity advocated by their American and Saudi patrons, but also to put the latter on the spot by creating a political fact conceived of as irreversible. Diplomatic recognition of this government in exile would then be demanded from the allied governments.

In other words, while Washington demanded that the Mujahideen close ranks in order to be in the best position to go into negotiations, the

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11. In this vein, Iran has proposed that its troops participate in an "Islamic force" that would replace the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

12. The following quotations come from the translation published in 'Le Monde' of January 18-19, 1987.

Alliance today is proposing to close ranks around an intransigent attitude excluding all negotiations. Washington may find an advantage in this stiffening of the Alliance, inasmuch as it enables them to up the ante to Moscow. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the US administration, as well as its Pakistani ally, would be annoyed if the "interim government" operation came off. Nonetheless, the heterogeneity of the Alliance is such that the risk remains very limited.

The big advantage that Moscow and its proteges in Kabul have in the Afghan conflict is that they are pursuing a single strategy, decided on in the Kremlin, against an enemy "camp" comprising forces with motives as disparate as those of the various groups of Mujahideen and the American, Pakistani and Iranian government.

The Soviet bureaucracy is undeniably anxious to extricate itself from the quicksand that Afghanistan has become. But it is trying to accomplish this without having to make any accounting to Washington. Operating in its own traditional sphere of influence, Moscow wants to prevent the US administration from playing the Afghan card.

If Moscow's pressures on Pakistan, which are today at a peak, do not succeed in forcing the hand of Zia ul-Haq's government, because of countervailing US pressures, it is not out of the question that Moscow will try to pursue its strategy of disengagement all the way without an agreement.

The Kremlin could then manage with a tacit agreement with a Pakistani government at the end of its tether. Or it could keep up the pressure on Pakistan until the council broke apart (in that case, Washington's Afghan card could be replaced by a Pakistani card in Moscow's hand). It could progressively withdraw the bulk of its infantry and tanks, which it is using less and less, and keep a military force in Afghanistan quantitatively closer to what was there before December 1979 (5,000 military "advisors") than to the massive military presence it has had in recent years.

On the other hand, this reduced force would be comprised of elite airborne units (paratroops) that have proven their effectiveness against the Mujahideen. These units have the advantage of being highly mobile and therefore able to be used intensively.

The USSR would not even have to send in its airforce. It has trained enough Afghan pilots to fly the planes that it has given the Kabul airforce and which are sufficient to carry out the sort of bombing mis-

sions that would be required. The shipments of portable anti-aircraft missiles to the Mujahideen are not such as to transform radically the operating conditions for an airforce that up till now has functioned with total impunity. It was, moreover, the Afghan airforce that carried out the raids in February against refugee camps in Pakistani territory in order to put pressure on the Islamabad government at the start of the last round of negotiations in Geneva.

The hypothesis I presented about Moscow's attitude seemed confirmed as this article was being completed by a rumor circulating in Kabul about

an imminent withdrawal of a strong contingent of Soviet troops. According to the rumor, this would involve 50,000 troops, or about half of all those engaged in Afghanistan!

In any case, the more the Soviet military presence in the country is reduced, the less is capacity of the reactionary forces for mobilizing. Their main argument has been, and continues to be, resistance to the *shoravis* ("Soviets," in the local language). The Mujahideen will certainly find less recruits for a jihad for their Islamic state than they have found until now for the fight to liberate Afghanistan from foreign troops. □

## Who are the Mujahideen?

IT DOES NOT say much for the "objectivity" and reliability of the media in the imperialist countries to see that they have glorified the "Afghan resistance," almost entirely passing over glaring facts. This is especially the case when they are so quick to point up the slightest indiscretion by the Communist guerrilla movement in the Philippines, to cite only one example.

Thus, the TV in Western countries have untiringly broadcast "sensational" reportage of the operations of the Mujahideen, which are all so many remakes on the same scenario. But only on the rarest occasions have they explored what lies behind the facade.

They show little interest in the extraordinary corruption of the bureaucracy of the parties in the Peshawar, the insolent luxury displayed by their leaders, the diversion of a part of the arms they get to the black market, their participation in the narcotics traffic. They overlook the atrocities commonly committed by the Mujahideen and the violent battles that often break out among them, which have aspects both of tribal and gang warfare.

### SALAH JABER

They also ignore the savage fanaticism of the fundamentalists, the extreme backwardness of the social and political mores in force in Peshawar, the medieval oppression of women and other aspects of reactionary Islamicism. These things draw the outraged spotlight of the media when they happen in Tehran. But they become harmless folklore, even

charming, when they happen in Peshawar or the Saudi kingdom.

Behind the myths, let us look more closely at the main organizations of the Mujahideen. Their only positive common denominator is their reference to Islam. It cannot be nationalism, given the ethnic heterogeneity of Afghan society, which does not constitute, properly speaking, a nation. Nor can it be any political ideology, since on this level the divergences are considerable, running from the Khomeinites on one side to the royalists on the other.

Islam as the sole unifying symbol is, by the way, a characteristic that the Mujahideen share with Pakistan. This helps to explain the ease with which Zia ul-Haq's regime, which is Islamic fundamentalist in its own way, was so quick to welcome them to its territory. It exploited their presence for its Islamicization drive, which is the only ideological justification for existence that it has. The common reference to religion, however, has not kept the Mujahideen from lining up according to the sect of Islam to which they belong. There are the Sunnis on one side, linked to Pakistan; and the Shiites on the other, linked to Iran.

### Two rival alliances fused

On the Pakistani side there are the Sunni parties, which represent the great majority of the Mujahideen, since more than 80 per cent of Afghan society is Sunni. In April 1985, the seven main organizations based in Peshawar formed the Islamic Alliance of Afghan Mujahideen. Under the pressure of their patrons, they fused the two rival alliances that had co-existed rather badly up until then — the alliance of the fundamentalists, and the so-called moderate one, actually an alliance of the royalists.

The four fundamentalist organizations are, overall, stronger than their rivals. But there is also a real rivalry among them, and it is just as often bloody, as there is between the fundamentalists and the traditionalists. Although the fundamentalist organizations are more "ideological," they nonetheless rely for their recruitment on ethnic, regional and tribal allegiances, to say nothing of the venality common to all the Peshawar parties. They are the following:

1) The Jamiat-e-Islami (Islamic Group) of Rabbani. Founded in the early 1960s by its present leader, a professor of theology, the Jamiat is the Afghan counterpart of the Pakistani Jama'at-e-Islami, the ultra-reactionary fundamentalist organization that helped to overthrow Premier Bhutto in 1977 and has supported the Islamic dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq. The Afghan Jamiat began its armed activity after the "republican" coup d'etat by Prince Daud in 1973, accusing him of being a Soviet agent. It is closely linked to the present Pakistani regime.

2) The Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party) of Hekmatyar. Founded in 1968-69 in the university to oppose the growth of the left. Hekmatyar's curriculum vitae includes the murder of a Maoist student in 1970. The Hezb-e-Islami is related to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, the spearhead of reaction in the Middle East. Following Daud's coup d'etat in 1973, it also took up armed struggle against the new regime. In fact Hekmatyar was to ally himself closely with the Pakistani regime of Bhutto and then to his successors, who made it their tool for combating the Pushtu nationalism of Daud. After the PDPA came to power, the Hezb-e-Islami diversified its sources of financing and forged links both with the Saudis and Khomeini's Iran. It is the most fanatical and most sectarian party in the Alliance.

3) The Hezb-e-Islami - Khales tendency. A split from the preceding group. It is led by a mullah, Khales, who is also a tribal chief.

4) The Ettehad-e-Islami (Islamic Alliance) of Sayyaf, a professor of theology imprisoned in 1974 by Daud and released in 1980 - irony of fate - by Karmal. Named to chair the first version of the Alliance of the Mujahideen shortly after his release, Sayyaf became the agent of the Saudis, and notably, of the puritan Wahabite sect dominant in the Arab kingdom. These links gave him access to considerable funds, enabling him to maintain armed groups. It should be noted that the four organizations cited above all began their fight well before the PDPA took power. They are not therefore specific expressions



*The only common denominator of the Mujahideen is Islam (DR)*

of a national struggle but rather forces pursuing ultrareactionary objectives, opposed to all "progressivism," native or foreign. The Soviet intervention enabled them to increase their ranks in an unhopd-for way by diverting the national feeling of the Afghan masses for the benefit of their fundamentalist program.

The three traditional organizations represent those nostalgic for the Afghan monarchy. They took up armed struggle under Amin, or following Soviet intervention. They are the following:

1) The Harakat-e-Enqelab-e-Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Movement) of Mohammadi, a deputy under the former regime. It is an organization of Sunni mullahs representing the traditionalist "clergy."

2) The Mahaz-e-Melli-ye-Islami (Islamic National Front) of Gailani. A big landowner, big businessman (holder of the Peugeot concession) and former advisor of King Zaher Shah, Gailani is also a *sayed* ("descendant of the Prophet"), chief of a Sufi brotherhood and a tribal leader. He in himself symbolizes the entire former ruling class.

3) The Jabha-ye-Nejat-e-Melli-ye-Afghanistan (Afghanistan National Liberation Front) of Mujaddedi. Although Islam does not figure in the name of his movement, Mujaddedi is himself a professor of theology and a member of one of the richest and most influential families under the former regime, which helped, with British support, to overthrow, the modernist King Amanullah in 1929.

The Hazarajat is the mountainous central region of Afghanistan. Its Shiite population represents nearly 15 per cent of the total population of the country. From 1979 to 1982, the Hazarajat was run de facto by a sort of autonomous government, the

Shora (Council), representing an alliance of the mullahs (in particular, the sayyad, the "descendants of the Prophet") and the landlords. Parties and groups developed in the region. The main ones are the following:

1) The Harakat-e-Islami (Islamic Movement) of Ayatollah Mohseni, the only Shiite movement not exclusively Hazara (Mohseni himself is a Pushtu). It maintains good relations with the Peshawar parties and is on bad terms with Khomeini's Iran.

2) Nasr (Victory), of student origin, Khomeiniite.

3) The Sepah-ye-Pasdaran, which as its name indicates, is in fact an Afghan section of the Iranian pasdars (revolutionary guards), the militia of the Khomeini republic.

In 1982, a veritable civil war was to break out among the Shiites for control of the Hazarajat. There were bloody battles between the Shora on the one hand, and Nasr, the Sepah and other Khomeiniite groups, on the other. It ended in 1984 with the victory of the Khomeiniites, who lost no time in turning their guns on each other. An agreement was reached under Iranian aegis in 1985 to stabilize the situation, so that the Hazarajat today is under the sway of the Khomeiniites, who are themselves controlled by Iran.

Up until 1985, the Kabul government almost chose not to intervene in the Hazarajat in order not to get Iran on its back, but also because the Shiite parties were more occupied in killing each other than in fighting the Soviet-Afghan troops. This policy gained the regime support among the Hazaras. However, owing to the cessation of the conflicts among the Shiite parties and Iran's desire to play a greater role in the Afghan crisis, the Hazarajat has, in turn, become another theater of clashes with the Soviet-Afghan army. □

# The Fourth International and Afghanistan

IN JANUARY 1980, a month after the start of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International met. A minority supported the Soviet intervention, characterizing it as "progressive." The majority of the United Secretariat criticized the intervention, but rejected the call for withdrawal of the Soviet troops, supporting them against the Mujahideen. It called for "choosing your camp against imperialist and the conservative forces." Only a small minority came out for withdrawal. (1)

SALAH JABER

The supporters of withdrawal, however, explained their position on the basis of considerations on the class nature of the camps existing in Afghanistan identical to those that inspired the two other positions. Their minority resolution, after condemning the Soviet intervention as a "gross violation of the right of peoples to self determination," argued as follows:

"A prolonged presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan can only fuel the following tendencies:

The tendency that the Afghan rebellion will increase in strength and popularity, profiting from the national Afghan resentment against Soviet intervention and from imperialist support using this intervention as a pretext. The Kremlin is in the process of getting bogged down in a war that it can never complete, inasmuch as it is completely illusory to wipe out guerrilla forces in a mountainous country when they have in addition two bases of support at their disposal — Pakistan and Iran."

The minority resolution concluded with the definition of tasks: "Revolutionary Marxists must take part in and promote actions by the anti-imperialist and workers' movement to bring political pressure to bear on the Soviet Union to immediately withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. In doing this, they must oppose all characterization of the Soviet Union as im-

perialist. They must also fulfill their duty of solidarity with the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist Afghan forces, explaining that the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops should in no way be confused with support for the Mujahideen."

This is the position that was finally adopted in May 1981 by a majority of the International Executive Committee of the International. (2) While a minority continued to uphold the United Secretariat position of January 1980, the majority of the IEC adopted and developed, with certain nuances of its own, the argumentation of the pro-withdrawal minority of 1980. Thus, the May 1981 resolution placed itself within the framework of "combating all the forces of reaction, the Islamic fundamental movements and others in Peshawar," and judged that the Soviet intervention "favors the counter-revolution."

While affirming that "real defence of the interests of the workers and peasants, as well as of the people's of Afghanistan, involves an intransigent struggle against the Afghan reactionary forces and imperialism," the majority resolution of the IEC declared for the "right of self-determination of the Afghan peoples" and for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, pointing out that this slogan "is in no way opposed to an unconditional defence of the members and sympathizers of the PDPA against the reaction."

The resolution ended by defining the following tasks: "Revolutionary Marxists will campaign to expose


the hypocrisy of imperialism, which, while claiming to be 'the defender of the freedom of the Afghan people,' gives its support to the reactionary forces . . . They oppose any imperialist intervention in the region. For support to the workers and peasants and organizations that are fighting against the reaction and against Soviet repression. (3) For defence of the right of the Afghan peoples to self-determination and for the political sovereignty of Afghanistan."

It is useful in particular to recall what was, and remains, the position of the Fourth International on Afghanism, because many people still confuse calling clearly for withdrawal of the Soviet troops with an attitude of support for the Mujahideen, or even with putting pressure on the imperialist countries to increase their aid to the world's richest reactionary guerrillas. □


1. The majority and minority resolutions were published in 'Intercontinental Press,' Vol. 18, No. 8, March 3, 1980.

2. The resolutions of the 1981 IEC were published in 'Inprecor (French-language),' No. 69, July 6, 1981.

3. There were a few Afghan organizations of Maoist inspiration that were both "progressive" and opposed to the Soviet presence. While it was correct to note their existence as a positive fact, it was wrong to think that they "could become a pole of active opposition to the Islamic fundamentalist or pro-imperialist forces." That was to underestimate the formidable polarization of Afghan society produced by the Soviet intervention and the military escalation. Those of the autonomous Afghan progressives who have not gone over to the Kabul government, or one of the Islamic parties have been decimated by the Mujahideen as much, if not more, than by the PDPA's repression.



العدد ٤ - أكتوبر/ديسمبر ١٩٨٦



الأسفية الإسلامية (٢)  
تونس - المغرب  
القومية والاشيوية  
في الحزب الشيوعي

## Al-Mitraqa

A revolutionary communist review for the Arab region. Issue number 4 (October-December 1986) is now available. Contents include: Tunisia — the lull before the storm; Dossier on Islamic fundamentalism (second part); Nationalism and internationalism in building the revolutionary workers' party.

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# New initiatives needed in fight against austerity

IN THE WAKE of his victory in the June 2 parliamentary elections in 1985, Greek Premier Andreas Papandreou launched a brutal austerity drive in September of the same year. It provoked very strong opposition from the workers' movement, which continued in January and February of this year. The strength of the opposition split the trade-union organization of Papandreou's party, PASOK itself, which dominated the Greek Confederation of Unions (GSEE). There has been a complex play within the labor movement between the PASOK regulars, the PASOK dissidents, and the two Communist Parties, the KKE-Exterior and the KKE-Interior, of which the former is by far the strongest.

Papandreou's election strategy of stampeding the left voters to vote for PASOK in June 1985 to block the right was aimed mainly against the KKE-Exterior. It was largely successful. In the municipal elections last fall, the KKE took a more hostile stance to the PASOK, refusing to support it in the second round. The result was that the right took many important municipal governments, including Athens.

In its rivalry with PASOK, however, the KKE does not seem to be avoiding the problem of zigzags that undermined the credibility of the French Communist Party, for example, and in large part led to its present crisis. The following are excerpts from the editorial in the March issue of *Spartakos*, the paper of the Greek section of the Fourth International, which commented on a new shift by the KKE Exterior.

"Now, we are seeing some light-minded strikes to get attention. Let's strike for real, if the great majority of the working people want that."

With that astonishing statement on February 23, [KKE-Exterior leader] Florakis officially confirmed his party's practical course a few days after the vast mobilizations in the public and private sectors.

The KKE split the dynamic strikes of OTOS and GENOP-DEN, pushed the Municipal Workers' Federation to sign a "labor peace," and gave the green light to winding down the struggles of all the federations and Workers Centers, which had gone into a critical phase. Overnight the actions that the KKE itself proposed, pursued and supported turned into "light-minded" mobilizations.

The KKE's pretext was based solely on a position taken by Metsotakis [a leader of the right-wing New Democracy (ND) party]. Only the ND raised the question of a snap

election (and everyone else saw that was just for propaganda purposes). But "the party of the struggles" turned tail, frightened by the possibility that *maybe* there would be elections, *maybe* the PASOK would fall, *maybe* it would be blamed.

The KKE forgot all about the PASOK not being "capable of change." It forgot that up until then it had stuck to the slogan "neither PASOK nor the right." It went back to full support for Papandreou.

These sudden changes of line do not surprise us in the least. They are neither accidental nor incomprehensible. The reformist leaderships in general and the KKE in particular have only one sort of logic - wretched parliamentary cretinism.

What the reformists see in the mobilizations of the workers, farmers, students and youth is not the dynamic of an alliance against the same system, but simply votes. They see mass coordinated extra-parliamentary struggle simply as a means of pressure for

their objectives in parliament. And they drop it if it ceases to serve that function, if it exceeds certain limits.

That is the real key to the KKE's position. The February mobilizations and the upsurge that was starting everywhere carried the danger of going beyond parliamentary limits and outflanking the KKE from below. The masses were coming into action demanding satisfaction of their demands right now. That would have very quickly revealed what is consciously concealed by the KKE - that there is no way to reconcile the interests of the workers with those of the capitalists, that a policy that does not aim at a break with capital and its system cannot be adequate for advancing the struggles of the majority of the Greek people.

Why did the KKE become the best defender of bourgeois democracy? So that no one would ask, "What if the PASOK government falls?" If a strong workers' movement, demanding satisfaction of its demands, managed to topple a bourgeois government (including the PASOK one), then it would have taken a decisive step toward understanding the only solution to the crisis and toward achieving it - that is a government of the working people themselves, control of the economy by the working people and a break from the capitalist logic of the "free market."

We have a long way to go to get there. We need victories, we need self-confidence. The capitalist attack through the PASOK government is too serious to leave the task of defence against it in the hands of the KKE. This time, despite the attempts to push the movement back, despite the difficulties, the recomposition of the workers' movement makes it possible to take initiatives of many sorts.

Initiatives by the workers at the base. Mobilization of all workers in their workplaces, in their organizations, in their neighborhoods, participation of all in making the decisions that concern them. Struggle committees everywhere, with the aim of breaking the government's policy.

Initiatives to put pressure on union bodies to advance actions that strengthen and express the workers' interests. Initiatives advancing the demand for escalating and coordinating the struggles. Is there some way, maybe, to break the government's policy workplace by workplace or industry by industry?

Initiatives by all activists moving in an anti-capitalist direction. They are the only ones who can contribute decisively to apply a concerted tactic of pressure on, and outflanking of, the reformists. □

# A Scandinavian contribution to internationalism

TOM GUSTAFSSON, a founding leader of the Swedish section of the Fourth International and a central leader of the Fourth International itself, died on February 6, and his funeral and memorial meeting were held on February 13. His contributions and character were well illustrated by the funeral and the memorial meeting that followed it.

GERRY FOLEY

Founded at the start of the 1970s, the Swedish section remains a relatively young organization, with few, if any members over 40. Most of Tom's generation were there to mourn him, and he was in the same age range as the bulk of the party.

The crowd that filled the funeral chapel and memorial meeting was made up essentially of young people. There were a number of small children. There was an extremely strong feeling of human solidarity and common devotion to an uplifting purpose.

The mourners were the image of the humanistic revolutionary party that Tom Gustafsson set out to build only a decade and a half ago, a party to end the age of terror and servility and usher in a new one of enlightenment and free collaboration. In that sense, they were as much a likeness of him as the picture on his coffin.

Leaders tend, of course, to bear the image of their organizations and vice versa, especially in the case of small revolutionary groups. But in fact, Tom's outstanding characteristic as a leader was that he did not impose himself, but rather helped people to learn and to work together.

What made the resemblance between Tom Gustafsson and the Swedish section was that he faithfully represented the processes that created both — the Swedish tradition of strong working-class organization, a high level of culture, an ingrained democratic outlook and a generally Scandinavian humanism and idealism. The reading of a poem by the Swedish-Finnish poet Diktonius was a fitting touch at the funeral.

The Swedish leader was a very cultivated person. He was well-versed in the works of the novelists of the

life of the workers and poor farmers that form an important part of the modern literature of his country. At the same time, he was fond of the modernist Swedish-Finnish poets, both the vibrant Diktonius and Edith Sodergran, whose art is complex, lyrical and introspective. He also followed contemporary Swedish writing with a lively interest.

## Communicating with workers

All that did not interfere with his practical political activity; it enlightened it, and probably helped keep it on course. He was an organizer, always at the center of the organization of any party event. For some years he worked in a factory, in the context of his party's campaign to root itself among workers. He gave a fundamental importance to being able to communicate with ordinary workers, address their interests and recruit them to the revolutionary party. But he saw this always as part of a scientific process of liberating the minds and development of people.

He did not fall into the common "Leninist" (actually Stalinist) fallacies of viewing workers as a battering ram to power and of glorifying the effects of the brutalization of working-people under capitalism, which inevitably goes along with that sort of outlook. In that respect, he was helped by the fact that, in Scandinavia, the brutalization of the working class is considerably less than any place else.

In that sense, as in others, Scandinavia is a very important window on the world. It is one, unfortunately, the Fourth International largely lacked

before the 1970s. It was the achievement of Tom Gustafsson and his comrades that they helped to open it for us.

There is no doubt that Scandinavia remains capitalist, with the evils that implies. Tom Gustafsson and other Swedish leaders were adept at pointing that out. Tom always carefully explained that it was the strength of the organized workers in Scandinavia that had produced a level of mass civilization higher than anywhere else. He had a strong confidence that there would be a working-class revolution in Sweden, and that it would be a very powerful one. But, at the same time, he acknowledged that the Swedish workers fought under better conditions than workers elsewhere.

Why were the conditions better? Essentially, I think, because Scandinavia has participated in advanced capitalist development without either becoming a major capitalist power itself or becoming entirely subordinated to one. It owes that to its position between England and Germany until World War II and to its position between East and West since.

While it is true that in Scandinavia the bourgeoisie often hides its interests behind claims of dedication to international peace and order and democratic international development, these are at least more progressive pretexts than those generally used by other national capitalist classes. And they have led to some benefits for those fighting exploitation and oppression around the world, for example for the Chilean democrats, socialists and revolutionists who escaped imprisonment and execution through the Swedish embassy in Santiago.

Modern Sweden was built up, like Denmark — the other Scandinavian country whose independence spans the modern period — on the ruins of a period of expansionism and great-power politics extending from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth.

The shattering of those ambitions forced a turn toward conceptions of social development relying more on developing human potentialities, involving human values. Representative of this attitude were the Swedish-Finnish poet Runeberg and the Danish scholar, poet and educator Grundtvig. The former's cycle of poems of the conquest of Swedish Finland by Russia created an image of dignity and honor undiminished by defeat. That went hand in hand with Runeberg's celebration of the lives and qualities of ordinary people, for which he is regarded as the precursor of the Swedish social writers.

It was Tom and his companion,



Birgitta, who shared his literary interests, who introduced me to Runeberg's works. I find it impossible now to dissociate them. Tom had a quiet, unassuming but unflagging sense of dignity that I came to identify with the Swedish national character like the personalities in Runeberg's *Fanrik Stals Sagner*.

Another positive feature of the Scandinavian tradition is that despite the relative smallness of the countries and their relatively sheltered place in recent history, there has been a strong sense of participation in universal struggles, reflected in the outstanding portraits of revolutionary problems in Scandinavian literature, such as Ibsen's *Brand* and Strindberg's *Master Olaf*.

### A special contribution

One of the constants in Tom's political outlook was the conviction that Scandinavian workers and revolutionists had a special contribution to make to the world revolution and to building the world revolutionary party, the Fourth International. I learned to share it.

I first came in contact with Tom and the Swedish section in 1972, when I went to Scandinavia with Malachy McGurran, a representative of the "Official" wing of the Irish Republican movement, who was doing a speaking tour on the Irish question at a high point in the struggle. (It was just after the Bloody Sunday massacre.)

There was a sharp dispute in the Fourth International at the time about how to relate to third world revolutionary movements with a guerrilla strategy. It affected the attitude to the two factions of the Irish Republican movement at the time, since one of the elements in the development of the "Officials" was a rebound against previous guerrilla warfare experience. Tom and I were on opposite sides of the debate. But that did not at all affect the way he responded to the McGurran tour and my connection with it. He was entirely positive and practical.

He immediately saw that the task was to help build any Irish solidarity tour, no matter by which organization, and that the way to help best was by building unity in action, excluding no one. The obstacles to that were the two big Maoist organizations that at the time dominated the Swedish far left. Both were convinced that they were the one true church, and both claimed Irish Republicanism, on the basis of opposite criteria, as part of their spiritual empire.

Stalinism, of course, is an international phenomenon that attracts by the force of great-state power. Sweden was not proof against it, and there was even a certain basis for it, as there is in any capitalist country. I found myself negotiating with the most virulent brand of it, the third-period Stalinists of the KFML(r) in Goteborg. Their leaders were a textbook example of the kind of intellectuals who become Stalinists out of belief in the power of evil, that is, of gangster methods. Since the powerful are evil, the way to become powerful is to be evil, to be "tough." That shows that you are a "winner," as opposed to the perpetual "losers," the Trotskyists, who show their weakness by talking about principle and democratic methods.

As irony would have it, it was not long after McGurran's tour that his own organization succumbed to the same Stalinist temptations, the lure of power seemingly offered by an alliance with the Soviet bureaucracy and by the methods they proposed from the height of their "success."

Under that influence, the "Officials" turned into the opposite of everything that they and McGurran believed in. It was not the first time, nor the last, that this has happened to a revolutionary organization. But the way in which Tom and the Swedish section approached collaboration with revolutionists with other views continued to set a positive example long after McGurran and the "Officials," as he knew them, had passed from the scene, and a lot of other water had gone under the bridge as well. It offered a positive alternative to factionalism and Stalinism, which are both logically and historically related.

The fight against such conceptions shaped the Swedish section in its formative period. Tom fought them all his life, and effectively, because he fought not just out of moral indignation but out of scientific

understanding. He had a marvelously sharp eye for political crookedness, and systematically exposed it.

Most of all, he and his party set an example of the power of other sorts of methods, an example of particular importance on the border of Eastern Europe, the lands of the mother church of Stalinism.

It was properly pointed out at Tom's memorial meeting that the Socialism for which the Fourth International fights cannot be achieved by "ice-cold fanatics," but only by enlightened and humanitarian revolutionists. That follows from the nature of the goal.

However, there is another aspect. A world revolution cannot be accomplished without the overthrow of Stalinism, without the contribution of hundreds of millions of people who have experienced terror and servility in the name of socialism, in the name of "the leading role of the Party," who have been betrayed by gangsters and political swindlers.

The building of a democratic, humanitarian revolutionary party on the frontier of the Stalinized world is a major step toward offering a convincing revolutionary and internationalist alternative to the masses oppressed and mocked by Stalinism. That goes hand in hand also with the role that Swedish revolutionists can play in helping the victims of repression in the third world, since their country and, to varying degrees, their neighbors, remain among the very few that take a relatively enlightened attitude toward refugees and can be pressed to make a minimally genuine show of defending the democratic rights of oppressed peoples.

Tom personified the qualities and the promise of the Swedish workers' and revolutionary movement, and offered an effective example of them for the international movement. It is a good deal stronger for that. It may already have had a decisive effect. Who knows? □

## IMR

THE SPRING 1987 issue of the English language theoretical journal of the Fourth International, *International Marxist Review*, is now available. It contains the following articles:

- Women and work in Western Europe — Jacqueline Heinen
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# AROUND THE WORLD



## South Africa

### IV joins censored publications

SEVERAL ISSUES of *International Viewpoint* have been banned in South Africa over the last few months.

There are two sorts of "bans" for journals and publications. The first is a total ban on possessing the publication in question. The second forbids selling or distribution without forbidding the private possession of one copy.

Thousands of journals, reviews and books are hit by bans in the land of apartheid. It is mainly the publications of banned South African organizations which are censored. But over the last few years they have been joined by certain publications of legal South African organizations of which this or that article offends this police-ridden state. Finally, since it became one of the hot spots of the world, a whole series of English-language foreign publications which take a stand or give information on the situation in South Africa have been added to the list. This alone gives an idea of the grotesque and suffocating world of apartheid. To oversee this ban on thousands of publications from around the world there has to be a vast bureaucratic apparatus in the embassies and in South Africa itself whose "historic mission" is to seek out the subversive poison in everything published.

Obviously many Marxist classics are banned. But the other area which terrorises the representatives of the "master race" is anything to do with sex: a fairly wide-ranging idea of what constitutes "pornography", which obviously is first of all directed at anything do do with homosexuality. It is hard to imagine the worthy representative of the South African embassy in London forced to tour all the sex shops in the city in order to inform his chiefs of the books and publications which should be banned for the sake of the country!

In the great list of evil publications the "Lenin" section immediately precedes "lesbianism". Unfortunately for the defenders of the — racist — moral order, it is more and more difficult to cut South Africa off from the rest of the world. Ideas circulate much more easily than publications. It is perhaps easy to sign a circular banning a European publication. It

must be much more difficult to forbid South Africans themselves to think, discuss or struggle. It seems that this is now the main danger for this racist subworld, much more than political journals published abroad. This is a good sign. □

## Ireland

### Stop strip-searching

PICKETS supporting women Republican prisoners in the North of Ireland on International Women's Day have become a traditional event. This year was the eighth, but this time the picket was held at Maghaberry Britain's newest Irish jail in County Antrim. Armagh women's prison, where the protests have traditionally been held, has now been closed down.

Over 300 people joined the picket, including delegations from many parts of Ireland — North and South — and from 15 towns in Britain. An all-night vigil was also held on March 8 outside Durham jail in the north of England, where two Irish Republican women are serving life sentences.

The central theme of the protest was the demand for an end to strip-searching of women prisoners, a practice which is used by the prison authorities both in Ireland and Britain to intimidate and degrade Republican political prisoners. Women Republican prisoners in Maghaberry issued the following statement on March 8 (reprinted from the March 12 edition of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*)

"Sisters. International Women's Day is of great significance to us all as it brings us the opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity and commitment to each other in continuing to further the women's cause . . .

"We are regarded as individuals in theory, but in practice are denied the right of individuality. We voice our disapproval at such hypocrisy and demand equal recognition and respect, only to be portrayed as a 'threatening force' to the man's world. Many of our male counterparts would continue to hold the view that we should be seen, not heard!

"For centuries we have been considered the weaker sex — a myth for the male ego. Down through the decades we have eradicated this myth through our persistence to win emancipation. Like a dispossessed people, we can only gain.

"It is on that point that we confront the state standards imposed on the women in this jail. Our own bodies are being used as weapons against us through the implementation of the strip-search policy in November 1982.

"It is a grossly demoralizing and demeaning practice — a policy which proves nothing short of legalized rape of mind and body. Young and old are compelled to strip naked entering and leaving prison for any reason. Refusal to strip is met with the forcible stripping of the women. During menstruation the woman is forced to remove her sanitary protection and hand it over for inspection — she remains totally naked and 'unprotected' until the visual body inspection and search of her clothing is completed.

"It is impossible to describe adequately how one feels during a strip-search. You are within a hostile atmosphere and at the mercy of hostile prison warders who add to the humiliation you are already experiencing through expressing snide remarks on your body shape or any distinguishing marks you may bear. Psychologically it can have far-reaching effects . . .

" 'Security', which is used to justify this malpractice, is a groundless excuse — the strip-search policy was deliberately designed to quell our resistance to the criminalization policy.

'Sisters, while our situations are different, we have a mutual cause — to defeat the oppression of women in whatever form it may take.' □

## South Africa

### Sanctions loopholes

"THE FOREIGN companies have always told us that they think it is important to support us Blacks, to offer us a chance to have careers, and so on. But we know from experience that they are not interested in alleviating poverty. They want to make as much money as possible."

That was what Sydney Mafumadi, assistant general secretary of the South African confederation of unions, COSATU, told me.

You could see that Sydney was used to answering the question about the role of foreign companies in South Africa. The question of sanctions is often discussed; and, although the law forbids anyone from speaking

favor of an economic boycott, the support for it is very great.

"A lot of people have visited us, including Swedes, and said that their companies leave South Africa today, they risk not getting their markets back after the liberation," Sydney said. "We don't think that such arguments have any validity . . .

"The presence of the companies only increases the military capacity of the South African regime. It is the regime that dictates the conditions for the companies, not the workers or the people or even the foreign firm itself."

While the demand for sanctions is increasing both among South Africans themselves and in the solidarity movements around the world, the companies are trying to find ways of avoiding them.

In the past year, more than 60 US companies left South Africa — at least on paper.

In most cases, they sold the US mother firm's stock in its South African subsidiary to some South African company on the basis of pledges that it would retain the right to buy it back and that the technical and manufacturing licences would continue to be purchased from the US. Often the US firms have lent South African firms the money to buy their stock.

That is what Coca Cola did, and in addition it moved the production of its syrup to Swaziland, from which it is sold to South Africa at high prices.

In 1979, the Swedish company ASEA was the first to get around the new Swedish law banning new investments in South Africa by selling the majority of its stock. In mid-January it got worried about the international trend and sold the rest of its stock in the South African ASEA Electric.

But in the South African media, ASEA promised to continue to provide manufacturing licences and new technology. The stock was sold to ASEA's former partner, Power-tech, which works closely with the South African military industrial complex, ARMSCOR.

"The factory would be forced to close without Swedish technology," said Josef Selau, formerly chair of the union at ASEA Electric in Rosslyn outside Pretoria.

"In the assembly of transformers, many parts come from Sweden . . . Without those parts the assembly could not continue," said Josef, who was fired right before Christmas.

ASEA said the layoff was because of lack of work, and laid off 80 workers at the same time. Of those, ten were in the union leadership, and one was the chair Josef Selau.

He has no hope of being called back. "That's the way they treat union activists here," he said.

The demand for sanctions is not coming because people think that it is easy but because of the apartheid system, said Chris Dhlamini, who is the vice chair of COSATU.

Chris is a hunted man, who has not been home for several months . . . . He sleeps in a different place every night . . . .

He is relatively safe at his job at Kellogs. The company is afraid of a big strike if the police were to arrest him, and so it offers him a certain protection . . . .

"It is not the workers who will suffer from sanctions but those who have exploited the people for too long," Chris Dhlamini said.

"The foreign companies have claimed that they are in South Africa to improve things for Blacks. Now that they are being forced to leave the country, we say that they should turn the factories over to the workers. That is COSATU's demand." □

*[From the March 5 issue of Internationalen, paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International.]*

#### *Kurdistan*

### **Protest at Turkish bombings**

IN ATHENS on March 6-10, Turkish and Kurdish organizations and activists carried out a hunger strike at the Propylaea in protest against the murderous attack of the Turkish airforce on Iraqi Kurdistan. [Recent bombings allegedly aimed at Kurdish terrorist bases across the Iraqi border.]

On March 20, hundreds of people marched to the Turkish embassy.

The following is an excerpt from the press communique issued on March 3 by the Kurdish organization Rizgari, which participated in the hunger strike:

"The massacres that happened in the past in Dersim and Agri and Zilan are being repeated today.

"Do those who talk about human rights and freedom not see what is happening in Kurdistan? . . . . They know that the language and the political rights of a people numbering 23,000,000 are being destroyed and that their mineral wealth is being plundered.

"Why do they remain silent? There is a struggle, and it is much more developed than other national liberation movements. They overlook it because of the economic interests of various states and in order to crush it."

The Internationalist Communist Organization Greek section of the

Fourth International, called for demonstrating on that day: "Where do the Turkish generals find the strength to continue this criminal operation against the Kurdish people?

. . . US imperialism is preparing to install monstrous weapons systems in Turkey (a treaty is about to be signed [it has been signed now]) to turn the country into a big watchtower on the Soviet border and a border guard of the Middle East, as they did with Israel and the shah's Iran after 1956 for the Arab countries and the Palestinian movement.

"The oil in the Mosul and Kirkuk areas in Iraqi Kurdistan is sufficient cause for some fancy maneuvering by the European imperialists (especially the Germans) as well as toward their tactical ally, Evren, in particular since the Iran Iraq war is bringing close the collapse of the Iraqi state. More arms to shed the blood of the workers and toilers. More blood for the profit of the international imperialists and their local lackies. This is the last alternative left to the system of oppression and exploitation, which is everywhere going deeper into crisis." □

*[From the March issue of Spartakos, paper of the Greek section of the Fourth International.]*

#### *Paraguay*

### **Two new unions founded**

A STRIKE by workers at the university clinic in Asuncion, capital of Paraguay, has continued for several weeks for more pay and better conditions. The strike leaderships one after the other have been arrested. Demonstrations have been broken up by the police with clubs and firearms.

The fact that this strike is continuing despite all the repression is a result of the new organization of the Paraguayan trade union movement, with the founding of two unions, the Movimiento Intersindical de Trabajadores (MIT — Inter-union Workers Movement) and the Agrupacion Independiente de Trabajadores (AIT — Independent Workers Group).

The situation has become more tense in particular owing to the resistance to the Stroessner regime's shutting down of Radio Nanduti, one of the few independent radio stations that adopted a bourgeois-democratic line. Since the closing of the station in January, the protests have continued and spilled over into other movements. □

*[From the March 12 issue of Sozialistische Zeitung, paper of the West German United Socialist Party.]*

# Repression unleashes wave of protest

MICHEL WARSCHAWSKY, director of the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem, was released on bail on March 17. He had been arrested on February 17 in a televised raid on the Center. Alain Krivine interviewed Warschawsky on March 20. [See the previous two issues of *International Viewpoint*.]

*Question. What were the official reasons given for your arrest?*

*Answer.* The decree of the general police commissioner closing the Center and the formal charge lodged against me at the start of interrogation, as well as confidential information that the police gave to some journalists, intimated that the Center was a front run and financed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of George Habash. It was suggested that far from being an alternative press agency and an office offering cheap composition and translation services to progressive movements, it was a cover for a liaison operation for the PFLP within the country and outside of it.

After several days of questioning the various members of the Alternative Information Center, and a detailed study of dozens of boxes of materials confiscated during the police raid, the charges were reduced to the following two points: possession of leaflets from illegal organizations and having composed material that served the publications of organizations that operated as a cover for the PFLP.

By virtue of the decree against terrorism, a British emergency decree of 1945, I was charged with "rendering services to an illegal organization."

The decree prohibiting typing or possessing banned leaflets or journals has virtually never been applied. But it provides for penalties of up to 10 years in prison. What is more, this decree stipulates that it is up to the accused to prove their innocence and not to the accusers to prove their guilt.

*Q. What is the objective of the Israeli government in this case?*

*A.* The closing of the Center and my arrest, in my opinion, had two central political objectives. First of all they wanted to hit an institution that has managed to gain a certain credibility, even with the official press, and has used this credibility

to unmask the reality of the occupation, of the repression and the resistance of the Palestinian population.

More recently, we have systematically exposed the Israeli-Jordanian maneuvers against the Palestinians. In this regard, the closing of the Center was linked to the shutting down of several Palestinian journals hostile to Jordan.

The second objective, without any doubt, was to try to reconstruct national unity, or at least to paralyze the opposition, by once again waving the peril of the terrorists, who had supposedly infiltrated the Israeli left. On this level, the operation of the Israeli authorities failed miserably.

*Q. What has the reaction been in Israel? Why did the government have to release you?*

*A.* Even the members of the security services that carried out the interrogations couldn't hide their surprise at the flood of solidarity in Israel and abroad against the closing of the Center and my arrest. Far from arousing a surge of chauvinist hysteria, these repressive measures unleashed a vast wave of protests that extended far beyond the circles of the radical and non-Zionist left.

Protests came from the Jerusalem Journalists' Association; from the very prestigious Association for Civil Rights, which is far from being a "leftist" front, who agreed to take charge of the appeal against the closing of the Center; and famous writers signed a petition. All the press reported daily on the case in a style that varied between objective neutrality and open support for our cause.

In the court hearings, dozens of friends were there. They were by no means all anti-Zionists, but they did not hesitate to show their solidarity publicly. For two weeks, solidarity pickets of 30 to 50 people stood daily across from the jail. Even among

a broader public, the authorities' attempt fizzled.

My release on bail by the Supreme Court is above all a direct result of the failure of this attempt to portray me as a dangerous terrorist, despite the charge of collaborating with an organization regarded as one of the most dangerous in the struggle against Zionism.

My release can only increase solidarity, because nobody is apt to believe that the Supreme Court would free anyone who worked on behalf of the PFLP.

*Q. What is the situation now?*

*A.* I was released on 50,000 dollars bail, with a whole series of restrictions. I am banned from working for the Center, even if it is re-opened. I am forbidden to do paid or even unpaid work in anything that has to do with printing or publishing. I have to report to the police three times a week.

All these restrictions are in force until the trial, for which the date has not yet been set. On the other hand, the appeal in the Jerusalem district court against the closing of the Alternative Information Center began this week.

*Q. What are the next tests? What is the role for solidarity now?*

*A.* Now, we are waiting for the date of the trial. That gives us a certain breathing space to give a new impetus to local and international solidarity. This has been decisive in forcing the various retreats on the part of the authorities, such as ending the interrogations after two weeks, which is not long for the security services; their rapid presentation of a cobbled together indictment; and, finally, my release on bail.

It is important today to center solidarity around two axes — the demand for the immediate reopening of the Alternative Information Center and the dropping of the charges against me. The Israeli government, especially its Labor Party wing, remains very sensitive to Western public opinion, especially in the various Jewish communities.

Finally, it is important that the financial campaign continue. All our material was confiscated. And my friends do not want, come what may, to stop the publication of alternative information for technical reasons. Without that, as many Israelis have acknowledged recently, it would be hard to know the reality that lies behind the statements of the spokespersons for the occupation forces.

[Contributions for the defence fund can be sent to 2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.]