International VIEWPOINT

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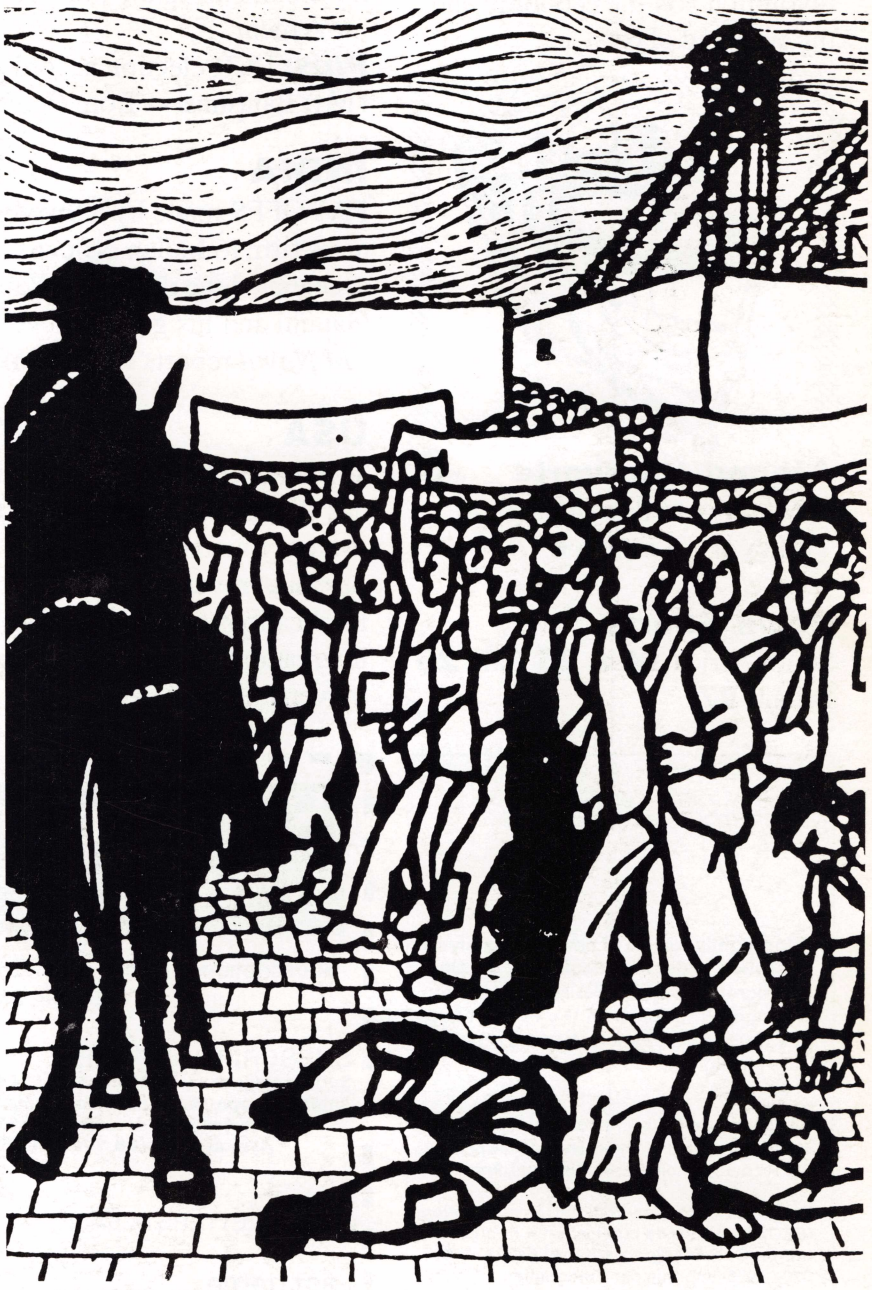

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International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

Win a new subscriber for IV!

THIS IS now the second issue that *International Viewpoint* has now appeared in its new format. We hope you like the changes we have been able to make, thanks to the purchase of new computerized typesetting and design equipment.

This was possible in part due to the success of our recent fund-drive, and to the contributions we are continuing to receive to help improve the magazine. We hope to be able to continue the improvements in looks and content even more in the future, as we become more familiar with the possibilities opened up by the new technology.

Enclosed with this issue you will find a copy of a subscription leaflet advertising the "new look" *IV*. Please don't throw it away! We are making a special appeal for all our present readers and subscribers to introduce the magazine to at least one of their friends and workmates.

If every reader wins just one more subscriber to *IV*, we could double our circulation overnight. Aside from bookshop sales, we rely a great deal on improving our circulation via word of mouth and personal contact. All our readers can think of someone they know who would appreciate receiving an international magazine that supports the struggles of the exploited and oppressed. And *IV* is also unique in carrying documents and material from the workers' and liberation movements all over the world.

There is another benefit for current readers of helping to improve our circulation. If we can increase our print-run dramatically over the next months, it will enable us to stave off future price rises and possibly expand the number of issues we produce each year. ★

After eight years of the "Thatcher revolution"

IN 1975, when Thatcher became leader of the Tory party, it had just got its lowest percentage of the national vote in any election this century. Now, after eight years as prime minister, she is confident of being elected for a third — and even a fourth — term in office and has called a general election for June 11, a year earlier than necessary.
A rumour that Labour had closed to within 1 per cent of the Tories in the first week of the campaign sent jitters through the City of London, wiping £7,000 million off share prices!
While there was panic at the top, the economic effects of the "Thatcher revolution" have been devastating for those at the bottom of the pile. The numbers of people living below the official poverty line in Britain is now over 12 million, almost double that when the Tories took office in 1979.

HILARY ELEANOR

THE LABOUR PARTY's fortunes have been looking up in the first week of the election campaign, with polls recording 41% for the Tories (still enough to give them an overall majority), 34% for Labour and 22% for the Alliance. Their ratings had suffered a big drop since January this year, when Labour were only 2 percentage points behind the Tories.

The Labour Party (LP) has to win 112 marginal seats in order to get a majority in parliament, and the indications are that it will take little short of a miracle to achieve this.

In recent by-elections, and in the May local elections, Labour has suffered heavy defeats. In the May elections, which took place everywhere but in Scotland and London, Labour was defending 9,000 of the 12,000 seats in metropolitan and district councils. Although still remaining the strongest party in local government, Labour made a net loss of 227 seats, while the Tories and the Alliance made net gains of 75 and 453 seats respectively.

The Tories have governed since 1979 with the support of only around 44% of voters. In the 1983 general election the Tories won 43% (373 seats), with Labour taking 28% and the Alliance 26%. Although the percentage of the national vote for the LP and the Alliance was very close, Labour took 209 seats to the Alliance's 23, due to the peculiarities of Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system.

The creation of the SDP by right-wingers breaking from Labour in 1981, and their electoral alliance with the remaining rump of the Liberal Party, has contributed to smashing the consensus of post-war British politics as much as Thatcherism itself. In particular, the Alliance has thrown doubt on Labour's ability to form a majority government. Labour lost 3 million votes — almost totally to the Alliance — between the elections of 1979 and 1983. It was this vote that played the decisive role in ensuring the re-election of Thatcher.[1]

Support for the Alliance in sections of the ruling class and the bourgeois media has more to do with its role in keeping Labour out than getting the Alliance in. It is the acceptable face of the anti-Tory vote, keeping Labour in line and accelerating its right-ward drift as it seeks to compete with the Alliance in the electoral arena.[2]

The establishment of the Alliance as

1. See "Thatcher and friends", by John Ross, Pluto Press (Arguments for Socialism series), London, 1983.
2. On the situation of the Labour Party and the Labour left, see "A victory for the right at Labour's conference", by John Lane, *IV* 107, October 27, 1986; and "Labour Party conference: Kinnock tightens his grip", by Richard James, *IV* 108, November 10, 1986.

the third party in British politics has produced a campaign for tactical voting "to keep out the Tories". The most well-known proponent of this strategy is Eric Hobsbawm of the (Euro) Communist Party. In the May issue of their journal, *Marxism Today*, he argues:

"The defeat of the Thatcher government is the essential task in British politics, and should have absolute priority over any aim and political calculation ... There is only one logical conclusion for those of us who put the defeat of Thatcher first. It is, in every constituency, to vote for the candidate who offers the best chance of beating the Tories, whether Labour or Alliance."

In the same issue of *Marxism Today*, an article entitled "The natural alliance" begins with this illuminating introduction: "The Alliance just can't be ignored by the left anymore. Martin Kettle suggests that it has a surprising amount in common with Labour." What is hardly surprising, with positions in their press like these, is that the membership of the CP has now plummeted to around 9,700.

Since the Tories' victory in 1983, seen by many as a result of the "Falklands factor", they have been consolidating their political and economic projects. The major themes have been reversing Britain's economic decline, restructuring industry and the workforce, and curbing the power of local government and the trade unions — both traditionally a base of support for the Labour Party.

Thatcher has been able to claim some successes on the economic front. But although indicators such as employment levels, exports and manufacturing output look better than they have for a while, everything is by no means rosy. General economic recovery since 1981 has been limited, with only parts of the economy succeeding in becoming competitive in international markets.

Much of the Tories' financial room for manoeuvre — outside of selling off nationalized industries — has come from North Sea oil revenues. With the collapse of world oil prices, the billions of pounds surplus that Britain is earning from its foreign trade in oil has decreased dramatically, leading to growing fears about the balance of payments deficit.

A masterly pre-election budget

In the recent March budget, Chancellor Nigel Lawson produced a "hat-trick" of income tax cuts, lower interest rates and higher public spending. It was a masterly pre-election budget. He was able to do this in part due to the recent upsurge of sterling against the Deutschmark and the dollar. In the run-up to the general election, the Tories are able to point to an annual economic growth rate of 3%, higher than any other European country. But even this would need to continue for 30 years before British living standards could catch up with those of West Germany!

On other fronts, there are problems facing the Tories should they be re-elected for a third term. A major one is the resuscitation of manufacturing. Following the 1980-81 recession, manufacturing capacity was drastically cut, leading to a loss of 2 million jobs in this sector alone. It is still contracting. Manufacturing industry had a 6% productivity improvement last year, meaning more job losses, with investment in this sector falling by 5% in 1986.

Unemployment has been one of the most visible consequences of Thatcherism. The official unemployment figure is 3,194,000 or 11%. Although the official figures have been falling recently, they are still double what they were when the Tories came to power in 1979.

Given that the Tories have spent a lot of time and energy fiddling the official unemployment statistics over past years, the real figure of those on the dole must be nearer 4 million. Even the *Financial Times* (April 21) has questioned whether there has really been a fall in the numbers out of work in the past year, given that the employed labour force had risen by the same amount as the increase in the number of people of working age.

Another method of "massaging" the figures has been the creation of jobs, training schemes and community programmes by government agencies, which involve an estimated 700,000 of the otherwise unemployed in mainly low-paid and dead-end work. It is no secret that if re-elected the Tories are planning to bring in US-style Workfare schemes, whereby claimants are forced to "earn" their pitiful amounts of dole money by working for it.

But even the official figures find it hard to mask the enormity of unemployment. Over 41% of those out of work are classified as "long-term" unemployed — that is, they have been on the dole for over a year.

Unemployment and poverty under the Tories has not been evenly spread throughout the country. There is now a marked north/south divide in Britain itself, which is also reflected in voting patterns (see box). In the 1983 election, the Labour Party hardly won any seats in the south of England outside of London, while the Tories did very badly in the north.

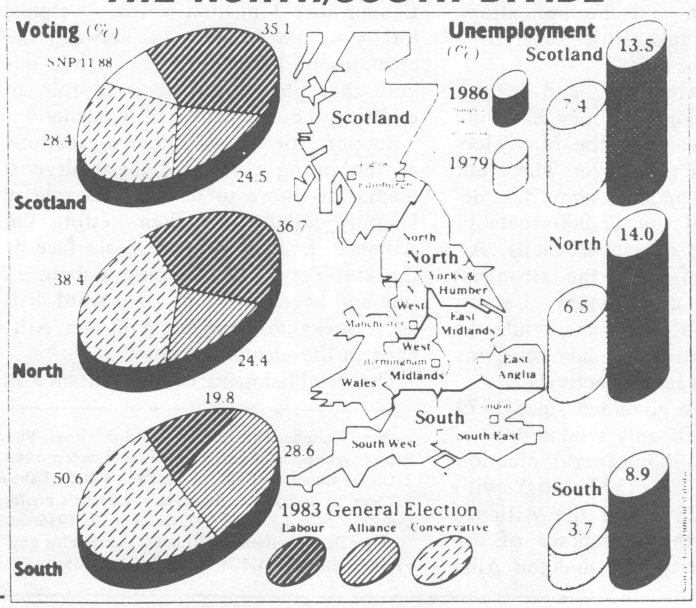
Scotland has perhaps been one of the hardest-hit areas, with an unemployment rate of 13.9% due to the slump in oil prices and in the semiconductor market in 1985. Over 19,000 jobs have been lost here in oil and related services alone. In January this year, a quarter of all jobs lost in the UK were in Scotland.

Tories expected to lose seats in Scotland

The Tories are expected to lose seats in Scotland and fall to third place, even after their poor showing in the last election. In 1983, the Tories won 28% of the vote, and Labour 35%, with the rest going to the Alliance and the Scottish National Party. There are 12 Tory Members of Parliament (MPs) with majorities of only 10%.

But the divisions that the Tories have wrought on British society have been deeper than simply geographical ones. Those in work have experienced a big rise in living standards. The take home pay of an average wage earner has risen by 21% more than inflation. Real personal disposable income is more than 15% higher now than in 1979. Divisions inside the working class have also been exacerbated along sex, race and age lines in the scramble for jobs, with such measures as the deregulation of minimum wages and attacks on the trade unions.

THE NORTH/SOUTH DIVIDE



Blacks, women and young people have been pushed even further to the bottom of the pile. Neal Ascherson, in *The Observer* newspaper of May 24, illustrates this process:

"Before Mrs Thatcher's victory in 1979, Britain had less income differences than most industrialized countries: the share of the top 1% had halved since 1945. Now the income share of the top 10% has returned to its 1960s level, rising from six and a half times that of the bottom 10%, to seven and a half times between 1979 and 1983. The figures of those living at or below the supplementary benefit level were around 6.1 million in 1979, and are now almost 12 million. The size of Britain's 'underclass' has nearly doubled, amounting today to almost a fifth of the entire population."

What the Tories have in store if they are re-elected is a deepening of this process, in conjunction with seeing through other uncompleted projects.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock — following in Wilson's footsteps?

One of the major structural changes made by the Tories has been the privatization of over a third of formerly state-owned enterprises. They include British Petroleum, British Aerospace, British Sugar, Cable & Wireless, Britoil, British Gas, Sealink, Jaguar and British Telecom. Since 1979, denationalizations have brought the treasury more than £7,500 million, even though they were sold off at bargain basement prices.[3] If they are elected for another term, the Tories plan to privatize British Steel, electricity and the water authorities!

But it has been the attacks on the trade unions and on trade-union rights, alongside unemployment, that has perhaps caused the most disarray and confusion in the labour movement. In 1979, 30% of the total population were members of trade unions; today this figure has declined to 22%. The defeats in particular of the year-long miners' and printers' strikes, with the Tories getting more than a helping hand from the trade-union and Labour bureaucracies, have left their mark.

In 1986, the national union federation, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) had 9.5 million affiliated members, a fall of 274,000 from 1985. The percentage of the working population in unions has declined — from 58% in 1979 to around 50% today. But in spite of the defeats and losses suffered during the past eight years of Thatcherism, there are still nearly 11 million people in trade unions. British unions are still organizationally much stronger than their European counterparts.

But even if the trade-union movement has not suffered a decisive, qualitative defeat in the past period, it still faces massive problems. A projection of employment trends and unionization from 1984 to 1990 carried out for the 840,000 - strong General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union, predicts the following:

Union strength will fall over this period by 18.4% in coal mining, 27.9% in oil, 20.5% in the car industry and 26.1% in the tobacco industry. On the other hand, union strength is growing in the service sector, and this trend will continue. Male employment will fall by 600,000, women's by 400,000. Full-time jobs will fall by 1 million, with the number of part-time jobs rising by 900,000. Finally, there has been a marked growth in peripheral jobs — part-time, home work or short-term contracts. Now 34% of the total workforce are in this "peripheral" category, 3 million men and 5 million women.[4]

An interesting fact to note here is that one spin-off from the Tories attacks on the trade unions has been a speed-up of union amalgamations across a whole a number of industries, as the unions seek to combine forces to defend their position. There are now fewer than 90 unions for the first time since 1872, when the membership of trade unions was only 255,000.

If the unions retain some numeric strength though, the attacks coming from the government in the form of successive Trade Union Acts hit at the Achilles' heel of British trade-unionism — its political weakness:

"The most unequivocal success [of the Tories] has been in the field of industrial relations ... the facts are that trade unions have been brought within the law; the power of the NUM [mineworkers' union] has been broken; the incidence of strikes has been greatly reduced." (*Financial Times*, April 9.)

The lack of any form of fightback on this front has meant that the Tories have even managed to win the propaganda battle that union power had to be curbed, pre-strike ballots are more democratic and so on. But there have been small successes, even so.

For instance, in an attempt to sever the financial support of the unions for the Labour Party, trade unions were compelled to hold individual ballots on whether to keep their "political funds". In all 37 unions that balloted, the vote was "yes", and in six more unions new funds have been set up.

Series of strikes in the public sector

The public sector, in particular, has seen a series of strikes by teachers and civil servants over pay and conditions. Public sector workers make up only 26% of the working population, but since 1980 have accounted for between 43-88% of days lost through industrial action. As Tory employment minister Kenneth Clarke acknowledges: "One of the problems we have now is that all the militant unions are in the public sector. The private sector ones have been modernized really; there you have all the reasonable and moderate ones."

At the same time as attacks on the trade unions, the Tories have taken on the other major part of Labour's base — concentrated especially in the big cities — local councils. Rate-capping by central government (statutory limits on local taxes, with financial penalties for overspending) has forced Labour-led councils to implement the Tories' public spending cuts locally.

Only one council fought against rate-capping to the end, that of Liverpool in the north of England, which was led by supporters of the *Militant* newspaper. The Court of Appeal subsequently disqualified 47 Labour councillors for the losses the council incurred. But in the recent May council elections, Labour won back its seats from the caretaker Alliance council, with the Tories only getting 10% of the vote. One group who were not pleased with this result were the leadership of the Labour Party, headed up by Neil Kinnock, who had condemned the council as "loony lefties" and used the fightback to victimize and expel *Militant* supporters.

Thatcher also succeeded in abolishing

3. *Problèmes Economiques*, April 23, 1987.
4. Employment Research Institute, Warwich University. Study conducted for the GMBU.

completely the popular Greater London Council, led by Ken Livingstone, and replacing its main functions by non-elected bodies. Another victory was the "greatest sale of the century" — the selling off of 1 million council-owned houses to their tenants. The Tories have further plans to bypass local council authorities on school financing and to centralize school curriculums.

All these policies are aimed at taking away decision-making and financial power from local authorities over spending, housing and education. The idea is presumably to end up with local councils in Britain having similar powers to those in the North of Ireland — over waste disposal, sewers and pest control. And the Tories want to privatize most of these jobs, if they haven't done so already!

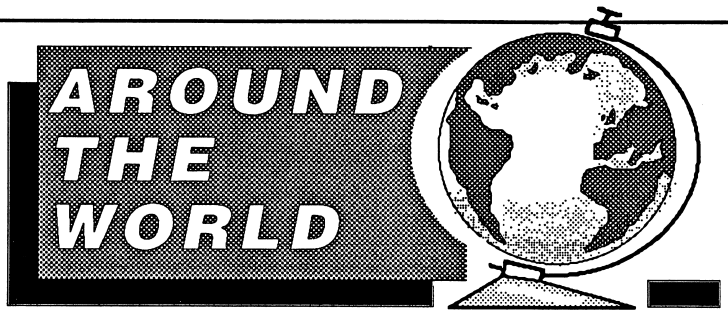
Another gem in the Thatcherite free-enterprise philosophy has been share-ownership schemes, with share sales following each successive privatization. She even launched the Tory manifesto for the upcoming election around the slogan "Power to the People" !

What has been Labour's response to all this? A good question. The editorialists of the May 20 *Financial Times* have the answer:

"The Labour manifesto is a revelation. If Labour had been able to produce documents like 'Britain will win' in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and so apparently free to dispense with conference resolutions, there would have been no need for the Social Democratic Party to have been formed ... Active membership of the EEC is accepted without so much as a blush at the memory that the subject has split the LP for the last three decades. Even the commitment to a non-nuclear defence policy, so controversial when it was adopted last autumn, has been toned down to the point where it is almost an apologetic footnote."

In the run-up to the election, the Labour leadership has concentrated most of its vitriol not on the Tories, but on the left in the labour movement. The defeat of the miners' strike ushered in a new era of LP leaders distancing themselves from workers' struggles, witch-hunts against the left and attacks on Black self-organization.

The Labour Party's attempts to present itself as more moderate than the Alliance could lead to a third general election defeat — why vote for a pale imitation when you can vote for the real thing? The lessons of the miners' and printworkers' strikes, the fight for local council autonomy and against public sector cuts and unemployment can lead to only one conclusion: only a radical alternative, fighting for the interests of the working class, can really begin to challenge the radical Toryism of Thatcher. ☆



INTERNATIONAL

Moscow Trials campaign

A CAMPAIGN to clear the names of the accused in the Moscow Show Trials has been launched and taken up by well-known labour movement figures around the world:

"It is now over fifty years since the infamous Moscow Show Trials. It is astounding that at a time when the Soviet government is at pains to emphasize its concern with 'human rights' and proclaims the need for glasnost' (openness), the accused in these trials, with a few exceptions, are still considered guilty of being paid agents of Nazism and other crimes.

"Among these men were numbered several who played outstanding roles in the Russian revolution of 1917. The reputations of founders of the Soviet state like Zinoviev, Radek, Trotsky and Bukharin were besmirched or expunged from the history books. Today, no-one doubts that the 'confessions' at the trials — the sole basis for the prosecution — were utterly false. Seven defendants in the third trial, Krestinsky and others, have been both judicially rehabilitated and politically exonerated. So have the military leaders, Tukhachevsky and others, whose military trial in 1937 was held in secret. But the admittedly false evidence against these men was inseparable from the charges against all the other accused.

"None of the accused, of course, is alive today. Many were executed immediately after their trials. Others died in prison or camps. Leon Trotsky, the chief accused in all three of the trials, was murdered in exile in 1940. However, families of some of the defendants are still living in the Soviet Union. Some have also suffered imprisonment and exile. It is worth recalling that a review of all these cases was promised by Khrushchev, but this promise was broken.

"We, the undersigned, therefore call on the Soviet government to re-examine the cases against all these victims of the perversion of Soviet justice, as took place with Krestinsky. We are confident that all those accused in the Trials of 1936-38 will be shown to have been innocent. They should immediately be rehabilitated, their honour restored, their families compensated and their graves marked."

Britain: Tamara Deutscher; Tariq Ali; Sidney Bidwell MP; Fenner Brockway; Jeremy Corbyn MP; Meghnad Desai; Eric Heffer; Tom Kemp; Eddy Loyden MP; Ian Mikardo MP; Stan Newens MP; Cyril Smith; David Winnick MP. *Peru*: Hugo Blanco. *Mexico*: Rosario Ibarra MP; Efraim Calvo MP; Marguerito Montes; Ricardo Pascoe MP; Pedro Penaloza MP; Rosalia Peredo MP; José Luis Diaz Moll MP. Sweden: Göte Kilden. *France*: Alain Krivine; Michael Loewy. *Italy*: Livio Maitan. Belgium: Ernest Mandel. Germany: Jakob Moneta. *Sri Lanka*: Bala Tampoe. *USA*: Noam Chomsky.

The campaign is appealing for further signatories of individuals or organizations, and financial donations to extend the appeal worldwide. Write to the Moscow Trials Campaign, c/o Michael Loewy, 34 rue des Lyonnais, 75005 Paris. ★

TURKEY

"Stop wife-battering!"

"WOMEN's solidarity! Stop wife-battering". A crowd of 2-3,000 women marched on May 17 through Istambul, in a demonstration seen by its organizers as a turning point for the Turkish women's movement. Until now the movement has mainly been limited to raising economic demands.

The demonstrators, who were applauded from the windows of the working class districts they passed through, denounced the judges for being soft on the brutalities which "one in four Turkish women is the victim of". They stressed that there is "no essential difference between conjugal violence and the torture" denounced by human rights organizations, and demanded penalties for husbands found guilty of domestic violence.

Statistics making it possible to estimate the number of battered women in Turkey do not exist, but the problem is endemic and has until now remained a taboo. Speeches against the prime minister's wife, who ostentatiously leads a foundation for the promotion of women, and who recently declared to the press that "women can never be the equal of men", gave a political character to a demonstration that was intended primarily to be anti-patriarchal and anti-macho.

Some transexuals, a group of whom

are entering the third week of a hunger strike against police brutality, joined the demonstration. Although hesitant at first, support for these strikers grew during the last week with some well-known show-business personalities signing their petition. The press published lengthy extracts from the letter addressed to the prime minister, reminding him of European positions on the question of no sexual discrimination. [From *Le Monde*, May 18.] ★

SRI LANKA

May Day march banned

IN RESPONSE to the bombing of the Pettah bus stand in Colombo on April 21, which killed and wounded a large number of people, the Executive Committee of the Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union (CMU) issued a statement on April 24 condemning this blind terrorist act. It denounced "those who perpetrated this crime as being cold-blooded terrorists, having no regard whatsoever for other human beings in the pursuit of their ends, whatever they may be."

Attacks by groups of Tamil-speaking youth on non-combattants in Sinhala villages and against other Tamil groups had facilitated attempts to attribute the outrage to such organizations, the statement said. It went on to declare that the CMU Executive Committee "cannot accept that there is justification for any such terrorist crime, even if it may be in retaliation for acts of terrorism that have been, and are being, perpetrated on the civilian population of the North and East by the armed forces of the state, including bombing from the air and shelling from land and sea."

Three days later, on April 27, the CMU Executive sent an open letter to the Sri Lanka president, J R Jayewardene, condemning the government for taking reprisals for the bombing by stepping up aerial and artillery attacks on the Tamil population, "causing death and injury to increasing numbers of ordinary people." It stressed: " Such attacks will not serve to remove the continuing danger of further terrorist attacks upon ordinary people elsewhere in the country, but may even provoke them."

At the same time, the CMU executive protested against the ban on public processions and meetings proclaimed in the wake of the bomb outrage, saying: "To let it stand would indicate that your government is more concerned with preventing any form of public, political or trade-union activity on May Day, in its own political interests, than with the safety of those who may participate..." ★

San Francisco in April

PART OF the crowd at the April 25 demonstration in San Francisco against US support for apartheid and intervention in Central America. The organizers estimated it 70,000. The police, echoed by the mass media, granted only 30,000, but in doing that they wittingly or unwittingly admitted that it was 50 per cent larger than last year's spring action.

Our correspondent and photographer says it could have easily been 100,000. "It took three hours to arrive at the Civic Centre, without any specific holdup other than just the volume of the crowd." ★

USA

Protest at Contra Killing

IN PORTLAND, Oregon, on April 29 1,500 people held a vigil to protest against the killing of Ben Linder by US-sponsored contras in Nicaragua. It was reportedly the largest anti-war action in the area for many years. Linder, who grew up in the area, was working as an engineer building hydroelectric plants in northern Nicaragua.

At a news conference preceding the vigil, the the murdered workers' father, David Linder, said that his son "had a commitment to the revolution there. By the revolution he meant giving people schools, giving them medical care, giving them land. He was trying to give them a little electricity."

John Linder, said: "My brother's death was not an accident. His death was policy." He went on to say, "The US government killed my brother," and to urge people to become involved in protests against US aid to the contras.

[From *The Militant*, May 8.] ★

INTRODUCTION

A rising sea of unrest

SINCE THE EXPLOSION of mass student protests in the Spanish state around the turn of the year, Felipe Gonzalez' government has begun to look more and more battered by a rising sea of unrest. Powerful momentum built up for a general strike. In the first week of May, the death of a worker in the Cantabrian industrial town of Reinosa as a result of a police punitive assault threatened to set the tinderbox alight. It was an important news item even in the northern European media.

The Gonzalez government had been probably the strongest and most arrogantly right-wing social-democratic regime in Europe. Only a year ago, it managed to defeat a mass movement against NATO membership, essentially by asserting its authority as a government to which there was "no alternative."

The student protests combined with desperate struggles by workers against draconian industrial reconversions in a number of flashpoints, such as the Puerto Real shipyards in Andalusia, the mines of Leon and at the HUNOSA mines in Asturias.

In Reinosa, the brutality of the police has served as a dramatic reminder that the "forces of order" of the social-democratic government remain essentially unchanged from the time of the Franco dictatorship.

The articles that follow give the assessment of the Fourth Internationalists in the Spanish state and describe their plans for political intervention both in the coming elections and in the upcoming Spanish state-level congress of the Workers' Commissions, the strongest trade-union force in the key sectors of the working class. ★

End of an era for Felipe Gonzalez

AT THE CENTER of the recent mobilizations in Spain has been the fight against austerity policies. Workers have been fighting for higher wages and against layoffs brought on by industrial reconversion.

The General Workers' Union (UGT), the social-democratic union confederation, is now distancing itself from the policies of the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), after suffering heavy losses in last November's union elections. The Workers' Commissions, in which the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) play a leading role, are now preparing for their next congress. The call for general strike action has divided its leadership.

The following article is based on a report on trade-union work by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the Spanish state section of the Fourth International.

THE SOCIAL-democratic government won victories in both the NATO referendum of March 1986 and in the June 1986 legislative elections. The low level of activity by the working class, which had waged no major struggles since the general strike of June 20, 1985, led Felipe Gonzalez' government to step up its austerity policy.

This escalation was reflected in particular in contract negotiations, in which the government began to link wage increases to productivity and to acceptance of changes in working conditions. Likewise, the employers' contribution to social security was again reduced, while attacks against the social wage increased.

Finally, the policy of introducing "flexibility" into the labor market followed its course, and a second wave of industrial reconversions began.

This sharpening of austerity was accompanied in the trade-union field by a scheme for setting up a conciliationist form of trade-unionism to make it easier for the government to impose a capitalist solution to the crisis. In this area also, there was a turn by the social-democratic government.

In fact, like any social-democratic government, the PSOE regime had used its links with the working class to put over reactionary measures. In the trade-union elections in December 1986, both the government and the UGT [the confederation dominated by the PSOE] tried to make a qualitative leap to establishing the dominance of the UGT on the labor front. Their aim was to consolidate a conciliationist trade unionism ready to accept social pacts and based on a mandate won in union elections, and not on the participation of the workers in the union branches.

This scheme involved putting the signing of a social pact off until after the elections. In fact, even while the UGT presents itself as the advocate of social partnership, the fruits of this in terms of unemployment, lost buying power and the growth of part-time and temporary jobs might have been seen as unacceptable by a lot of workers. The bosses were demanding a new tightening of the austerity policy.

Defeat for UGT in union elections

However, the result of the November 1986 union elections knocked the props out from under this scheme. While the UGT won more delegates than the Workers' Commissions, it lost in enterprises with more than 50 workers, in the key sectors of the economy and in general where the workers' movement is well-organized.

Thus, the government's plan for establishing a conciliationist trade unionism and getting a social pact has failed for the moment. If we put this together with a growing social discontent in all sections of the masses, reflected in the mobilization of young people, agricultural workers, small peasants and of the workers' movement itself, we can draw

the following conclusion:

While the government has not given up the objectives it set itself, it has been obliged to adjust its projects to the social reality of the moment by proceeding with a form of industrial reconversion that does not confront the workers' movement head-on but is being introduced gradually, while the legal rules on labor market flexibility and so on are being delayed.

A year after the government's victory in the NATO referendum, the mass movement is in full effervescence.

Young people have erupted onto the political scene, becoming a political force of primary importance. And a series of the most diverse social sectors — small merchants protesting against removal of restrictions on opening hours; peasants protesting against the agricultural policy and the effects of Spanish integration into the EEC, sections of the health service protesting against the policy followed in this area — along with the workers' movement, have displayed a level of combativity that contrasts drastically with the reserve of recent years.

It is also important to stress that objectively the workers' situation improved in 1986. On the one hand, while the share of wages in the GNP continued to decline, the great majority of workers suffered little, if any, loss in buying power. On the other hand, employment increased. In the 18 months that have just gone by, 543,000 net new jobs have been created, and at present there are more wage workers in work than there were when the PSOE came into government. The consequence of these two factors is that the consumption of wage earners' households has increased.

However, these various factors, to which others should be added, have far from strengthened the credibility of an austerity policy, as the government would have us believe. They have had the opposite effect on consciousness of working people, who felt that conditions were more favorable for mobilizing to express the social malaise generated by the cumulative effects of the austerity policy.

In fact, the increase in the number of jobs, the decrease in the number of workers affected by such expedients as "job regulation" and the economic growth of certain industries, such as construction, have had the result that workers in work — with the exception of some sectors affected by industrial reconversion — are now less afraid of losing their jobs.

This growth in employment does not mean that the problem of unemployment has become secondary. It simply means that subjectively working people's fear of losing their jobs has diminished. But the high rate of unemployment and the way that it has increased under a Socialist government explain why it remains one of the primary causes of social discontent.

In fact, while the numbers in work have increased slightly over the time that the PSOE has been in government, the growth of the economically active population and the decline of non-waged labor have meant that the number of unemployed has grown over this period by 700,000. A total of a million unemployed is the most eloquent condemnation of this austerity policy for working people.

Dramatic cuts in social services

Second, during the PSOE government, the number of temporary jobs has increased considerably. Thirdly, if we leave out 1986, the cumulative loss of buying power is enormous. Finally, austerity has had dramatic effects on some social services. In health, the deterioration of the public service has been so great (there is a lack of even the minimum supplies for operating) that it has led to general mobilizations throughout this sector.

The current contract negotiations are being conducted without a social pact laying down guidelines. The social partnership policy's loss of credibility that we mentioned earlier, combined with the results of the trade-union elections, has made it impossible to sign a social pact.

Carlos Solchaga, the economics and finance minister, who is pursuing a policy of stabilization at any cost, has appealed to "the employers' sense of responsibility" to keep them from raising wages by more than five per cent, which is the official inflation rate projected for 1987. He has not hesitated to apply blackmail, making a reduction in the employers' share of social security contributions dependent on respect for this ceiling. At the same time, he has made it very expensive for the employers to exceed this limit by implenting a restrictive monetary policy and raising interest rates.

This wage policy has been applied most harshly in the public sector. The state rail service, RENFE, is a good example. The management has proposed a wage increase of 5 per cent, a three-year contract, freedom to transfer workers to other jobs and regions, very broad job classifications, changes in work norms and so on. In a nutshell, these are all the basic elements contained in the government's scheme.

As a result of this policy, the current contract negotiations have been hard fought, and there has generally been unity between the UGT and the Workers' Commissions. As we will see later on, this leadership of the UGT seems to be taking its distance from the government. But there are many negative points in the attitudes of the union leaderships, such as the UGT's acceptance of the general contract for the metal industry, which only gives workers a six per cent raise for 1987.

The source of the sharpest conflicts has been the so-called second industrial reconversion. Despite its tragic consequences for working people, the first wave of industrial reconversions was insufficient for the needs of the system. Its sails were trimmed to avoid predictable working-class opposition.

This first phase of reconversions so far has only been carried through halfway. Moreover, even though we have seen layoffs, people are still waiting for the promised compensation for this, the investments that the bosses were supposed to make. Now, economic conditions in certain industries point toward a second wave of reconversions.

In steel, the picture is dominated by excess capacities, which have now been aggravated by entry into the EEC,

Felipe Gonzalez (DR)

since all of Europe faces similar problems and the production quotas assigned to each country in the Community are being cut. In steel, as in other industries, we are only just beginning to pay the bill for EEC membership.

In shipbuilding, the trend of demand has not followed the projections made at the time of the first reconversion. What is more, worldwide excess capacity amounts to seven times world production. And, with the emergence of some very competitive countries, projected orders for the Spanish shipyards have not materialized.

Bloodletting in steel, shipbuilding and mines

Steel and shipbuilding were at the center of the first wave of reconversions. The cost in terms of employment was high, amounting respectively to 13,000 and 16,000 jobs. But despite this bloodletting, the crisis was not solved. The economic situation of these industries is untenable, and EEC pressures, justified by the accord Spain signed to reduce its productive capacities, are becoming more and more insistent.

These two industries, then, along with the mines, are the primary targets for the dismantling planned by the PSOE government. Government reports specify that it will be necessary to eliminate about 18,000 jobs in steel, 12,000 in the mines and about the same number in the shipyards.

In this second wave of reconversion, the government also plans to put in order public enterprises deeply in the red, and to extend the reconversion to industries untouched by the first measures, such as producers' goods and the railways.

However, all these measures are not going through without provoking very sharp conflicts, such as at Reinosa in Cantabria, at the Puerto Real shipyard in Andalusia or in the HUNOSA mines in Asturias.

Another source of conflict linked to the industrial reconversions is the suspension of the Employment Promotion Funds which is now being opposed by all the unions [see box on page 12].

The profound social discontent now being expressed throughout the Spanish state made a general strike possible. But for that very reason, the fact that it was scuttled by the Workers' Commissions has had the most negative repercussions. First of all, a good opportunity for undertaking a general action was lost in a situation in which there was an upsurge of mobilizations.

In these circumstances, the call for a general strike itself would have stimulated partial mobilizations and dealt a major blow to the government's social and economic policy. Conversely, the failure to call a general strike created a feeling of frustration among the most militant vanguard, which saw it as a perspective for generalizing the present struggles.

The decision gave a respite to the PSOE government and to the bosses, who had been seeing a growing number of conflicts and were sure that there would be a general strike. With this breathing space, they are in a better position to pursue their offensive against the fundamental rights of working people.

Finally, the decision meant a victory for the most right-wing sections of the Workers' Commissions and a shift of the union to the right. As a consequence of this evolution, the UGT will feel less vulnerable to pressure and gain a larger margin for maneuver.

The fact that the general strike was scuttled shows how subject the Workers' Commissions are to contradictory pressures. Some factors push the leadership to act in a more class-struggle direction. In fact, the union elections show that it was profitable for the Workers' Commissions, and in general for the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), to take a more confrontationist attitude toward the PSOE government.

Being outside the institutions of government is an incitement to establish a relationship of forces through mobilization. The social discontent and the approach of the municipal elections are an encouragement to take the initiative in the field of social struggle in order to be able to capitalize on it. Finally, the more militant sections of the Workers' Commissions have had better conditions for building working-class mobilizations.

Verbal radicalism not matched by deeds

The apparatus of the Workers' Commissions at the Spanish state level, and the pro-Soviet Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (PCPE) led by Ignacio Gallego, have been most sensitive to this left trend in their language and in their way of proceeding. But this shift has been very limited.

They have not fundamentally challenged the social partnership policy, and their verbal radicalism has by no means been matched by deeds. Most of the union leaderships and activists are stuck in their old rut.

Moreover, what has just happened with respect to the general strike shows clearly that negative factors have gained the upper hand. The opposition in the confederation to calling a general strike was very strong, espe-

Left slate for the Workers' Commissions

AN AGREEMENT has been made between the Movimiento Comunista (MC) and the LCR for the Confederal Congress of the Workers' Commissions. This article from *Zutik*, the newspaper of Fourth Internationalists in the Basque country, explains the basis of the accord:

The Workers' Commissions have just begun the process that will culminate next autumn in the holding of the fourth confederal congress.

The refusal to call a general strike and the various positions that were expressed in the union on this question give an even greater importance to the political discussion that will unfold in the Workers' Commissions.

For the activists of the trade-union left who are working in the Workers' Commissions, it is of vital importance to get their positions known within the union, to defend with a single voice a consistent line of working-class resistance to the bosses' attacks and to the anti-labor policy of the government, and to put into the leading bodies of the Workers' Commissions men and women committed to this line.

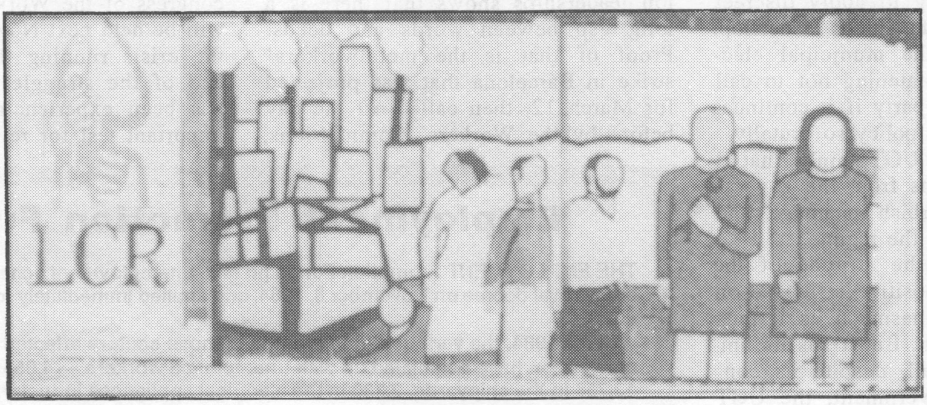
Our two parties consider that this alliance must serve as a rallying point for all left activists in every congress who want to defend in the Workers' Commissions a clearly left form of trade-unionism as an alternative to the various reformist currents. Our two organizations will consider case by case the advisability of extending this agreement to other trade-union forces and currents.

The activists of both parties working in the Workers' Commissions will draw up and defend in a united way amendments, resolutions and positions as an alternative to the reformist proposals that will be presented in all the congresses and conferences preceding the confederal congress.

In every case in which the conditions for this are assembled, they will put up left trade-union candidates in accordance with these positions. As regards the MC and LCR, candidates will be put forward in accordance with the relative size of the forces of each party present in the conferences or congresses. ★

cially among the leaders of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC, the PCE's name in Catalonia); among supporters of Gerardo Iglesias, present general secretary of the PCE in the Madrid union (although not Iglesias himself); and those of Santiago Carillo, grouped today in the Workers' Party of Spain-Communist Unity (PTE-UC), which was formed in February.

We knew that we would run up against this sort of resistance, but we thought it would be easier to overcome. This resistance to a general strike, very widespread among the cadres and leaders of the Workers' Commissions, is rooted in the profound reformism in which they have been educated and that is the framework in which they think.



This reformism involves a conception of the relations between bosses and workers based on negotiation and not confrontation, on conciliation and not mobilization. It involves trade-union activity limited to contract negotiation and a fundamentally economist view of things; a conception of unity in action with the UGT based on adapting to the conciliationist unionism that the latter represents.

The contract negotiations underway in many industries that are being carried out in united action with the UGT are a good example. In these instances, many Workers' Commissions leaders are adapting to proposals that they think would be acceptable to the UGT.

Underlying this is also a philosophy of joint responsibility for finding a solution to the crisis, which is generally reflected by a cultivation of social pacts and more concretely by the acceptance of the FPE, industrial reconversion and so on. To all this has to be added the fear of heading for a confrontation with the government and the "destabilization" that it might provoke.

These are the decisive factors in the political practice of the union, although there are also a series of others that can push a section of the leadership of the Workers' Commissions to the left.

Rejection of the general strike has opened up a crisis in the Workers' Commissions, in particular because the union is in a pre-congress period. This crisis is not unrelated to the one that the Communist Party has been undergoing for nearly ten years, and which has been reflected by fragmentation into numerous conflicting factions in the Workers' Commissions themselves.

The PCE current was the most divided on the question of the general strike. Marcelino Camacho, general secretary of the Workers' Commissions, who was favorable to it, was weakened by the decision that was made. In a certain sense, that is also true for Gerardo Iglesias, who openly declared in favor of the general strike. On the other hand, the most moderate section of the PCE in the Workers' Commissions was reinforced.

The stance of pro-Soviet current, the PCPE, was determined by the process of unification which it is going through with the PCE. They were already together in the Izquierda Unida (IU — United Left) electoral coalition. It adopted a rightist course that has not failed to have negative repercussions.

Despite everything, some sections of this current are resisting the rightward motion involved in fusion with the PCE and its political implications. However, no one should have any illusions about the scope of this "resistance," even if on some occasions and in some places it can have interesting results.

General strike debate fuels divisions

On the question of the general strike, this current has clearly made common cause with the union apparatus and maintained a position for mobilization that is not without certain contradictions. On the one hand, this attitude facilitates an alliance with with a section of the PCE — Camacho and the confederal-level apparatus of the Workers' Commissions. On the other, it makes more difficult a rapprochement with other sections of this party. In fact, while the PSUC was one of those forces most hostile to calling a general strike, the Communist Party of Catalonia, which is the PCPE's group in that region, voted in favor.

The PTE current lead by Santiago Carillo starts from the principle that the workers' struggle has to be aimed against the right and not against the present policy of the social-democratic government. This is why he has opposed any mobilization against the PSOE, on the pretext that it would be capitalized on by the right.

This current is almost beginning to make unity in action with the UGT its supreme principle. It opposed the general strike, just as it did the previous one of June 20, 1985, arguing that the conditions were not ripe and that it was necessary to create them at the base in contract negotiations, that unity in action with the UGT could not be broken, that the enemy was the economic right and not the government and so on.

The convergence that has occurred between a broad section of the present PCE and Carillo's positions on the general strike is not a coincidence. These two currents come from the same reformist mould.

The effect of the union elections, the failure of the schemes of the government and the UGT to build up a conciliationist unionism under the latter's dominance, and the effect of the social unrest in the country has been to sharpen the contradictions between the social-democratic union and the government.

Until now, the government has based all its policy toward the unions on its links with the UGT. The social-democratic union, the advocate of the policy of social partnership, played a key role in the demobilization, becoming more and more the "foreman of the change" [the name the PSOE has given to its rule].

The general strike of June 20, 1985, showed that while the Workers' Commissions opted for mobilization, the conflicts between the UGT and the social-democratic government were sharpening. But in the absence of mobilization, the policy of the government and the bosses of presenting the slightest concession as a victory for the UGT, and the paralysis of the Workers' Commissions themselves, have made the UGT into a model for a lot of reformist leaders in the Workers' Commissions.

The union elections have modified this situation substantially. The UGT appeared too implicated in the government's policy, and lost the elections in key sectors and enterprises (HUNOSA, the telephones, RENFE, the banks), and in important regions (Barcelona

and Madrid). These losses have forced the UGT to distance itself from the government's policy by calling for wage rises higher than the 5 per cent set by the government and also forced it to mobilize against the industrial reconversions, sometimes even competing with the Workers' Commissions, as in the case of HUNOSA.

UGT leader Nicolas Redondo has decided to focus attacks against Solchaga, and the UGT decided unilaterally to withdraw from the party-union commission, in which it sits alongside the PSOE. Likewise, some sections of the UGT are beginning to apply discreet blackmail against the PSOE leadership. Looking toward the municipal elections, they are threatening not to call for a vote for the party if it continues to pursue its social policy so brutally.

In this way, the UGT thinks that it can win concessions from the government that can refurbish its image, and distance itself from the regime.

This change in the attitude of the UGT can have a positive influence on the mobilization, inasmuch as it puts austerity in question. But it has its limitations. First of all, despite its conflicts with the government, the UGT has not broken its umbilical cord to the regime. On the contrary, it is trying to rebuild its links.

Discussion around work contracts

It is for this reason that the UGT is centering all its denunciations on the wage issue, and not taking up economic policy as a whole. Secondly, the UGT is benefiting from the fact that the Workers' Commissions cannot put themselves forward as an alternative to conciliationist unionism, which they also represent. In daily practice, a lot of Workers' Commissions leaders are just as rightist as those of the UGT, which facilitates the conciliationist policy of the social-democratic union.

Finally, while the UGT's conflicts with the government arise because of the extent of mobilization of the workers, that does not keep it from opposing mobilization, as was the case in the general strike in Asturias, since it is always out to close any breach that might open up. In this sense, the scuttling of the general strike by the Workers' Commissions gave it a considerable breathing space.

An immediate test for the workers' movement is the discussion of the contracts. Unlike preceding years, it will be carried out without a social pact, in a context strongly marked by the numerous struggles in progress. And, as shown by the contracts already signed in many sectors, there is a real possibility for exceeding the 5 per cent ceiling that the government is trying to impose.

However, while in many places the bosses are ready to give way on wages, this must not be traded for concessions by the workers on working conditions — night or weekend work, flexible job classifications and geographical mobility, increased productivity and so on. A lot of union leaders are ready to give way on such points in exchange for a "good" readjustment of wages.

Mobilization of the workers remains key to getting favorable contracts. And there again the past attitude of the union leaderships shows that there is a long gap beween words and deeds. Proof of that is the metalworkers' strike in Barcelona that was projected for March 12, then called off the day before by the Workers' Commissions, who signed a disastrous agreement.

The fight against the industrial reconversions will remain the principal axis of the struggle in the coming months. It includes a fight against the extension of the FPE. Many industries hit in the past, such as steel, shipbuilding and the mines, are going to be hit again by "permanent reconversion." It is likely that the government's attacks against these industries will run up against the hostility of the entire population in the regions affected, as in the HUNOSA struggle.

Finally, the fourth Spanish-state congress of the Workers' Commissions will be held next November. In view of the crisis running through the union and of the struggles that the country has been experiencing, it will be an important test for revolutionaries. ☆

Employment Promotion Funds

THE EMPLOYMENT Promotion Funds [in fact, unemployment schemes] were created by royal decree on November 8, 1984, and applied immediately for the first time in steel.

Since 1984, the various funds created in those sectors affected by industrial reconversion have been filled up with unemployed workers — 4,053 in the steelmills, 13,758 in the shipyards, 2,330 in the electrical appliances industry, 4,000 in steel.

A section of these workers, those over 55, would never work again. They were just waiting for retirement age (60). But the others, according to the decree, were supposed to be offered a new job within three years, the duration of the FPE.

The truth about the FPE emerged clearly when the number of workers ready to work who remained in the FPE was made public and when the government was forced to issue another decree extending the FPE for a further 18 months for those workers who had come to the end of their three years. Of the 19,000 workers who came under the FPE, only 1,500 have found a job. About 7,000 can claim retirement benefits.

The government's propaganda around the FPE pivoted around two points. The first was the offer of new jobs. The second was better financial advantages than under classical unemployment insurance, since the workers under the scheme could draw 80% of their former wages for three years. The new jobs were a fairy tale, as everyone knew perfectly well. There could be no hope of jobs when the reconversion was being carried out without a minimum of the necessary re-industrialization.

The financial advantages offered by the FPE were real, but they created a major problem of divisions among the unemployed. There was a conscious discrimination designed to create an "elite unemployed." At the same time, these advantages were presented as a lesser evil, given the lack of credibility of new jobs, to get the layoffs through more easily.

A third argument was advanced. At the time, it was presented as an important gain, but it rapidly proved to be a shameless lie. It was the possibility that these workers could be taken back into their old plants after spending three years in the FPE, because their work contracts had not been broken but only suspended.

Obviously, in reality, this possibility was wiped away with the wave of a hand by the plants concerned. How could they get people to believe that these workers were going to be re-employed when the factories were continuing to lay people off?

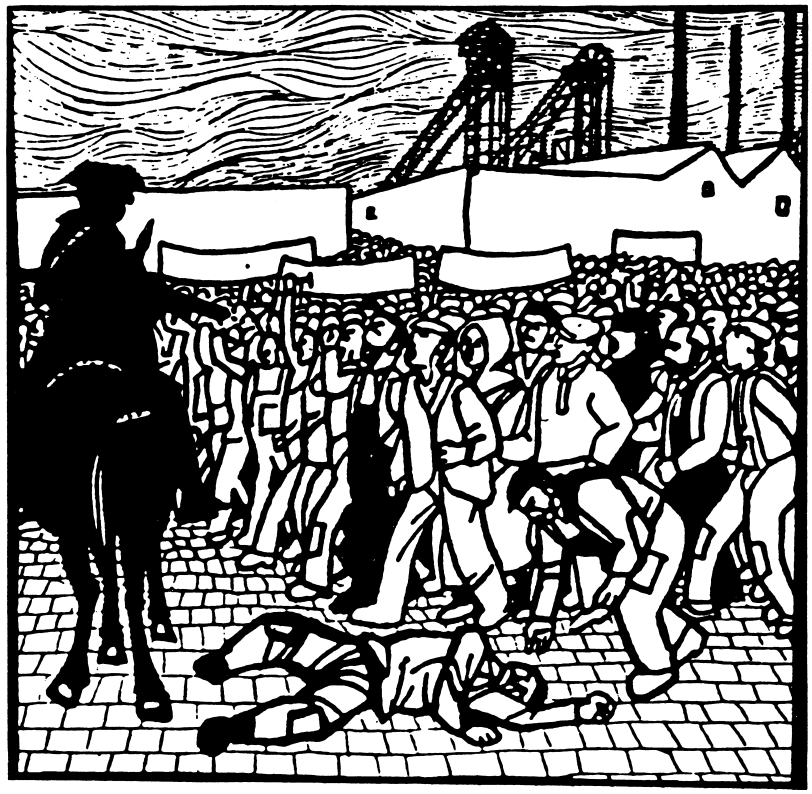
On March 6, the government issued another decree that modified the November one on three points.

First, it extended by 18 months the initial period of three years in order to try to cover up as best it could the failure of any perspective of rehiring and above all to avert a convergence of the workers still in the FPE with those who are about to enter, coming from the new wave of industrial reconversion.

Secondly, it cut the cost of the FPE. During the 18 month extension, 80% of former wages will no longer be guaranteed. Henceforth, the FPE benefits will be respectively 70%, then 60% and finally 50% of the original wage in each six months.

Thirdly, this decree set up more coercive mechanisms in order to force the workers themselves to leave the FPE. Practically any proposal of work anywhere in the Spanish state now counts as the offer of a new job. The original decree stipulated that the job offered had to be within a radius of 25 kilometers from the home of the worker concerned and that it had to be acceptable to them. Likewise, it said that workers who refuse job offers considered "acceptable" by the state will be expelled from the FPE, which means the cancelling of their contracts and the end of their benefits. ★

LCR election accord with Herri Batasuna



THREE LEVELS of elections will be held in Spain on June 10: elections for the European parliament in Strasbourg, city and town governments and provincial (autonomous) assemblies in Aragon and in Nafarroa [Navarra], historically a Basque area but not included in the Basque autonomous region.

The following article — from the May 9 issue of *Combate*, the paper of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR), the Spanish state section of the Fourth International — describes the positions and electoral agreements presented by the LCR at the opening of the campaign.

SINCE MAY 1, an election atmosphere has started to spread. Felipe Gonzalez has just made his umpteenth attempt over the state TV network to hypnotize public opinion. And there is a hysterical campaign against Herri Batasuna [the Basque revolutionary nationalist organization], whipped up over the sinister attack on the office of the ruling Socialist Workers Party of Spain (PSOE) in Portugalete [where a small, shadowy terrorist group, unconnected to HB, threw Molotov cocktails]. These are no doubt signs of the climate that the rulers want to build up for June 10.

We are experiencing a period of broad and intense mobilization directed in one form or another against the government. Will this change the electoral map that emerged from the last general elections? That is not very likely. The polls being published confirm what might be deduced from a reasonable analysis of the situation. There will be no "electoral expression" commensurate with the struggles that we have experienced, although later on we may see some important "reprisal" votes against the PSOE.

Of course, elections are always a distorted reflection of social reality. But in the Spanish state, over and above distortions, there is a real schizophrenia in the most active and mobilized sectors of the masses (with the well-known exception of the revolutionary nationalist current in Euskadi). They vote well to the right of the ideas they defend in action. Even clearly revolutionary organizations may find themselves affected by this "infirmity."

In Nafarroa, the EMK [the Basque country current represented in the rest of the Spanish state by the Movimiento Comunista (MC)], the LKI [Liga Kommunista Iraultzailea — Revolutionary Communist League, the Fourth Internationalist organization in the Basque country] and independent elements have formed the *Batzarre* ["Assembly"] coalition [for the elections to the province's autonomous assembly].

The special conditions for the radical left in Nafarroa have given rise in the past to coalitions which offered interesting perspectives for work. Today, *Batzarre* has emerged with a clear identity. It is revolutionary, unitary and revolutionary nationalist, although different from Herri Batasuna, with which it seeks to maintain relations of respect. While it of course defends its own proposals, it avoids confrontation.

In these conditions, the coalition can not only win some positive electoral results, but after the elections can also promote stronger and more united action by the radical left of Nafarroa as a whole.

While in Nafarroa there is going to be what we might call a "classical" experience of united work — although we seldom find favorable conditions for putting this into practice in elections — in Aragon a quite exceptional agreement has been reached. It is a coalition between Izquierda Unida (United Left) and the Convergencia Alternativa de Aragon, which includes various sectors of the radical left, including our party. [This agreement is for both the municipal elections and those for the autonomous assembly].

Special conditions for left unity

The relative weakness of the PCE [Communist Party of Spain], and the special conditions for left unity that have existed since before the anti-NATO referendum, have made it possible to reach a compromise on terms acceptable to the radical left. Of course, the coalition is fully independent politically and organizationally of Izquierda Unida at the level of the Spanish state.

Moreover, the coalition functions on the basis of assemblies, with participationist methods in the drawing up of slates and control over possible elected officials (including rotation of some of them).

The election campaign itself will be waged with broad participation of the

coalition's hundreds of sympathizers. We think that these conditions permit effective revolutionary work.

Unfortunately, the MC reached other conclusions, and has withdrawn from the coalition. Experience will show who was right. What is important is that a relationship of unity be maintained between both parties in Aragon in the many important activities outside the local elections and the elections for the autonomous government.

Undoubtedly, the most important event in this pre-election period is Herri Batasuna's decision to stand and to campaign throughout the Spanish state [in the European elections]. Elections that seemed destined to be no more than a steam bath for delapidated politicians have taken on considerable interest. A good indication of this is that the government has opened up the throttle of its disinformation machine to spread prejudices against Herri Batasuna.

A clear revolutionary program

We think that it is a very positive thing in itself that Herri Batasuna has decided to campaign throughout the state, and in particular, that it has come to the revolutionary organizations, such as the Movimiento Comunista and our party, seeking in a sincere and respectful way an agreement to get our support for the campaign.

An agreement was reached on a clearly revolutionary program, the only one that firmly opposes the political, military and economic institutions of capitalist Europe and which also includes solidarity with Euskadi, defence of the right of self-determination, soldarity among all peoples and all workers in the Spanish state.

On the basis of this political agreement we are going to to form united-front committes to support the Herri Batasuna slate, whose activities will be directed by the organizations that make up the committees in each locality.

The committees will invite Herri Batasuna to present its political views in a series of rallies and meetings, and they will make every political and material effort to assure that the campaign gets the maximum results in terms of getting out its message and winning votes.

We are not unaware of the difficulties that this campaign will have to confront. But this is an opportunity to wage a broad campaign of solidarity with Euskadi, which is one of the most important tasks of revolutionists in the present political circumstances. It is also an opportunity for common work between revolutionaries throughout the Spanish state and Herri Batasuna. We do not know what consequences this may have in the medium term, but the experience in itself is positive.

Finally, we are going to take part in an electoral campaign that will have a major impact and in which we will be fighting for a credible objective, gaining the necessary number of votes throughout the state to send HB deputies to Strasbourg. In order to do this, we will try to concentrate the thousands of potential protest votes against the government's policies that exist from Puerto Real to Reinosa, in the factories, neighborhoods and towns.

We know that we are going to find people with a spontaneous sympathy for Herri Batasuna. But we are also going to encounter many barriers, blind spots and strong negative reflexes, even in militant sectors.

Moreover, we are aware of the fact that campaign for a vote for another political formation always raises problems, even when it is a revolutionary organization such as Herri Batasuna. In fact, we have important points of agreement with Herri Batasuna, including those that make up the program for these elections. But we also have very important and well-known disagreements.

Of course, an election campaign is not an appropriate place to raise differences. On the contrary, the most correct and effective course is to defend the program on which we have agreed, in particular solidarity with Euskadi, and to argue that voting for Herri Batasuna is the most thoroughgoing way of expressing all the desires and reasons for opposing the government's policy.

It will not be easy to do this after so many years of anti-Basque black propaganda and in the midst of the barrage of intimidation and blackmail that the government will surely unleash. But these are problems that a revolutionary organization has to deal with. And we are determined to do so. ☆

SOUTH AFRICA

Free Moses Mayekiso and Amon Msane!

TWO LEADING Black trade unionists, Moses Mayekiso and Amon Msane, are in jail for their union activities.

Moses Mayekiso is the general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU). He and four other members of the union have been charged with high treason and sedition. The case will come to court in August, and if they are found guilty the penalty could be death by hanging, or indefinite jail sentences.

According to a MAWU communique, the indictment includes Mayekiso's activities last spring, when he travelled overseas to raise support for striking workers at BTR Sarmcol. (See *IV* 119, May 4, 1987.)

Moses played an important role in the founding of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in late 1985, and was one of the organizers of the two-day general strike in the Transvaal in November 1984.

He was detained for these activities, but the charges were later dropped and he was released. In March 1986 MAWU members staged a successful national strike for his release from another spell of detention.

After returning from a union solidarity tour to Scandinavia on June 28 last year, Moses was detained again and charged under the Internal Security Act. He was held in solitary confinement until January this year.

British trade-unionists and Labour Party members have signed an appeal calling for Moses' immediate release. Among the many signatories are union general secretaries Jimmy Knapp (rail), Alan Tuffin (building workers), Harry Conroy (teachers), and Labour Members of Parliament Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Jo Richardson, Brian Sedgemore, Bob Clay, Jeremy Corbyn and Claire Short.

Solidarity needed urgently

Amon Msane, a member of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers of South Africa, is another political prisoner in Botha's jails. He is the chief steward at the 3M Company near Johannesburg, and is being held at Modderbee prison. (See *IV* 116, March 23, 1987.)

Solidarity campaigns calling for the release of these prisoners are urgently needed, in particular for Moses and his comrades because of the gravity of the charges.

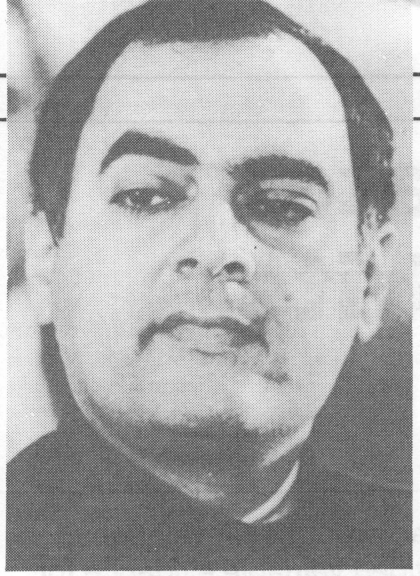
Messages of support can be sent to:

- COSATU, PO Box 1019, Johannesburg 2000, S Africa; and to
- MAWU, 6th Floor, Angus Mansions, 268 Jeppe Street, S Africa. ★

Rajiv's fading star

SINCE THE 1970s, bourgeois rule in India has been running into more and more political crises. The following report from Bombay, written before the suspension of the Punjab state government, describes the rapid besmirching of the country's new regime.

M NAVID



THE SCANDAL over payoffs to Indian officials by the Swedish arms firm Bofors has accelerated the decline of the government of Rajiv Gandhi, who won a landslide victory in the December 24, 1984, general elections. The rapid fading of his star has been reflected, among other things, in recent defeats for his Congress Party in state assembly elections in Kerala and West Bengal, which were won by coalitions dominated by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM).

In fact, the Bofors affair has been the crest of a rising wave of scandals. It is on the question of corruption, for example, that Rajiv has been hardest pressed in the government by his rival V P Singh. As finance minister, Singh carried out the essentially tokenist and populist policy of "cleaning up" big business a little too enthusiastically.

When Rajiv Gandhi finally shifted him this February to head the Ministry of Defence, V P Singh went out of his way to further embarrass the government by ordering a probe of a defence deal whereby India contracted to purchase a number of submarines from the West German firm HDW.

The ostensible purpose was to uncover an alleged pay-off of close to 7 per cent of the final purchase price to various intermediaries who obviously acted on behalf of important people in the government and ruling party. The finger of suspicion was implicitly pointed to Rajiv Gandhi and his closest associates.

V P Singh made news of the probe public without the prime minister's permission, and this led Rajiv Gandhi to obtain his resignation amidst a public outcry that he and his government intended to cover up the whole issue.

In April this year, Swedish National Radio broke the scandal about Bofors, the Swedish manufacturer of field artillery, whose parent company is Nobel Industries, headed by Anders Carlberg.

Swedish radio stated that around 33 million kroner [about $5,500,000] had been transferred to the Swiss bank accounts of Indian "contacts." It said it had dates, account numbers and details of the amounts transferred, but was afraid to disclose them for fear of harming its sources. In response to the domestic uproar, the Indian government claimed that it wanted all the details to come out.

What is the Bofors deal? The total transaction involves 1,500 field guns, costing over $3,500,000. The initial deal for 155mm howitzers or Bofors FM-77 B artillery systems was worth 8,400,000 kroner [$1,416,666], which still made it the single largest export order ever for Swedish industry, and the biggest ever contract signed by Bofors.

The Swedish company had had to compete with the British/German/Italian FM-70 system, the Austrian GHN-45 and the French GIAT-155 TR system. By 1985, after tests, the Indian choice lay between Bofors and the French. In March 1986, the contract was given to Bofors, two months after a visit to India by the then Swedish premier Olof Palme, who met Rajiv Gandhi and personally plugged Bofors.

Web of conspiracies still unravelling

Without this deal, Bofors would have been in desperate trouble, and would have had to close down a major part of its operation, putting thousands of workers out of a job. Thus, there was obviously considerable pressure on Palme to secure the deal.

In Sweden the Indian deal is really peripheral to the main controversies. The web of conspiracies and manoeuvrings is still unravelling.

What is the identity of the Indian "contacts" and the interests in government that they were serving? Can any of them be linked to the circle close to Rajiv Gandhi or it is at other levels that the corruption flourished? If so, at what levels?

How much was given in kickbacks? If it is only the sum of 60.6 million rupees (less than half a per cent of the total value of the deal) revealed by Swedish radio, then the uproar will be much less than if the payoffs were in the range of 5 per cent or more. One per cent payoffs are after all "normal" in all major defence deals anywhere in the capitalist world.

Nonetheless, this scandal brought the credibility of the Rajiv government and his leadership of the Congress Party to its lowest point since he came to power. This unique opportunity could have been used by the mainstream left (The Communist Party and the Communist Party-Marxist) to widen the breach in the bourgeois government's crisis. They could, and still can, try to push popular anger and disillusionment in a radical direction.

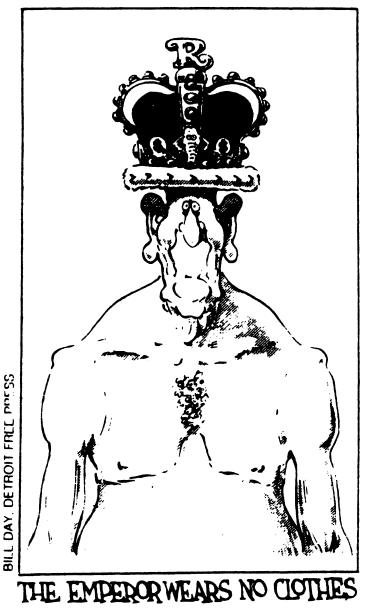
A convenient scapegoat

The problem is that the reformist left do not want to do this. They will not mobilize nationally on the issue of corruption, because they are giving first priority to the defence of the bourgeois government against the "forces of destabilization". This flows logically enough from their agreement with the Soviet government's support for the India's "anti-imperialist" foreign policy.

The US no doubt does utilize opportunities to extend its influence when these present themselves. But this is nothing new. Time and again, the ruling Congress has used the idea of "destabilization" by a "foreign hand" as a convenient scapegoat (Mrs Gandhi used it to justify imposition of the Emergency in June 1975), and as a means of appealing to the mainstream left for its political support. Today, the CPI and CPM are once again out of tune with the majority of the masses who have not bought the "foreign hand" argument.

Then again, the CPM, which is itself inviting multinationals to invest in West Bengal, is hardly in a position to wage a principled and sustained campaign against the corruption of big business. This means that the far left can at best carry out effective, though limited, propaganda on the issue. However, it is clear that in the future, corruption will be continue to be an issue undermining the efforts of the Indian bourgeoisie to establish stable ideological hegemony over the country.☆

Contragate: the shit hits the fan



THE CONTRAGATE scandal has produced revelations, confirmed suspicions and provided valuable evidence for anti-imperialist, peace and human rights movements. This article reviews the course of the Contragate affair, and its relation to US and international politics.

JOHN BARZMAN

ONE WEEK AFTER the Tower commission published its report on February 26, 1987, Reagan admitted in a national TV broadcast that, although his intentions were noble, he had been wrong to let his underlings proceed with arms sales to Iran. He fired his White House secretary, Donald Regan, and replaced him with Howard Baker.

The following week, Marc Kravetz, a journalist for the Paris daily *Libération,* wrote a commentary praising the openness of US democracy: "You have to recognize that nowhere else can elected representatives, judges and journalists freely challenge the executive power right up to the top, explore its most confidential mechanisms and make public the results."

This is a rather widely held opinion in those European left circles that have come to regard the United States as the guarantor of democracy in the world. There is a grain of truth in it. Few European powers can afford the luxury of such scandals.

But the institutions of the United States should not be idealized. All the "most confidential" mechanisms of the state were not opened to scrutiny. Those that were could not be explored by all the nation's elected representatives and all its journalists, but only a select few.

Nearly all the "nation's elected representatives and judges," products of the selection mechanisms of the Democratic and Republican parties, accept the assumptions of the administration's policy and only ask questions of procedure that do not challenge this policy as such. It is they who direct the congressional and judicial investigations and who are interviewed in the media.

It is also worth noting that the chain reaction of revelations was set off and fueled by forces external to American "democracy," that is by Lebanese Shi'ites and Nicaraguan Sandinistas.

The saga began on November 3, 1986, with the revelation by a Lebanese (not an American) magazine, *Al-Shiraa,* that Robert MacFarlane had travelled to Tehran incognito in May 1986. At the time, MacFarlane was director of the National Security Council (NSC, a body that was to become the focus of the controversy), and a confidant of President Reagan.

The leaks were too numerous

The president of the Iranian parliament, Rafsanjani, confirmed the report and added that the negotiations had been recorded on tapes. The US authorities pretended to check their files, hoping to bury the affair.

But the facts revealed by the American press were conclusive, and the leaks were too numerous. It was verified that MacFarlane had been part of a delegation whose mission was to negotiate arms sales to Iran, notably anti-tank missiles (TOW), anti-aircraft missiles (Hawks) and spare parts for material purchased by the Iranian army before the fall of the Shah. The US president's confidant brought little gifts for his negotiating partners, a key (symbolizing the opening of a new era in Iranian-American relations), a bible signed by Reagan himself as a token of good faith, and a cake!

Reagan was forced to recognize that there had been contacts with the Iranian authorities. He claimed that his main motivation had been humanitarian concern for US hostages in Lebanon, that he had been informed of these contacts only late in the game, and that he had never considered paying a ransom for the hostages, but only encouraging Iranian moderates to mediate the crisis.

Even that much constituted a violation of the January 1984 congressional decision imposing controls on all exports to Iran. It also contradicted the president's appeals to European allies of the USA not to yield to blackmail and reject any sort of negotiations with hostage-takers, in the name of civilization and the crusade against international terrorism.

This modest confession immediately touched off a major crisis of confidence among an American population that had been deluged since 1979 by incessant propaganda against the "ayatollahs" and other terrorists, and put the US government in a embarassing position with regard to its allies. Reagan's first problem was therefore the contradiction between past rightist patriotic rhetoric and the actual conduct of US diplomacy.

But another issue with more progressive implications emerged quite rapidly. The use of the US secret services for covert operations — which would not get the assent of a large part of public opinion if made known — recalled unpleasantly the machinations of former president Nixon.

In fact, the operation violated at least two laws — the arms control act, which stipulates that any sale or transfer of more than $14 million worth of US arms must be approved by the State Department and reported to Congress; and the national security act, which requires that Congress be informed in due time of all covert operations.

The press recalled the Watergate scandal that led to Nixon's resignation,

THE EMPEROR STAGING A COMEBACK

hence the term "Irangate."[1] In view of growing questions among the public and in the press, Congress decided to open an inquiry.

Very quickly, it became obvious that an aspect of the arms sales had been to offer a ransom for the release of US hostages. The affair seemed to be coordinated by Oliver North, a Marine officer linked to the far right and a member of the NSC.

The Israeli government, which had always maintained discreet but good relations with Tehran, suggested this course of action. The intermediaries were Israeli army agents; the Iranian millionaire Ghorbanifar, a former SAVAK agent who remained close to the top circles of the Iranian army; and Kashoggi, an intimate of the Saudi royal family.

The CIA gathered the arms from US arsenals (notably in Anniston and Texarkana in the United States, as well as in Italy and Turkey), apparently without the approval of local military authorities or the Pentagon, and had them transported to Iran via Israel on charter flights of Southern Air Transport. The operation was entitled Project Recovery. The money from the sales was deposited in Switzerland.

The CIA had convinced Canadian business people to loan several million dollars to cover the expenses of the operation. But Iran was late with the first payments as the arms delivered were not the ones that it had ordered. The Canadians therefore got impatient and threatened to go to court to recover their money. The Pentagon denied all responsibility. The CIA could no longer cover up its role in this aspect of the affair. (*Newsweek*, December 1 and 22.)

At the end of 1986, the press began to follow the trail of the Swiss accounts. The inquiry was helped along by the Nicaraguans. In fact, the capture of the US pilot Hasenfus by Sandinista forces on October 5 last year had unleashed a chain reaction of revelations on the role of the CIA in supplying and financing the contras. But no clear connection with the Iran operation had emerged.

Hasenfus named names that made it possible to reconstruct the chain of responsibility. This coincided in part with the people and companies implicated in Irangate. Attorney General Meese then recognized, on November 22, that $10 to $30 million from arms sales to Iran had ended up in the coffers of the contras. Reagan claimed to know nothing about it.

The case was now referred to as "Contragate" rather than Irangate. With the Nicaraguan link, the scandal gained a resonance among the majority of Americans who are opposed to aid to the contras. It appeared in the light of the revelations that all the congressional votes against aid to the contras, all the amendments suspending it or limiting it to humanitarian or "non-lethal" aid or to so-called defensive weapons only (the "Boland amendments in force from October 1984 to spring 1986), all the lobbying and press campaigns for and against, were only a show put on for the public's benefit. The government was determined, in any case, to provide this aid by devious channels. US foreign policy thus evaded democratic control by the people. But to what extent?

"Damage control" operation

Sometime in late November or December, Reagan's White House team decided to implement a "damage control" operation, more commonly known as a cover-up. Donald Regan, the authoritarian White House secretary, got the team to agree on a new chronology of the meetings between Reagan and his aides. This chronology was intended to make it possible to put the blame on North, MacFarlane and his successor as head of the NSC, Poindexter. The CIA's role would be mentioned only in passing. The president was cast in the role of a distant overseer, informed by his staff only after the fact. In line with this scenario, Reagan appointed a special prosecutor, Walsh, to investigate possible criminal actions, and fired North and Poindexter.

But a turning point had been reached. "It can be said that critical mass in a scandal is achieved," wrote radical journalist Alexander Cockburn, "when half of the wild rumors turn out to be true, and people start giving the other half their undivided attention. This is when official denials have the same effect as matches on gasoline." ("The shit hits the fan," *The Nation*, December 6.)

In view of the lack of credibility of the statements by Reagan and his aides, Congress decided to open an inquiry. The task was given to three respectable members of the establishment, headed by Senator Tower. Testimony was heard. The media sent their journalists looking for scoops.

The concentration of power around the presidency has its contradictions. Instead of being immediately destroyed, as their authors thought, the secret messages transmitted by NSC computers between North, Poindexter, MacFarlane and Casey were stored in a secret memory. It, along with notes on the working out of the new chronology, fell into the hands of the investigating committee. North's secretary, Fawn Hall, admitted to having shredded his notes the evening before the committee was to visit his office. MacFarlane attempted suicide.

Secret parallel CIA budget

The affair exploded. All trails were now considered worthy of interest. Accusations made by the small radical press were taken up much more broadly.

The most interesting charges raised in this period included the following:

- The Swiss bank accounts supplied with money from the arms sales are not used only to finance the Nicaraguan contras. They are part of an enormous secret parallel budget controlled by the CIA and the NSC which provides aid for example to UNITA in Angola, to Renamo in Mozambique, to Afghan fundamentalist groups, to the Khmer Rouge and their allies installed on the Cambodian frontier and to Salvadoran far-right commandos.
- While Reagan preached against drugs, the CIA-supplied contras fattened on the drug traffic between Latin America and the United States, using their airports in El Salvador and Honduras as relay points.
- Besides the profits from sales of arms, North collected funds from US and European business people, the Sultan of Brunei, Saudi princes and others, for various anti-communist foundations, such as Carl Channell's National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty and William Singlaub's US Council for World Freedom. He used letters signed by Reagan, and even the promise of meeting the president in person

1. The Watergate affair got its name from Nixon's use of the secret service to spy on his Democratic rivals meeting at the Watergate Hotel, in Washington, DC, in July 1972. One thing leading to another, many CIA and FBI surveillance operations were challenged.

for the biggest donors.

● These funds, as well as the CIA's own funds, financed the contras' public relations campaign to present themselves as respectful of human rights, notably by opening offices in Paris and Madrid and by creating a fund to influence European "opinion makers," in particular trade-unionists and intellectuals.

● The Standing Committee on Human Rights in Nicaragua, the main source of accusations of human rights violations by the Sandinistas, received a donation of $44,000 in 1985 from this network. Its reports were then used to convince Congress to vote $100 million for military aid to the contras in August 1986.

● Examples of pressure on the press: North suggested to Associated Press that if it wanted to gain the release of its reporter Terry Anderson, who was taken hostage in Lebanon, it was in its interests to rein in its investigations of the links between the CIA and contras.

● While Reagan was condemning terrorism, the CIA trained the Lebanese commandos who planted a car bomb on March 8, 1985, in Beirut in front of the house of Mohamed Hussein Fadlallah, spiritual guide of the Hezbollahs. The device exploded killing 92 people and wounding more than 200.[2]

To try and stem the proliferation of such revelations and rumors, the commission of inquiry decided to focus its attention on the decision-making mechanisms only. The leading Democratic and Republican politicians and the media followed suit, with few exceptions. The question became: had Reagan been fooled by his aides? Was he ill, lazy or senile? Should the NSC have operational powers?

The final report of the Tower Committee, published on February 26, made a rather detailed inventory of the measures taken by Reagan and his entourage in the affair of the sales to Iran and payments to the contras, thereby exposing the mechanisms of covert war.

But it did not challenge Reagan's basic options and did not pursue the numerous trails discovered during the inquiry. It limited itself to condemning the lack of professionalism on the part of those responsible for both affairs and to recommending that the NSC restrict itself to advising the president and leave the execution of his decisions to other agencies.

Donald Regan was assigned the main blame. Finally, in a crude display of cynicism, the report called for reinforcing confidentiality in the conduct of such affairs, because leaks to the media had been the mainspring of the crisis.

Following this report, President Reagan admitted making mistakes and agreed to fire Donald Regan and replace him by a figure in the conservative establishment, Republican senator Howard Baker. A sort of Baker regency began, with Reagan remaining president in name.

The Democrats agreed to give Reagan another chance. At the end of March 1987, the Democratic-controlled Senate voted to let the final payment of the $40 million appropriated for the contras last year go ahead. Congress postponed the testimonies of North and Poindexter for 90 days and granted them limited immunity. They scheduled joint public hearings for May 5.

In March and April, new revelations continued to undermine Reagan and Baker's attempts to re-establish a new aura of credibility around the White House. The role of more institutions was questioned. The CIA, under Casey, was shown to have masterminded North's operations, with the blessing of Vice-President Bush. US army bases in Central America and the embassy in Costa Rica were involved. Reagan himself helped to raise funds for Channell's and Singlaub's outfits.

The "damage control" tactic now shifted to diverting attention onto financial and accounting irregularities. On April 29, Carl Channell was convicted for falsely claiming tax-exempt status. His was the first conviction in the scandal. A *New York Times* editorial entitled "Influence Peddling" gave the cue: "The ideologues misused public money. The new charge is that they stole public money with bogus exemptions for private donors." (*International Herald Tribune*, May 4.)

The joint congressional public hearings opened on May 5. They are being televised live across the entire United States. The first testimonies heard so far, those of retired air force general Richard Secord and Robert MacFarlane, were very damaging for the CIA, Reagan himself and almost all foreign policy institutions.

Secord rejected the accusation that he had embezzled funds and portrayed himself as a patriot trusted by Casey and the CIA, working on orders from North with the blessing of Vice-President Bush and Reagan. His answers confirmed that the methods used in the Iran-contra affair, far from being "unprofessional," were standard procedure in covert operations.

Using profits from US arms sales for CIA or CIA-inspired operations was a pattern. North and other US officials had proposed to South Korea, Taiwan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Honduras and El Salvador that the bill for the arms they purchased be artificially inflated. The extra funds were to be used to finance anti-communist causes. In exchange, these countries were promised special favors, or, if they refused, threatened with reductions of aid. Some chose to contribute directly rather than through the arms deals.

Other funds were raised from individuals by US Under-Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, North, and Reagan himself. The donations were channeled through far-right foundations posing as charities or research institutes. Donors were told they could deduct the money from their taxes.

The money was then allocated out to the various forces fighting "low-intensity" wars with CIA support. A network of companies, bank accounts, arms dealers, transportation facilities and mercenaries facilitated the transfer. Funds were also assigned for public opinion campaigns. Clandestine radio broadcasts targeted Libya and Cuba. Many US agencies cooperated with these operations: US military bases, ambassadors and drug enforcement agents.

Secord referred to this set-up as "the enterprise," and testified that it was set up in the mid-1970s to bypass legislation regulating CIA activities. CIA director Casey deliberately ran covert op-

2. On all the charges raised, see in particular the articles in *The Nation*, December 6, January 1 and 31 and February 14. See also *Newsweek*, December 22 and January 19.

erations outside the CIA to avoid congressional surpervision. The *New York Times* on May 8 now conceded the obvious: "Such an operation is impossible unless key officials from various government agencies participate and systematically deceive and disobey Congress." (*International Herald Tribune*, May 8.)

With the testimony of MacFarlane, Reagan's personal responsibility moved to the fore again. The former NSC director testified that he had briefed Reagan dozens of times on the progress of the fund-raising for weapons for the contras during the congressional ban.

No challenge made to covert action

The hearings continue. So far, though, neither the Republican and Democratic senators and congressmen, nor the major media, have ever challenged the need for the United States to complement its legal, diplomatic, economic and military means of action with destabilization operations, covert wars and disinformation.

None of them have even proposed trimming back the CIA or restricting its information-gathering role. Covert war is now a central pillar of US foreign policy.

The main goals of this foreign policy are shared by Republicans and Democrats alike — overthrowing the Sandinista regime by economic blockade, military pressure and contra terrorism; imposing a *Pax Americana* on the Middle East; imposing US hegemony on the capitalist world by relying on its superiority in nuclear weapons and counterinsurgency; preserving a semblance of stability in South Africa as long as possible; assuring transitions that maintain the arbitor's role of the army in Haiti, the Philippines, Brazil, Argentina and in other such cases.

How then can we explain the scandal? The fact is that Washington's power has limits. The Republican-Democratic consensus on foreign policy aims does not guarantee the government against mishaps, dilemmas and the need for turnabouts.

Reagan scored some successes, such as the invasion of Grenada, the growth of the Afghan rebellion, the cold transitions in Brazil and Argentina and the launching of Starwars. But these have been limited in time or fragile. Today, in hindsight, one can see that certain aspects of Reagan's policy have been stalled in blind alleys.

In Nicaragua, after eight years of US efforts, Reagan has not succeeded in overthrowing the Sandinista regime. In El Salvador, the rebellion has maintained its vitality. In the whole of Latin America resentment is growing against the foreign debt.

In the Middle East, Washington has not found a regime that could play the role of gendarme previously filled by the Shah's Iran.

Starwars has created an enormous budget deficit, and led the United States to "reinterpret," that is, to violate, the SALT I and SALT II nuclear arms limitation treaties. Despite its high cost, it does not seem to offer any realistic perspective for bringing the USSR to its knees economically. And it has enabled Gorbachev to regain the initiative in the field of disarmament.

Nor have the enormous investments in Starwars-related projects enabled the United States to reverse the decline of its big industries in the face of Japanese and European competition.

To these external difficulties should be added the persistence of domestic dissent on foreign policy questions. The famous Vietnam syndrome remains strong. This syndrome, that Reagan promised to exorcize, is the fear of seeing the US involved in a new counterinsurgency war, with its train of dead, wounded and atrocities.

General anti-war sentiment has focused on US intervention in Central America. The April 25 demonstrations, which brought out crowds estimated at at least 100,000 people to Washington and 70,000 to San Francisco, showed the potential for involvement by labor. The murder of the American internationalist worker Benjamin Linder by the contras caused a massive outcry.

Washington's support for Pretoria is another major source of internal division, with US Blacks overwhelmingly opposing the administration policy.

Nor is there any consensus on nuclear armament. In 1983, the campaign for a freeze on nuclear arms had a broad impact which could resurface.

Finally, in 1986, the strike curve, which had been declining regularly since 1979, turned upward again. From 300,000 in 1985, the number of strikers increased to 500,000, which is still very low. (*Financial Times*, March 12.) A few sustained strikes, such as the fight of the Hormel packing house workers, opposed the spiral of concessions in which the unions have been trapped for seven years.

The beginning and modest change in the domestic situation and the obstacles encountered by the US bourgeoisie on the international scene seem to call for a policy including a stronger dose of negotiations and search for a moderate "third force." US public opinion must again be reassured. This requires changing at least a few faces in Washington.

So far the bourgeois establishment seems to have decided to focus the blame on the so-called cowboys in the basement of the White House.[3] The likes of North and Secord will probably drop out of sight until they can be shifted to other agencies.

Another proposal from the establishment is that NSC powers should be curtailed. Originally only a body for formulating and coordinating foreign policy, the NSC assumed more and more operational prerogatives under Nixon and Carter. On several occasions, direct orders emanating from the NSC have sown confusion in the secret services and armed forces. In summer 1985, the NSC urged Egypt to invade Libya against the advice of the State Department.

The US bourgeoisie can perform much of this house cleaning in public in a way that has aroused admiration from some people in Europe, because while there are opposition movements in the United States on specific issues, these movements have no real counterpart on the political level.

The Democratic Party is no alternative, even in the limited sense that the European social-democratic parties are. It is dominated by millionaires and structurally designed to drown the demands of trade unions and social movements in the "general interest" of the country. In recent years, it has attributed its defeat in the 1980 and 1984 elections to an excessively liberal image and taken over Reagan's rhetoric. Even its election-time promises do not correspond to the aspirations of large sectors of the population who form its traditional base. The recent rightward drift of the party is highlighted by the fact that Jesse Jackson's suggestion to revive some populist themes has had only marginal impact on the party.

Exposing US foreign policy

The US bourgeoisie retains a substantial margin of maneuver, but the people of the United States and the world have a good opportunity to discover and expose the workings of US foreign policy. Questions need to be asked about the invasion of Grenada and simultaneous media blackout; the blackmail of the Honduran and Costa Rican governments; the air raid on Tripoli; the grounding of an Egyptian civilian aircraft flying over the Mediterranean; the use of funds to influence European and American intellectuals and trade unionists; General Singlaub's operations in the Philippines; and, finally, the dirty tricks of counter-intelligence agencies in the United States itself. ☆

3. For an attempt to tie the prominence of these "Rasputin" types to the decline of US imperialism, see James Petras, "Speculators, Lumpen-Intellectuals and the End of US Hegemony," *Against the Current*, March-April 1987.

Defeats and fiascos: the last five years of Arafat's leadership

THE EIGHTEENTH session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) was held on April 20-25 in Algiers. The media hailed the event as a dazzling victory for the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), Yasser Arafat. But, in fact, this meeting set the seal on the complete failure of Arafat's policies over the past five years.

SALAH JABER

AMONG THE many para-state institutions of the PLO, the PNC plays the role of parliament. But in contrast to parliaments, its makeup — which varies from one session to another — is not determined by electoral means. It is set by the Executive Committee (EC) of the organization, which since 1969 has been dominated by Fatah, the main Palestinian organization, led by Yasser Arafat [see box]. It is then ratified at the start of every session by the members of the preceding session.

Thus, in reality, the PNC is an emanation of the PLO executive. It is, to be sure, a forum for debate. But its function is to "legitimize" the decisions and compromises adopted by the majority of the EC, that is, in the last instance, by the leadership of Fatah. The latter so predominates in the PLO that by itself it has a majority and can provide a quorum within the PNC.

For example, when Fatah's political choices came under strong challenge in 1983 from the traditional left of the Palestinian movement — the PFLP and DFLP — as well as by the Saika and the PFLP-GC, the Arafat leadership did not hesitate to hold the seventeenth session of the PNC the next year in the Jordanian capital Amman without these dissenting groups. That session mustered the necessary quorum and was able to present itself as "legitimate," a label that has become in a way the property of the Arafat leadership within the Palestinian movement.

The recent session in Algiers, at which the PFLP and DFLP were again represented, has been called a congress of reconciliation, while its numbering expresses its continuity with the Amman meeting. The great majority of the media believed it to be a dazzling victory for Arafat. Indeed, he has become a grand master in the art of disguising defeats as victories. But in this case, one would have to be very much out of touch with the recent history of the Palestinian movement to be taken in. The eighteenth session of the PNC in fact set the seal on the total failure of the policy Arafat has pursued since 1982.

On September 1, 1982, the last contingent of PLO fighters left Beirut by sea under the protection of "multinational" forces made up of US, French and Italian soldiers, and under the eye of the Israeli army, which had been besieging the Lebanese capital since mid-June. That was the result of long negotiations undertaken from the start of the siege between the Arafat leadership and Ronald Reagan's special envoy, Philip Habib.

On the same day, by virtue of the same deal apparently, the US president made public his famous "peace plan." It made no explicit mention of the Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967 and officially annexed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1981. (The Sinai was restored to Egypt by the Camp David accords, and the Israelis completed their evacuation in April 1982). In contrast, Reagan's speech was focused on the problem of the West Bank and Gaza, the last territories of Palestine — as it had been under the 1918-1948 British mandate — to be occupied by the Zionist army, in June 1967:

Jordanian-Palestinian confederation

"The United States is firmly convinced that the best chance for achieving a stable, lasting and just peace is to establish self-government of the Palestinians in the West Bank of the Jordan river and in the Gaza sector, in association with Jordan."

On September 20, 1982, while the entire world was still stunned by the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres, King Hussein of Jordan echoed the US president: "The time has come to begin discussions with the PLO to define the form of relations between Jordanians and Palestinians in a future confederation."

Arafat arrived in Amman on October 9, 1982, where he met King Hussein and declared that their talks had been "very successful, very constructive and very positive," and that they "dealt largely with a possible Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, and will continue in the future."

To understand the extent of this "fraternal" attitude, you have to remember that Hussein directed one of the biggest slaughters ever suffered by the Palestinian people — Black September 1970. In April 1981, the Fifteenth Session of the PNC meeting in Damascus was still expressing "its support for the struggle of the Jordanian national movement," that is for the anti-monarchical, anti-imperialist Jordanian underground opposition.

In the resolution of the following session, held in February 1983 in Algiers, the Arafat leadership imposed a very different formula for relations with Jordan. Support for the "national movement" disappeared, to make way for the statement — quite new for the PLO — that "future relations with Jordan will be established on a confederal basis between two independent states."

Once again, the Arafat leadership, had the PNC "legitimize" its new course by the use of ambiguous terms. While maintaining the formula of an "independent" state adopted in 1977 — all you have to do is look at a map to judge what kind of "independence" a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank would enjoy! — it introduced the principle of "confederation" with the Jordanian kingdom, in line with the central idea in Reagan's plan of "association with Jordan" and conforming to the proposal of the Jordanian monarch.

In fact, the whole of the policy of the Arafat leadership after its departure from Beirut was to fit into this dual framework. This is the famous "Jordanian option" which, inasmuch as it converged with the US policy of separate settlements between Israel and each of the Arab states surrounding it, was in total contradiction to the preceeding policy of the PLO. This had been to defend, in alliance with Syria and the USSR, the principle of an all-round settlement — security of frontiers in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967 and the creation of an "independent" Palestinian state.

The objective of the US policy is, in fact, to achieve peace accords between Israel and the Arab states that Wash-

ington considers to be in its sphere of influence — Egypt, Jordan and the Lebanon — without any involvement of the USSR and excluding the latter's principal ally in the region, the Syrian state.

Arafat's Jordanian option involved, therefore, a break with Syria, the USSR and their Palestinian allies, and an alliance with Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, with the blessing of his Saudi paymasters and a perspective of convincing the US administration to establish official relations with the PLO. The Arafat leadership's deeds were to remove any ambiguity about its political intentions.

Negotiations with Israel

As early as April 1983, it reached a preliminary agreement with the Jordanian monarchy providing for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for negotiations with Israel. This scheme touched off an explosion — the rebellion of the nationalist left of Fatah against the Arafat leadership in May 1983, followed by battles between the rival forces; a break with Syria, Libya and their Palestinian allies (Saika, the PFLP-GC); and fighting in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. This led to the evacuation of Tripoli in December 1983 by Arafat's troops, once again by sea. But this time it was after being besieged by the Syrian forces and their Palestinian allies — forces that in 1982 had been besieged in Beirut and then evacuated along with Arafat's own troops.

From Tripoli, the PLO leader was to go directly to Cairo to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, thereby breaking the boycott of Egypt that was decreed by the Arab League following Sadat's signing of the Camp David agreement, which established a *Pax Americana* over Egypt and Israel. And this was despite the fact that Mubarak has never reopened the question of this agreement, even at the height of the invasion of Lebanon by the Zionist army. Arafat thus followed on the heels of King Hussein, who had re-established relations between his kingdom and Egypt in September 1983.

Swept along by the logic of its option, the Arafat leadership was to break with the PFLP, DFLP and PLF (Yacub), which had adopted an attitude of neutrality toward the fighting in Tripoli and more generally a conciliatory attitude toward Arafat until his trip to Cairo and even after. As a matter of fact, these three formations, which were grouped in the Democratic Alliance, along with the Palestinian Communist Party, reached an accord with a Fatah delegation in March 1984 on a basis for dialogue for the coming session of the PNC (the Aden Accord).

However, disregarding these accords, which were an impediment to its policy, the Arafat leadership was to convoke a PNC without the presence of these organizations. The seventeenth PNC met in November 1984 in Amman itself and was inaugurated by King Hussein in person!

To put the crowning touch on all this, on February 11, 1985, Arafat concluded the famous Amman Accord with Hussein. It referred to UN relations, "including the Security Council resolutions" — a clear allusion to Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which called for trading "land for peace," and whose acceptance has been presented by Washington and a "moderate" faction of the Zionist establishment as a condition for negotiations with Arafat's organization. It also provided for an "Arab confederation betwen the two Jordanian and Palestinian states" and a Jordanian-Palestinian "common delegation" to "peace negotiations" in the framework of an "international conference."

Moscow since then has not hidden its indignation. Arafat was not invited there anymore, unlike Habash and other Palestinian leaders. For example, *Pravda* of August 22, 1985, noted that the Amman Accord "does not provide for the creation of an independent Palestinian state, no more than for PLO participation on the basis of equality [in a possible international conference]," and characterized it as "a new separate deal comparable to Camp David, but this time with a Palestinian cover." For once, *Pravda*, which means "truth," actually lived up to its name.

At the culmination of his rush to the right, Arafat totally turned upside down the alliances that he made in the period 1978-1982, when the PLO was in the front line of Arab opposition to Washington's policy and to the Camp David accords. Even during that period, however, through its unfailing allegiance to the Saudi monarchy — its major source of funds — the Arafat leadership maintained more or less open relations with all of the reactionary Arab regimes, including the Jordanian and Egyptian ones. In that respect, it was consistent with its interests as a bourgeois leadership, doubly dependent on the Arab oil dynasties both because of its own bureaucratic interests and those of the Palestinian bourgeois diaspora that it represents. Moreover, it was banking on getting the West Bank and Gaza through a settlement negotiated with the Zionist state which was inconceivable without the US putting pressure on Israel.

The Arafat leadership could, therefore, not break its ties with the gov-

Palestinian Organizations

FATAH **(Palestinian National Liberation Movement), the largest of the Palestinian organizations. Led by Yasser Arafat. Financed mainly by Saudi Arabia.**

FATAH-RC **(Revolutionary Council). Split from Fatah in 1974. An ultra-nationalist terrorist organization led by Abu Nidal. Financed today by Libya.**

FATAH-dissidents **A split from Fatah in 1983. A radical nationalist organization led by Abu Musa. Linked to Syria.**

PFLP **(Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). A nationalist organization led by George Habash. Maintains relations with Syria, Libya and the USSR.**

PFLP-GC **(General Command). A split from the PFLP in 1986. A nationalist group led by Ahmed Jibril. Linked to Libya and Syria.**

DFLP **(Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). A split from the PFLP in 1969. A Stalinist organization led by Nayef Hawatmeh. Linked to the USSR.**

PLF **(Palestinian Liberation Front). A split from the PFLP-GC in 1976. It split in 1984 into two grouplets: one, led by Talaat Yacub, is aligned with the PFLP; the other led by Abul Abbas (involved in the Achille Lauro incident), is linked to Iraq.**

PPSF **(Palestinian People's Struggle Front). A nationalist grouplet linked to Syria and Libya.**

SAIKA **The Palestinian branch of the ruling Ba'ath party in Syria.**

ALF **(Arab Liberation Front). The tiny Palestinian branch of the ruling Ba'ath party in Iraq.**

PCP **(Palestinian Communist Party). The former West Bank section of the Jordanian CP, a classical Stalinist organization linked to Moscow.**

[For an analysis of the historical evolution of the PLO, see the report adopted by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in June 1986, and published in the journal *International Marxist Review*, Spring 1987.] ★

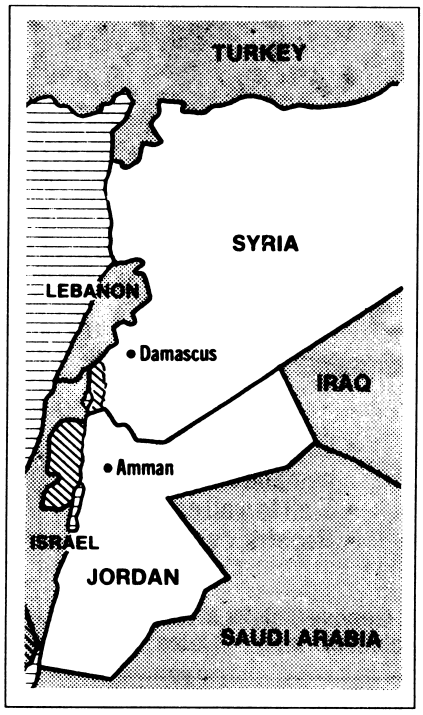
ernments that made up the natural framework of its strategy for the sake of a perspective based exclusively on an alliance with the USSR, Syria and the Lebanese left, along with the Arab regimes and forces that found themselves in the same general lineup. In addition, the Arafat leadership justified its links with Arab reaction by the need for counter-balancing Syria's ambitions for hegemony.

In contrast, when this leadership opted for its rightist course in 1982, it did not hesitate to burn all its bridges with its former allies. Moderate and conciliatory when it was in the camp opposed to US imperialism, it proved quite the opposite once it had gone over to the other side. It is clear that the Syrian regime, the Arafat leadership's recent ally, has designs on dominating the Palestinian movement in general. These designs could be combated effectively, and without betraying the national cause of the Palestinian people, only by reinforcing the movement itself as a mass movement and strengthening the left forces that are its most reliable strategic allies in the struggle against Zionism, imperialism and the Arab regimes, beginning with the Lebanese left which has always fought at the side of the Palestinians since 1982.

But it is just as clear, and for still stronger reasons, that the Jordanian regime also has designs toward the West Bank in particular, a territory and a population that were under the Jordanian crown since it annexed them in 1949 until the Israeli invasion in June 1967. Even from the standpoint of the bourgeois interests represented by Arafat, prudence was absolutely necessary in pursuing his new rightist course. Even from that point of view, the prestige the Arafat leadership has enjoyed up until today is one of the most undeserved that may be imagined. The balance sheet of this leadership is a long series of defeats and fiascos that far outweigh the few partial successes of which it can boast, and which are due in fact to the tenacity of the Palestinian masses rather than to its own policy.

Road opened up for Hussein

The inevitable happened. Hussein took advantage of his "Palestinian cover," in *Pravda*'s apt phrase, to undertake a series of measures aimed at putting him in a position to claim the occupied West Bank. If they had not benefited the "Palestinian cover," these measures would have aroused a vast Palestinian and Arab outcry, orchestrated by none other than the PLO. In other words, they were measures that Hussein would never have dared adopt if he had not felt that his hands were freed by the PLO's policy.



In April 1983, relations between Hussein and Arafat had come to an impasse because of Palestinian and Syrian-Libyan opposition to Arafat. In eight months, he had entirely burned his bridges to this opposition. Meeting with Mubarak after evacuating Tripoli in December 1983, Arafat chose to commit himself fully to his reactionary political option. The road was thus opened up for Hussein. In January 1984, the king called into session the Jordanian parliament, which had been suspended since 1974, following a decision of the Arab summit in Rabat that recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

Half of the deputies in the Jordanian parliament are indeed West Bank representatives elected in April 1967, shortly before the Israeli invasion, and the decision of the Arab summit thus deprived them of any status.

Then, in April 1985, following the conclusion of his accord with Arafat, Hussein set up a new ministerial team in Amman, including for the first time since 1974 eleven Palestinian ministers, mostly from the West Bank.

The return of the Israeli Labor Party to government in September 1984 after the July parliamentary elections was to open the way for the second stage of the policy of preparing for Jordan to regain control of the West Bank. In fact, the Reagan Plan, while it could only satisfy Hussein, was also in tune with one of the main options of the Zionist Labor Bloc [Ma'arakh] — the celebrated "Allon Plan" (named after its author, Ygal Allon, a former minister and star of the Labor Bloc). This plan provides for a partial (two thirds) restoration of the West Bank to Jordanian sovereignty, with the maintenance of a network of Zionist settlements, along the Jordan mainly, to "guarantee Israel's security."

It was in line with this that Hussein kept up constant relations — known to everyone, although officially "secret" — with the Israeli Laborites. Once they returned to power, they were to collaborate closely with their old crony. Since the indispensable concomitant of the measures taken in Amman was to beef up the leadership of the pro-Jordanians on the West Bank itself, in November 1985 Peres appointed Zafer Al-Masri, nephew of the vice president of the Jordanian Senate and uncle of the kingdom's minister of foreign affairs, to head the most important municipal government on the West Bank — Nablus. Al-Masri was already the head of the Nablus Chamber of Commerce.

Economic integration into Jordan

In March 1986, Zafer Al-Masri was assassinated by the PFLP. But this did not keep Peres from snapping back to appoint three new mayors on the West Bank in November. At the same time, Amman, in collusion with its Labor Bloc cronies, undertook to reactivate the West Bank's economic integration into the Jordanian kingdom. With Israeli authorization, it reopened an Arab (Jordanian-Egyptian) banking establishment on the West Bank. Amman resumed payment of the salaries of functionaries employed on the West Bank under Israeli tutelage. And above all, it launched a Jordanian five-year plan for developing the West Bank and Gaza (this was the first time that Amman directly and unilaterally assumed responsibility for the Gaza Strip, which was under Egyptian tutelage until 1967).

In order to finance this five-year plan, Amman issued urgent pressing appeals to the imperialist powers, first of all the United States, and to the Arab oil monarchies. It did not, it is true, get an enthusiastic reception.

In the meantime, Hussein, judging that the PLO's "cover" was no longer indispensable — or was even becoming an impediment to expanding his relations with the Zionist leaders, who place an absolute veto on any contacts with that organization — disdainfully dumped it. The pretext was appropriate.

From the time that he concluded his accord with Arafat, Hussein pressed the PLO leader to meet the final condition needed to make possible official contact between the PLO and the US administration, as well as the participa-

tion of representatives designated by the PLO in negotiations with Israel in the framework of an international conference.

In other words, Hussein pressed Arafat to play his last and only card — official and unqualified acceptance by the PLO of Resolution 242 (1967) of the UN Security Council. This recognized the state of Israel's right to "live in peace", while making no mention of the Palestinians' right to even partial self-determination. Likewise, he pressed Arafat to accept the corollary of this: official renunciation by the PLO of the anti-Zionist armed struggle.

However, even if he wanted to, Arafat would find it immensely difficult to justify this ultimate concession by his own movement in the absence of a formal guarantee of quid pro quos from the United States or Israel. Neither Hussein, nor his Saudi and Egyptian allies, have so far been able to provide this.

Thus, accusing the reluctant PLO leadership of "evasiveness," Hussein decided unilaterally on February 19, 1986, to "suspend" the accord that he had concluded with Arafat a year before. This was to be the prelude to a series of measures hostile to the Palestinian organization. This included the "split" in April of a faction of Fatah led by one of its most corrupt chiefs, Abul Zaim (Atallah Atallah), who had gone over to Amman's payroll.

Then, in July, the loyalist Fatah's offices in Jordan were closed. Parallel to this, the negotiations between Hussein, Peres and the US administration advanced toward a definition of the framework of a separate Jordanian-Israeli settlement, without the PLO, that would complement the Egyptian-Israeli settlement.

Return to more balanced policy advocated

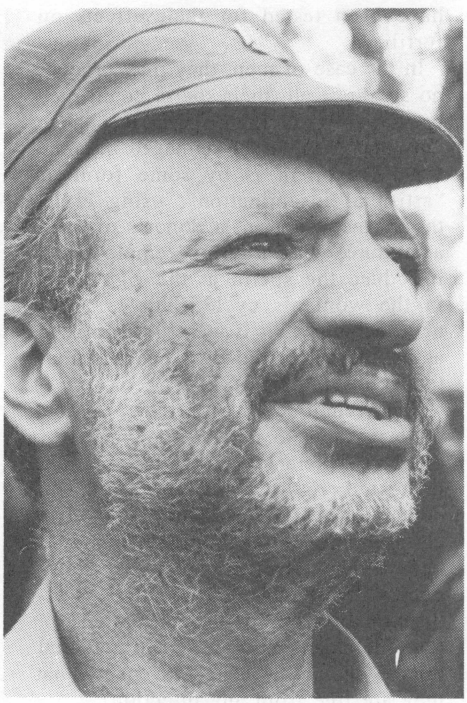
In view of this resounding fiasco of Arafat's Jordanian option, the "centrists" in the PLO leadership who maintained contacts with Moscow, notably Abu Lotf (Faruk Kaddumi) and Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), advocated a clear and frank break from this disastrous line and a return to a more balanced policy that would restore the PLO's traditional margin for maneuver.

The "Saudis" in the Palestinian leadership — notably Arafat himself and his alter ego, Abu Jihad (Khalil Al-Wazir) — nonetheless tried to cling to the Jordanian option, hoping that the combined pressures of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Egypt (all three allies both of the PLO and Jordan), would finally convince Hussein to revert to a more friendly attitude.

Just as the battle of Tripoli in 1983 had furnished Arafat with the political and psychological conditions that enabled him to cross the barrier to a meeting with Mubarak, the PLO leader was to see an opportunity in the dramatic turn taken by the war of the camps in Lebanon at the end of 1986 and the beginning of 1987 to gain a moral compensation for his political discomfiture.

The mobilization of the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza in solidarity with the camps in Lebanon was seen by Arafat as a demonstration of strength that he hoped would convince Hussein of the necessity of making a deal with him.

In other words, rather than seeing the solidarity in the fight of all the Palestinian factions in the camps against the Amal movement as an opportunity for political reconciliation among Palestinians, Arafat saw it as an opportunity for reconciliation with Hussein! He met the Jordanian monarch at the Islamic summit in Kuwait at the end of January and announced to all and sundry that he and the king had agreed "to turn over a new leaf and open up a new dialogue on all levels."



Yasser Arafat (DR)

In fact, the only concession Hussein made, on the insistence of the Saudi leaders, was to allow Abu Jihad to go in mid-February to Amman (from which he had been expelled a few months before) for a meeting of the Jordanian-Palestinian committee administering the Arab countries' aid for the West Bank and Gaza.

This meeting gave Arafat's companion a chance to see that the Jordanian attitude remained basically unchanged. Both men had to face the facts. They had no choice other than to go back on the policy that they had followed for the past four years.

The balance sheet of this policy was drawn by George Habash in an answer to a question from a Kuwaiti journalist. I can leave the floor to him:

"Yes, after Beirut, this grave turning point in the experience of the Palestinian revolution led to the 'moderates' stepping up their 'moderation.' Certain people felt that there was no other road before them but the American road, and they displayed a notorious lack of hope about the possibility of continuing to pursue the objective of national independence. But what has been the result? Has this option proved to be correct? What has been gained by those who banked on it? Have they really managed to save anything after four years of trial and testing? Have they been able to avoid new and still greater massacres?

"The answers to these questions are no longer a matter for supposition and conjecture, as was the case just after the departure from Beirut, because we now have the results of an experience that has gone on for several years, and we can draw the necessary balance sheet. The actual result of this policy has only been more divisions among Palestinians and greater tension in the relations between Palestinians and patriotic Arabs and in the international relations of Palestinians, more unnecessary concessions that have not, despite their enormity, satisfied the imperialist and Zionist circles. The result has been the expulsion of the PLO leadership from Jordan, the Abul Zaim affair, the development plan, and a Jordanian-Israeli division of labor. What has this policy been able to save, and who has profited from it, ourselves or the enemies of our cause?

"We are facing a war of extermination"

"And what massacres has it been possible to avert thanks to this policy? Has the physical liquidation of the people and the revolution ceased, or have our problems in fact grown worse in Lebanon, where we are facing a war of extermination, while the PLO's relations with most of the Lebanese parties are fraught with tensions? Has it been possible to avert physical liquidation, or has this spread even to the Palestinian offices in Tunisia?" (*Al-Qabas*, April 17, 1987.)

The unconditional supporters of the PLO leadership should think about this balance sheet. ☆

● *A second article dealing with the role of the USSR, and the PNC's compromises and perspectives, will appear in the next issue of* IV.

New reproductive technology: a mixed blessing?

THE ADVANCES in reproductive technologies have aroused tremendous debates about the rights and wrongs of current research and its implications — surrogate motherhood, "cloning" and genetic manipulation.

This article, from the March/April issue of the British journal *International*, takes an initial look at the benefits and drawbacks for women of the new advances that are being made.

LEONORA LLOYD

SOME FEMINISTS see the new scientific developments in the sphere of reproduction as an attack on the autonomy and bodies of women. Right-wingers often condemn these developments as an attack on marriage and the family, on god-given "nature" itself. Certainly the questions raised are important for everybody.

The new reproductive technology is mainly used to alleviate infertility, to identify and treat certain conditions before or shortly after conception, to select sex and to try and prevent certain conditions altogether. It is generally taken to cover *in vitro* fertilization — popularly and misleadingly called "test tube babies" — surrogacy, gene manipulation and variations or combinations of these techniques.

Most of the stories which have hit the headlines concern infertility, a problem thought to affect an increasing number of people. (One in six couples need some help to conceive — although, of course, not all these are actually infertile). Factors thought to affect female infertility include the use of the contraceptive pill and the later age at which many women are choosing to have their first baby.

A common cause of infertility affecting an estimated 100,000 women in Britain is blocked fallopian tubes. Others have problems with their ovaries. Male infertility is being increasingly recognized. So too is the possibility of environmentally-induced causes from our industrial society for both men and women, although little investigation has been done and only hundreds out of many thousands of industrial chemicals have been tested for their effects on fertility.

In the case of men, they may produce no sperm at all, their sperm count may be very low, or their sperm may have "low mobility" or be damaged in some way. Treatment is by some form of "artificial insemination", using either the partner's sperm, a donor's or even a mixture, with a syringe employed to introduce the sperm at the right time in the woman's cycle. This is not a new technique — it was first recorded as having been used by a Scottish doctor, John Hunter, in 1776.

This technique allows women without male partners to become pregnant, for example lesbians. The right-wing has protested against insemination by donor, as little better than adultery and certainly not a technique that should be available for the unmarried. However, it is so simple that self-insemination groups have been set up. (One new danger is AIDS and potential donors should be tested to ensure that they are free from any infection).

Sperm banks and "super babies"

Sperm can be frozen and so men can arrange for storage of sperm before undergoing chemical therapy, for instance. Commercial sperm stores have already been set up in the United States to enable women to choose "super-babies" fathered by "great achievers"!

In Britain, there is a real shortage of clinics dealing with infertility in the National Health Service (NHS), and private treatment is prohibitively expensive for most people. There is currently a 12-year wait for *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) including the time for investigation and trying other forms of treatment.

By the end of 1985, there were ten NHS hospitals offering IVF, half of them in London. A further six private hospitals were charging around £1,000-£2,000 an attempt, and up to three attempts may be needed before chances are ruled out altogether. (There are now a total of 20 centres, both private and NHS).

The success rate has reached about 40 per cent according to a 1984 study of 58 IVF teams working worldwide. Certain risks are involved for the woman because of the drugs and anaesthetics used, because of the danger of repeated ruptures of her ovaries as eggs are extracted and because of the chance of a multiple pregnancy.

Commercial surrogate agencies

Infertility programmes sometimes involve the use of surrogacy (i.e. one woman carrying a foetus for another). Egg, sperm or both may be donated, either by the "commissioning couple" or by third parties. In Britain most publicity has centred on commercial surrogacy. In the case of "Baby Cotton" the surrogate mother was paid £6,500 while the American agency responsible for arranging it was paid a similar amount. Commercial surrogate agencies were outlawed in 1985 in this country (although individuals are not prohibited from acting as surrogate mothers and being paid). They continue, however, in the US where rich white parents have paid poor immigrant women to carry babies for them.

Surrogacy appears to have gone on informally for centuries between friends and sisters. It has caused controversy now because of its potentially exploitative aspects. Also it brings conflicts when the "natural" mother refuses to give up her child at birth. The right of a woman who has carried the pregnancy to keep the child should be supported and there should be as much legal protection for surrogate mothers as possible.

The prevention or cure of genetic

disorders is another major area of development and research. It can be done in several stages. Genetic counselling is now available on the NHS, and is given where people's medical history merits it. Women can also be tested to detect disorders several weeks into their pregnancy if they are willing to run the current risks of possible miscarriage or damage to the foetus. If a disorder is found they may then opt for an abortion.

People with disabilities devalued

Some feminists have been worried by what they see as part of society's aim to create "perfect" people, thus devaluing people with disabilities. Society indeed discriminates appallingly against disabled people in the provision of housing, jobs, education and in reproduction itself. It is possible, nonetheless, to fight this discrimination while supporting attempts to eliminate painful and distressing illnesses. There are undoubtedly great pressures on any woman who is carrying a damaged foetus. It must remain a woman's choice whether to continue or end any pregnancy.

Perhaps the area of most concern to feminists is that of sex selection. There can be sound medical reasons for wanting to know the sex of the foetus, because a number of disorders are sex-linked, generally to the male. But it is for the selective abortion of female foetuses that the tests are most often used worldwide. Recent reports suggest that some women are using the results of scans to ask for abortions if they are carrying the "wrong" sex, and some doctors and hospitals are refusing to give out results which indicate sex, except for strictly medical reasons.

What of the future? There is no doubt that many women and men feel an enormous pressure and desire to produce children in this society, built as it is around the family unit. The social pressures on women to fulfill their "biological role" are enormous. And the way the family system works — usually excluding other people from a real share in childcare — often means that women feel that they must have their own children in order to be involved with them.

But there is no doubt that infertility and inherited diseases are serious problems for those who face them. Further, infertile women need treatment — whether or not they want children — if they are ill. If help exists women are entitled to it and it should be made accessible to all who need it.

Any arguments against further research which are based on the "humanity" of the embryo or the sanctity of marriage (insemination by donor seen as adultery for instance), or which deny unmarried women the right to benefit from new reproductive technology, must be firmly rejected.

At the same time, arguments against the research from the angle of those who feel profound misgivings about the increasing control of scientists and doctors over women's lives, and about the scope for abuses opened up by experiments, deserve serious consideration.

In capitalist societies most research is either for military purposes or is commercially funded. And so long as it is left to market forces, there will always be cause for concern. So we need guidelines. For feminists and socialists the main questions should be: will this research help to improve the quality of life for at least a group of people, without damaging or exploiting another group? In particular, will it enhance women's role in society and women's self-esteem? Will it increase the ability of women to control their own reproductive lives?

We need to start now to work for greater democratic control over scientific research. For example, the "ethical committees" already established voluntarily by British scientists should include a majority of lay members, and — specifically — a majority of women lay members where the research is into reproduction. And there should be strict guidelines about what areas of research should be pursued, how trials should be conducted, rules about informed consent and so on.

Our most important allies in this fight — to control scientists and scientific research — will be scientists themselves, many of whom want to be able to work on projects that will benefit humanity. Only when the research is seen as important to us all, and not something to be left to market forces, will we gain control. Those feminists who say "a plague on all their houses" are leaving us without a strategy for campaigning against the worst manifestations of science. ☆

SOUTH AFRICA

Metal unions win paid maternity leave

PREGNANCY can once again be celebrated instead of cursed by women workers — at least in the metal industry.

The country's first national industry-wide maternity agreement assures them of six months' paid leave and their job back when it's over.

Previously pregnancy was feared by many women workers — regarded as dispensable "part-time" workers under the present economic system — as it inevitably led to dismissal.

In desperation, women have been known to bind their stomachs to hide their pregnancy and then take a few days' "sick leave" to have the child. Others have risked death or permanent sterility in hastily performed back-street abortions.

Although a minority in the metal industry, militant women workers pressurized their unions to fight against this highly visible form of sex discrimination, arguing that women have the right to job security too!

It was initially raised by the Metal and Allied Workers' Union during the 1986 industry-wide negotiations and strongly supported by all the metal industry unions.

Just a fortnight ago, the metal unions and the employers' association, SEIFSA, agreed to six months' maternity leave with weekly pay ranging from 50 to 144 Rands. If other maternity benefits are added, this means women will receive nearly full pay for three months of the leave.

The important job protection clauses in the agreement lay down that women qualifying for maternity leave will:

- Qualify for leave and leave bonus payments as if she had unbroken service.
- Be re-employed at the same or similar job.
- Not only get the same pay, but will also automatically qualify for any increases that have been awarded nationally.
- Not suffer any prejudice in promotion or merit increases because of her absence from work.
- Be given a written guarantee of re-employment, giving the date on which she agrees to return.

The maternity agreement is a tremendous leap forward for the struggle against sexual inequality at the workplace. However, other areas of discrimination still remain. women still suffer poorer job opportunities, unequal pay for similar work, segregation into poorly paid jobs like cleaning and catering, and widespread sexual harassment — not only by management but also by male colleagues. [From *SA Metal Worker*, March/April 1987.] ★

4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A common electoral campaign

WITH BOTH major parties of the working class movement vying to demonstrate their "understanding" of the needs of the capitalists, there is a crying need for a political alternative for the large number of youth and working people who have shown their readiness to struggle. To try to begin to fill this vacuum, the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria, Italian section of the Fourth International, and Democrazia Proletaria, a far left organization represented in parliament, signed the following accord for a united slate for the June 14 general election.

AFTER NOTING once again significant convergences between the two organizations in analysis, objectives and daily political activity, Democrazia Proletaria and the Revolutionary Communist League, Italian section of the Fourth International, reaffirm the usefulness of a political accord for the coming legislative elections. Such an accord, which was already tried out with positive results in 1983 and 1985, is within the framework of an autonomy of their respective political projects.

The five-party ruling coalition has been dissolved as a result of a power fight between the Christian Democracy and the Italian Socialist Party, that was to a very large extent divorced from the people's needs and struggles. It did not challenge the program of one of the worst governments in the last 20 years: the one that installed missiles in Sicily, inaugurated the Nuclear Energy Plan, cut the sliding scale of wages and social security spending, increased unsteady jobs and deprived the voters of the right to vote by referendum on the question of nuclear energy.

Any other coalition of the five parties that comes out of the elections will push the same program, perhaps even with a greater ferocity, since the economic context is less favorable. It will pin its prospects on authoritarian reform going toward a "second republic" [that is, a new constitution], and a further deterioration in the living conditions of the masses, as well as pro-nuclear and pro-war options.

The crisis of orientation provoked by free-enterprise economics has given rise to new social fightbacks and a new desire for change. This is indicated by the struggles of the Genoa dock workers, teachers, railway workers and people evicted from their homes, as well as the results of the union referendums on the new contracts. In the last case, the vote showed quite large opposition, sometimes a majority, to the orientation of the union apparatuses. Moreover, the Alfa Romeo workers attempted to mount an immediate fightback against the attack they suffered as a result of the Alfa-FIAT accord.

At the same time, sensitivity to the ecological, nuclear and peace issues, and a desire to see these matters decided on by referendums, has been growing. This has been confirmed by many mobilizations, for example the one on April 26 against the Caorso nuclear reactor.

It is necessary to increase the number of united demonstrations, to promote self-organization and social combativity in order to foster a culture of solidarity and equality in opposition to the prevailing individualism and against the determination of the bosses to impose their choices at any cost.

In the election campaign itself, we want to assert the following principles:

- The right to a guaranteed socially useful job, to culture, to egalitarian social services, to health care, to a healthy environment, to equality without discrimination based on sex, age and nationality.

Extension of democratic rights

- Defence and extension of democratic rights through the introduction of referendums in which proposals could be made, rejection of any attacks on proportional representation and of any limitation of the right to strike, support for council democracy in the unions based on the principles in the Charter of the Self-Convoked....
- Peace and solidarity with the oppressed peoples and liberation move-

ments; unilateral disarmament and withdrawal of Italy from from NATO; support for Sandinista Nicaragua, which is facing the threat of US aggression; support for the struggles of the South African majority and for the fight for the rights of the Palestinian people and recognition of the PLO.

Our campaign is opening with an intransigent fight for referendums that can express the popular opposition to nuclear power that has been shown in mass mobilizations (as well as by the parliamentary battle), and support for the struggles of the workers at Alfa Romeo. We therefore reaffirm the usefulness of our being represented in government so that there, also, the fights and interests of the working people can be reflected and given weight in the political confrontation.

It is through such initiatives that the conditions must be built for a vast resumption of social struggles, for direct participation and for people's control, without which no alternative social and political project can be realized.

In our view, an alternative means the affirmation in society and in the left of the needs and interests of the exploited and of political, moral and cultural values opposed to those that flow from the present social and political relations — egalitarianism, social solidarity, self-management and direct democracy, the right of the peoples to self-determination and the unilateral declaration of peace.

"We want to recreat the idea of socialism itself"

In essence, we want to recreate the idea of socialism itself, a socialism that would be attractive as a scheme for a libertarian and self-managed society, in opposition both to the domination of capitalist profit, which is strangling humanity by its deadly logic and its destruction of nature, and to the bureaucratic models of the East. It is in this area in particular that we can gauge the profound strategic crisis of the Italian left, paralyzed by its inability to offer an alternative project of its own because of its subordination to the rules of the capitalism system.

The electoral unity between Democrazia Proletaria and the LCR is, therefore, in itself a part of testing and looking for answers on the left. It is indissolubly linked to organizing the subjects of social action, to support for struggles and for the building up of a class-struggle memory in the masses.

On the basis of these points of convergence, Democrazia Proletaria and the LCR will wage a common electoral campaign, with the LCR putting up its own candidates on the Democrazia Proletaria slates. ☆

BRITAIN

New revolutionary Marxist journal launched

THE WEEKEND of May 9-10 saw the birth of a new revolutionary Marxist magazine in Britain, *Socialist Outlook*.

The launch conference for the magazine marked the culmination of an 18 month fusion process between the currents around *International* and *Socialist Viewpoint*. *International* came into existence in late 1985 as a result of a split in the editorial board of *Socialist Action*. Many of *International*'s supporters are comrades who have been in political solidarity with the Fourth International for many years.

The *Socialist Viewpoint* current, the smaller of the two, emerged from a split in the Trotskyist journal *Socialist Organiser*. It included among its supporters a number of comrades expelled from the Healeyite Workers' Revolutionary Party in 1974, who have long experience as rank and file leaders in the trade unions, and whose work at the British Leyland car factory in Cowley is well-known in the British left.

The two currents decided on a lengthy fusion process to ensure that the fusion took place on the maximum agreement and clarity possible. In particular, the fusion took place on the basis of political solidarity with the United Secretariat (USec) of the Fourth International. The fusion conference took lengthy reports on the British political situation, affirmative action and on the programmatic basis of the fusion.

More than 300 people attended the conference. Greetings were given to the conference by the Horizons current in the German Greens, and by the US organizations Solidarity, the Fourth International Tendency and Socialist Action.

Addressing the conference on behalf of the USec, Livio Maitan welcomed the fusion of the two magazines. He pointed to the importance of recent working class struggles against austerity in Europe, particularly those in France and Spain. He also stressed the importance of measures to maximize the participation of women in the leadership of the Trotskyist movement, and noted that these questions would be on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. ★

[Statement from *Socialist Outlook* editorial board.]

Aristocrats stick together

ONE OF THE clearest lessons of the May 14 coup in Fiji is the dangers of the monarchical institutions maintained by Britain and the Commonwealth countries that have adopted its constitution. In 1975, a representative of the queen in Australia removed a Labour prime minister. Now one has given legitimacy to a naked military takeover.

GERRY FOLEY

THE FIJIAN governor general, Penaia Ganilau, is moreover an aristocrat himself, a paramount chief and a former military man. On May 21, the Great Council of Chiefs, the organization of the hereditary communal rulers, set up an advisory council of 19 headed by the leader of the coup, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. This body was recognized by Ganilau, who claims to be exercising executive power personally. In that capacity, he has dissolved the legally elected parliament and government of the islands.

New elections are to be held in six months, after "reform" of the constitution presided over by Colonel Rabuka, according to *Le Monde* of May 23. The "Advisory Council" is reportedly an amalgam of the cabinet chosen by Rabuka and members chosen by Ganilau. The relationship between the Alliance Party, which ruled the islands since they became independent 17 years ago, and the Great Council of Chiefs has been a close one.

Investigations of corruption

Investigations of corruption under the Alliance Party government had been announced and the Australian premier, Bob Hawke, has accused former prime minister Kamisese Mara of backing the coup in order to prevent them.

The government toppled by the coup was a coalition of the Labour Party, founded in 1985, and the National Federation, a party of the community descended from Indian bonded laborers introduced by the British. They are denied the right to own land, but have been using more and more of it under leases from Melanesian landowners.

The Labour Party is a non-communalist party with a program of reform. The Labour Party prime minister, Dr Timoci Bavadra, a Melanesian, entered public life nine years ago when he was elected president of Fiji's Public Service Union. He left that post in 1985 to help found the Labour Party, with the support of the trade-union movement.

The unions had strong reasons for undertaking political action. The rate of unionization is low. Striking workers face fines of up to US$1,700 a day, according to the New Zealand Socialist Unity paper, *Tribune* of April 13.

Unemployment is rising. Layoffs have been becoming common. There is no unemployment insurance, no pensions, no social security at all. And even education is not free.

Labour played the key role in the upset victory for the Coalition, won by 28 seats to 24 for the Alliance. The Coaliton's parliamentary fraction was predominantly of Indian origin, 19 out of 28. But the new cabinet included six Melanesian ministers and seven Indians. A dispatch by Karen Magnal in the May 5 issue of *The Press* (published in Christchurch, New Zealand) estimated that about 9 per cent of the Melanesians the voted for the Coalition. Another report said that the Melanesians voting for the Coaltion were urbanized.

Non-aligned, anti-nuclear stance

In an editorial May 6, *The Press* wrote: "One of the hopeful signs is that the new government . . . is moving slowly and avoiding measures that would inflame the opinion of the indigenous Fijians. Thus, some of the most sensitive portfolios have been allocated to Fijians. The prime minister, Dr Bavadra has the Fijian affairs and home affairs portfolios. Mr Tupeni Baba has education, and Mr Vola Vola has lands, energy, and mineral resources."

The non-aligned and anti-nuclear position of the new government immediately drew fire from Washington. The Coalition announced that it would follow New Zealand's lead and refuse to allow nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed US warships to visit the islands. In response, US assistant Secretary of state for organizational affairs, Alan Keyes, issued a protest. On April 24, *The Press* quoted Richard Fisher of the US foreign policy think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, "Obviously the snowball effect that we feared is becoming a reality right before our eyes."

The Soviet Union signed a protocol to the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the so-called Rarotonga Treaty, which was ratified by a majority of the South Pacific States in 1986. The United States, France and Britain refused. But, *The Press* reported, Prime Minister Mara, had not been very happy about nukes in the South Pacific either, and had protested bitterly about the refusal of the Western powers to sign the anti-nuclear pact. On April 14, Jim Shrimpton wrote in *The Press*: "This is one subject at least on which the Coalition is in accord with the Alliance." However, in general, the Alliance has been firmly pro-imperialist.

Campaign of civil disobedience

The Coalition government was described as "left leaning" in the New Zealand press, but created no great fears in South Pacific business circles, despite tensions both before and after the election: In its May 9 issue, *The Press* reported: "Investors were apparently reassured by government statements promising attractive conditions, tax concessions, and duty drawbacks, the sources said."

The New Zealand Labour government in particular, and also the one in Australia, have expressed support for the legally elected government of Fiji. In the first days after Ganilau's legitimization of the coup, Bavadra refused to accept it, and called for a campaign of mass civil disobedience. He will obviously be under considerable pressure to yield. But if he persists, the Fiji conflict could become a focus of political contradictions in a South Pacific area that the big imperialist powers are finding more and more difficult to control. ☆

Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka