

International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

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*Palestinian
fighters leaving
Beirut in
1982 (DR)*

Twenty years after the Six-Day War

IN THE DAWN hours of June 5, 1967, the Israeli army struck at its three neighboring states — Egypt, Jordan and Syria. After just six days of fighting, the Zionist command achieved its goals. It was a formidable military show of force by a state dedicated to war. Today, with only 4 million inhabitants, Israel has the world's seventh most powerful airforce.

Israel occupied the last parts of the territory of the former British mandate of Palestine still remaining under Arab sovereignty — the West Bank that had been annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, which had been administered by Egypt. To increase its military advantage against its most dangerous enemies it seized "strategic zones" — the Sinai desert against Egypt; and the Golan Heights against Syria in the northeast. On June 10, the army of a state covering 20,800 square kilometers controlled 102,400 square kilometers of territory!

THE TWENTIETH anniversary of this conquest inevitably brings to mind another date: the fortieth anniversary of the November 29, 1947, UN General Assembly vote to partition Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. The latter was given 55 per cent of the territory, although the Jews — the overwhelming majority of them made up of immigrants fleeing the terrors of European anti-Semitism — constituted only a

third of the population and possessed just 6 per cent of the land.

Even this flagrant injustice could not satisfy the chiefs of the Zionist armed gangs. In a few months of fighting and massacres, they added 6,500 square kilometers to the 14,300 given to them by the UN. What is more, the Arab and Jewish populations had been roughly equal on these territories, but on the 20,800 square kilometers they took over they made sure that only a small

minority of Palestinian Arabs remained.

The state of Israel was born. By a cruel irony of history, it bore within it some of the characteristic traits of the "Brown Plague," many of whose victims had been shanghaied into the Zionist enterprise — racism, militarism and expansionism. These features were compounded by another that was in total contradiction to the dreams of self-sufficiency of the more utopian Zionists — dependence.

Israel is the most extreme example of dependence in the world. No other state is so dependent both militarily and economically as the Zionist state is on US imperialism. A state with such a small population (700,000 Jews in 1948), based on the expulsion of a greater number of natives belonging to an incomparably larger national community, could survive only by maintaining a military force superior to that of its enemies, and therefore out of all proportion to its own resources. Only United States' imperialism had both the means and the motivation for supporting it.

In turn, Israel was to serve as a mercenary state of imperialism, not only in the Arab region but also from Sri Lanka to Africa to Central America.

These innate features of the Zionist state were to grow over the years. The 1967 war was to be a decisive stage in this process, which would reach its peak ten years later with the coming to power of Menachem Begin's Likud, an embodiment of the most narrow-minded chauvinist arrogance and racist disdain.

Likud's insane military expedition into Lebanon in 1982 was to reveal the naked reality of the Israeli state, stripped of the veneer of social Zionist hypocrisy. This was to result in a grave moral crisis, breaking the national consensus for the first time in war.

Today, 20 years after the Six-Day War, the ruling class of the state of Israel remains divided on the means of maintaining control of the Palestinian territories conquered at that time. Either pure and simple absorption, as the Likud advocates, with the maintenance of the existing apartheid system and eventual expulsion of the natives (in this regard, it is true that the fascist rabbi Meir Kahane only says out loud what a lot of Likud leaders quietly think); or the creation of a Palestinian bantustan hemmed in by a belt of Zionist colonies, as proposed by the Laborites led by Shimon Peres, with their old crony, King Hussein of Jordan, being left to run it.

If these are the terms of the political debate in 1987, they lead to the corollary of the Israeli victory in June 1967 — the Arab defeat. Although the Six-Day War dealt a mortal blow to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Arab nationalism, embodied by the Nasser regime in Egypt and the left Ba'athist one in Syria, its real fruits only ripened ten years later. This was when Sadat, the anti-Nasser, inaugurated the process of separate peace agreements with the Zionist state. Today, the Jordanian stage of this is on the agenda.

Before this point could be reached, the main political and moral counterweight to the June 1967 defeat — the tempestuous rise of the armed movement of the Palestinian refugees in the countries bordering Israel — had to be subjected to repeated blows from its "brothers," the Arab regimes. It was crushed in Jordan in 1970-71. It was muzzled in Lebanon by Hafez El-Assad's Syria in 1976-77.

The recent assaults by the Amal movement, backed by Syria, against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, are consolidating the results of the 1982 Israeli invasion. In this way they are helping to create the conditions for the Jordanian stage, even if the Syrian regime risks being the first loser from this. The Syrians had already prepared the ground for Sadat's betrayal in 1976-77, for which they had to pay the price.

In a Middle East where reactionary winds are prevailing today, including those of Islamic fundamentalism, there are only a few remaining pockets of progressive mass struggles. The most important is unquestionably the resistance to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian masses on the West Bank and in Gaza. We are still a long way from the emergence of an independent movement of the proletariat transcending state frontiers and national, ethnic and confessional differences.

Unfortunately, the more distant a socialist perspective remains, the deeper the Middle East will sink into barbarism. ☆

A crossroads for the PLO

THE EIGHTEENTH session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), held from April 20-25 in Algiers, was marked by the reintegration of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) into the Palestinian Liberation Organization dominated by Yasser Arafat's Fatah.

This reconciliation was, in fact, brought about by the impasse of the Arafat leadership's rightist policy. In recent years, the PLO had taken the "Jordanian option" — an alliance with Jordan that culminated in the Amman accord in February 1985. King Hussein and Arafat, squarely in line with the US proposals, used this accord to project a common delegation for negotiations with Israel.

A year after that, the Jordanian king suspended the accord and closed Fatah's offices in his kingdom. At the same time, in concert with the Israeli Labor Party Bloc leader Shimon Peres, he sought to create the conditions for a deal on the West Bank and Gaza without the PLO.

The first part of this article, published in the last issue of *International Viewpoint*, drew the balance sheet of the policy followed by Arafat. This second and final part analyses the process of reconciliation among the Palestinian groups and their perspectives.

SALAH JABER

THE USSR had clearly shown its irritation over the policy followed by Arafat, especially after the conclusion of the Amman accord. But it nevertheless kept up relations with the PLO, in particular with the "centrist" members of its leadership. In fact, Moscow never gave up hope of winning back the PLO.

The Kremlin correctly estimated that the American card that Arafat was playing was a losing one, since the maximum concessions the PLO could offer remained incompatible with the minimum conditions for an accord with the most "moderate" faction of the Zionist establishment.

While Hussein might be able to find a reward in co-administering Palestinian bantustans on the West Bank and in Gaza with Israel, what advantage could the PLO bureaucracy, headed by Arafat, find in that? And that is the only formula for "settlement" that could come out of any negotiations

with the Zionist state — at least in the present relationship of forces, which is not about to change.

Arafat's blindness in the face of these obvious facts is bound up with his refusal to think things through to the end. That reflects the contradiction of a bourgeois bureaucracy leading a national liberation movement, which is dependent on Washington's Arab accomplices, principally Saudi Arabia.

Important ally for the USSR

The Soviet leaders therefore had good reasons to think that despite itself, if not out of conviction, the PLO leadership would again be obliged to turn to them. But might not one wonder why they cling to such an unreliable ally, which has no ideological or political affinity with the USSR?

Paradoxically, it is this aspect of Ar-

afat that most interests Moscow. He is a good Muslim, recognized by the most reactionary Islamic regimes and sponsored by the Saudis, who moreover enjoys an undeniable popularity among the Palestinian masses. This puts him in a good position to oppose effectively the Israeli-Jordanian-American maneuvers from which he is excluded.

Thus, the PLO leader is an inestimable ally for the Soviet bureaucracy, which is trying to gain respectability in the eyes of Muslims, particularly since it is confronted with the double problem of Iran and Afghanistan. Also, for 15 years it has been a target of a systematic US effort to throw it out of the Middle East.

Agreements honored in the breach

Before the Amman accord, Moscow made great exertions to bring the PLO back into its orbit and reconcile it to Syria, the other kingpin in its Middle Eastern lineup. These efforts were relayed through the direct instruments of Soviet policy in the region, the DPLF and the PCP — then in alliance with the PFLP — and the South Yemen regime (see box on page 6). They led to the Aden accords of March 1984.

However, eight months later these agreements were honored in the breach by Arafat when he convoked the Seventeenth Session of the PNC in Amman, without the presence of the PFLP and the DPLF. Subsequently, the PFLP, followed by the PLF (Yacub), broke off their alliance with their partners lined up with Moscow.

They joined the Fatah dissidents, Saika, the PFLP-GC and the PFLP in the framework of the the Palestinian National Salvation Front (PNSF) linked to Syria and Libya. One of the PNSF's main demands was the removal of Arafat from the chair of the PLO for treason to the national cause.

The DPLF and the PCP, following the Kremlin's orders, kept up their conciliatory efforts against all obstacles and all odds.

Hussein's announcement of the suspension of the Amman accord in February 1986 was to give Moscow and its regional political relays the opportunity to renew their efforts directed at the PLO, this time with much better chances for success.

While with Moscow's blessing Algeria launched an appeal for the reunification of the PLO and offered to host a meeting of the PNC on its territory to consummate this, negotiations under Soviet auspices were initiated between representatives of the loyalist Fatah and the DPLF and the PCP.

These negotiations led in an initial stage to a "Moscow accord" in August

1986, followed in September by the Declaration of Prague signed by the three formations. This declaration already contained all the essential elements of the political platform that was to be adopted by the Eighteenth Session of the PNC.

The Prague Declaration proposed abrogating the Amman accord, while at the same time it reconfirmed the ambiguous formula adopted by the Sixteenth PNC calling for a "confederation between two independent states" (Jordan and Palestine). It expressed the hope for a reconciliation with Syria, but postponed the question of relations with Egypt.

On organizational questions, the Prague Declaration envisaged reforming the structure of the PLO leadership in a more frontist and collective direction. It set April 1987 as the date for the next PNC, which was to meet in Algiers with the participation — for the first time — of the PCP.

The six months that followed the Prague accord were marked by intense activity in two opposite directions. The dominant right-wing faction of Fatah, led by Arafat, strove to achieve a reconciliation with Jordan and a reactivation of the Amman accord. Moscow and its regional relays and allies strove to implement the Prague Declaration.

In the first part of this article, I already described the fate of Arafat's efforts. Those of the Kremlin and its consorts proved more fruitful. Syria had posed conditions for any reestablishment of relations with the PLO leadership that were too "radical" for it to accept at the start (in particular, breaking off relations with Egypt). Therefore, the Soviet camp's efforts were to be concentrated on Libya and the PFLP.

With Qaddhafi, the conciliators en-

countered no problems. Hard pressed by a military, political and economic offensive mounted against it by Washington and confronted with grave setbacks in Chad, the Libyan regime was more dependent than ever on Moscow. Its difficulties forced it also to water down its Arab policy. The war of the camps in Lebanon gave it the opportunity to extend a hand to the PLO leadership without losing face.

Thus, the PFLP and other Palestinian organizations and groups subsidized by Qaddhafi found themselves subjected to a pressure convergent with that of Moscow.

The PFLP, however, was to be the main target of the conciliators, since it was both the essential and weakest link in the PNSF. It was the organization with the most prestige, the most autonomy from Syria but also the most politically divided, with an active conciliatory fraction (Abu Ali Mustafa, Basam Abu Sharif), and with George Habbash, as usual, playing a balancing act. Typically, the PFLP leader hesitated until the last minute, and then finally begrudgingly contradicted himself.

Negotiations in Tunis

The PFLP did not join in the Tunis negotiations last March between the loyalist Fatah and its two partners in the Amman PNC (the PLF of Abul Abbas and the ALF), on the one hand; and the two pro-Soviet formations, the PLFP and PCP, on the other. These negotiations led on March 16 to the adoption of a working document quite in line with the Prague Declaration, including postponement of the decision on Egypt, the main apple of discord



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.] ★

It was nonetheless important that in signing this new document — more weighty than the Prague Declaration — Fatah ratified the commitment that it had made in the former statement to abrogate the Amman accord, especially since in the meantime Arafat had been striving to do just the opposite.

Parallel to this, Qaddhafi was to issue a call to the various components of the opposition to Arafat to meet in Libya in order to set down their conditions for the reunification of the PLO. The result of this was the Tripoli Document signed on March 23 by the organizations financed by Libya — the PFLP, the DPLF, the PFLP-GC, the PLF (Yacub), the PPSF and even the Fatah-RC of Abu Nidal.

Relations with the Egyptian regime

The only components of the PNSF that refused to put their names to the Tripoli Document were the Fatah dissidents and Saika, both of which, backed by Damascus, demanded the removal of Arafat as a precondition for reunifying the PLO. On the other hand, the PFLP signed both documents, the Tunis and the Tripoli statement, claiming that they were not contradictory.

In fact, the main difference between the two documents concerned the question of relations with the Egyptian regime. The Tripoli platform, unlike the Tunis one, openly declared for a break with the Cairo government, not the sort of thing to displease the Libyan regime, whose relations with Mubarak's Egypt are conflict-ridden.

The bargaining to get the PLFP to take part in the negotiations among the Palestinian formations at the Eighteenth Session of the PNC, set for April 10-20 in Algiers by the Tunis document, was to focus on the Egyptian question. The PFLP would demand that the Executive Committee of the PLO as such declare itself in favor of abrogating the Amman accord and of breaking relations with Cairo preliminary to the PNC meeting.

Subjected to combined pressures from Moscow, Algeria, the DPLF and the PCP — with the approval of Libya — Habash agreed to participate in the new session of the PNC without winning his point on Egypt, and the PLF (Yacub) followed his lead.

On the other hand, the PFLP-GC, the PFLP and the Fatah-RC refused to participate in the PNC, even though the latter two had taken part in the bargaining with the loyalist Fatah up to the last minute. To justify this, they cited their attachment to the Tripoli document. (In fact the problem of its representation in the leading bodies of the PLO seems to have been more im-

portant than anything else for the Abu Nidal group).

On two occasions, compromises among the Palestinian factions have been drawn up in the Algerian capital. In 1983 already at the Sixteenth Session of the PNC held in Algiers a laborious compromise was worked out between the Arafat-led dominant faction in the PLO, which was then accentuating its rightist course, and the nationalist and Stalinist left of the Palestinian movement. On the two questions at the center of the wheeling and dealing at the last PNC — relations with Jordan and Egypt, the 1983 session adopted the following position:

● The PNC committed itself to "consolidate the special relations between the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples," and, while reaffirming the PLO's status as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," considered that "future relations with Jordan must be established on a confederal basis between two independent states."

● While supporting "the struggle of the Egyptian people and its patriotic forces to put an end to the policy dictated by the Camp David accords," the PNC called on the Executive Committee to "establish relations with the Egyptian regime on the basis of its renouncing the Camp David policy."

These ambiguous formulations, which represented a clear retreat from those adopted in previous sessions of the PNC, easily lent themselves to the interpretation that Arafat made of them, and which enabled him to present his subsequent alliance with the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes, as well as the Amman accord of February 1985, as political options in conformity with the orientation adopted by the PNC, and therefore "legitimate."

Fundamental concession made by left

However, because of their very ambiguity, these formulations constituted a compromise between the Arafat leadership and the conciliationist, nationalist and Stalinist left represented mainly by the PFLP and the DPLF. In fact, in this compromise it was the left who made the fundamental concession.

The deliberate ambiguity of these formulations, in contrast to the rather clear resolutions adopted by previous sessions of the PNC, could have no other purpose than to open the way for the Arafat leadership's new reactionary option.

Furthermore, acceptance of the principle of a Jordanian-Palestinian "confederation" was in itself an enormous concession made explicitly by the left to the Arafat leadership, and all

the more so because this idea came from King Hussein and echoed the Reagan Plan.

With respect to the resolutions adopted by the Sixteenth Session of the PNC, it might have been expected that the new session in Algiers would mark an advance in the right direction for the PFLP and the DFLP. Was not the Eighteenth Session going to end the four years during which the Arafat leadership was able to give free rein to its reactionary choices, to its "Jordanian option," which had concluded in a total, lamentable fiasco?

Official abrogation of the Amman accord

This time, in fact, Arafat and his companions, were forced to make two concessions to their partners on the left, which were designed first of all to satisfy the USSR. There was the minor concession of including the PCP as such in the institutions of the PLO. And there was the symbolically more important one of officially abrogating the Amman accord.

It is true that the accord had been a dead letter for a long time, at least since the Jordanian king proclaimed its "suspension" more than a year before the Algiers meeting. The abrogation of the Amman agreement, by its own terms, was in any case more of a belated death certificate than an execution: "Since it is no longer in force, it is considered annulled."

Nonetheless, the fact that PLO officially put its stamp on this death certificate, while Hussein had confined himself to suspending the accord (thus not ruling out its reactivation), is not without importance. In so doing, the PLO leadership disregarded the warning of Egyptian president Mubarak, while at the same time trying to finagle by using the most anodyne formulation possible.

The position of Arafat and his associates is, in fact, very uncomfortable. On the eve of the PNC, they were confronted with the following dilemma:

- Either yield to Jordanian-Egyptian pressure by formally accepting Resolution 242 (1967) of the UN Security Council and officially renouncing armed struggle against Zionism. That would have made it possible to reactivate the Amman accord, but at the price of a still graver split in the loyalist Fatah than the one in 1983, as well as of a grave crisis of confidence among the Palestinian masses that support the PLO; and a decisive break with the USSR, the traditional left of the PLO and their allies.

Without the slightest guarantee of advantages for the PLO leadership in the context of a deal with the United States

and Israel, such an attitude would have represented the maddest sort of reactionary adventurism. It would in fact have been suicidal.

- Or yield to the pressure from Moscow by abrogating the Amman agreement so as to place themselves again in the framework of the Soviet doctrine for settling the Israeli-Arab conflict. That is, participation by the PLO as an independent Palestinian delegation in a international conference that would negotiate an overall "settlement" of the conflict in all its aspects and on all fronts.

This conference would be held under UN auspices with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council, and would lead to the creation of an "independent" Palestinian state.

The obvious risk of the second alternative for the PLO leadership was cutting itself off from its Egyptian ally, and offering a pretext to the Amman-Cairo axis for taking part in a new Camp David deal settling the fate of the West Bank and Gaza without the PLO.

On the other hand, the advantages of the second option were also clear, unlike in the case of the first — restoration of the moral credit of the PLO leadership, which had been gravely damaged by its Jordanian fiasco; reconsolidating its own ranks and those of the PLO, and therefore reinforcing its political weight at a time when it most needed it; and last but not least, renewed support from the USSR, with all that this implies as regards the Syrian attitude, and consequently for the war of the camps in Lebanon.

The balance, therefore, swung decisively in favor of the second option, all the more so because certain factors aggravated the already quite dubious character of the first — the entanglement of the Reagan regime in the Iran-gate affair; the uncertainty of the relationship of forces in Israel between Likud, hostile in principle to any compromise on the West Bank and Gaza, and the Labour Bloc led by Peres; the intransigent opposition of Peres himself to participation by the PLO in any negotiations and so on.

This is why the Arafat faction could only bend, willingly or not, to the pressure from Moscow, which was insistently relayed by its own "centrist" associates within the leadership of Fatah and the PLO. It agreed reluctantly to official abrogation of the Amman accord and could not oppose the adoption by the PNC of a motion on the "international conference" in conformity with the Soviet doctrine:

"A conference with full powers under the auspices of the UN on the basis of all the the UN resolutions relating to the Palestinian question and the Israeli-

Arab conflict [that is, including the General Assembly resolutions that, unlike the Security Council resolution, recognize the national rights of the Palestinian People], in which the five permanent members of the Security Council will participate, as well as the concerned parties, including the PLO, on a basis of equality with the other delegations to the conference."

However, while accepting these inevitable concessions, the Arafat leadership took great care to rule out any formulation that could prove an obstacle to pursuing its special alliance with Jordan and Egypt. It was to be aided by the fact that the USSR does not demand a break with these two countries. In fact, it is conducting its own charm offensive toward them. Such a break is demanded only by the PFLP and, to a lesser extent, by the DFLP.

The Arafat faction therefore pulled off the exploit of getting the PNC to adopt formulations on relations with Jordan and Egypt that by comparison with those of the Sixteenth Session represented a new step to the right! (In the same vein, this faction forced the PNC to adopt a motion of explicit support for Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its war against Iran, while the 1983 session had limited itself to calling for an end to the war.)

Ideological and programmatic pretensions

It needs to be said, however, that up against such wilted leaderships as those of the Palestinian left represented in the PNC, the Arafat leadership's task was not an arduous one. In fact, instead of fighting for political positions in conformity with their ideological and programmatic pretensions and in the interest, of course, of the national struggle of the Palestinian people — it should be recalled that the Twelfth PNC in 1974 called for "establishing a national democratic regime in Jordan ... in collaboration with the Jordanian national forces" — the PFLP and DPLF leaders waged a stubborn fight in Algiers for the reconfirmation of the formulations adopted at the Sixteenth Session of the PNC, the very ones that Arafat used to justify his policy over the last four years!

The 1983 formulations were an opportunist compromise with respect to the previous line of the PLO, defended by the left in the PNC. Since the new 1987 compromise was a compromise with respect to the 1983 formulations, it could only be still worse. In this way, from one session to the next of the PNC, in the name of the sacrosanct "national unity" beloved of Stalinists and petty-bourgeois nationalists, the Palestinian left has endorsed the inex-

orable rightist drift of the PLO.

The resolution of the last PNC was not content with reaffirming the principle of a "Jordanian-Palestinian confederation" adopted in 1983. It defended the Amman accord while proclaiming it inoperative and thereby opened the road for renewing it.

"PFLP's tough stand did not last"

With regard to Egypt, this resolution was formulated so as to give no offensive to the Mubarak regime and to pose no impediments to pursuing the relations established with it. What is more, it ignored the Egyptian "patriotic forces" for which the 1983 resolution expressed support in their struggle against the Camp David accords.

It is understandable, therefore, why the editor in chief of the semi-official journal of the loyalist Fatah published in Paris (*Al-Yom Assabeh* of May 11) could have an easy time making fun of the PFLP, recalling this organization's long history of retreats and ending by pointing out:

"Even on these two specific questions [the PLO's relationship with Jordan and Egypt], the PF's tough stand did not hold up until the end. The formulation accepted by the PF with respect to abrogation of the Amman accord in fact justified the conclusion of this agreement by saying that it was 'with the aim of achieving the common interest of the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples in conformity with the decisions of the Arab summit in Fez,' and that the accord was 'based on the decisions of the PNC,' and did not violate them, as other documents of the FP said.

"Likewise, the formulation that the PF accepted on relations with Egypt was not designed to break off such relations (as the PF had demanded before and during the discussions) but rather 'charged the Executive Committee of the PLO to define the principles of Egyptian-Palestinian relations on the basis of the consecutive sessions of the PNC.' And when the PF insisted that the Sixteenth Session of the PNC (the resolution that mentions the Camp David accords) be cited in particular, it agreed that only the basic Palestinian principles (statehood, return and self-determination) in that resolution be referred to.

"This is why we can say that the tough stand of the PFLP is purely formal. At bottom, the PF inclines toward the policy of open bridges practiced by the PLO."

The author of the preceding lines had least had the merit of frankness about the character of the resolutions adopted by the Eighteenth Session of the PNC!

How, then, should we interpret the re-

action of Mubarak in ordering the closure of the PLO offices in Cairo in the aftermath of the last session of the PNC? The astonishment of Arafat and his associates at this measure was no doubt quite sincere. They had fought bitterly to the last minute, risking a breakup of the PNC several times, to avoid any formulation that could harm their relations with the Egyptian regime.

In reality, in reacting as he did, Mubarak did not intend to express his irritation at a resolution formulated in such an anodyne way, but rather at the overall meaning of the Eighteenth Session of the PNC. It was a major success for Soviet policy in the Middle

East, which contrasts strongly with the great inertia of the bureaucratic system internally.

At the same time that the PNC was being held in Algiers, the Soviet leader was hosting the USSR's main Arab ally, the Syrian president Hafez El-Assad, in Moscow. In a sort of tandem with the PNC in Algiers, the two chiefs of state issued a common declaration denouncing "partial and separate accords" (an allusion to the American doctrine illustrated by the Camp David accords) and calling for an "international conference with full powers" under the auspices of the UN, and so on — exactly the formula adopted at the same time by the meeting in Algiers.

Over and above the symbolic importance of this double stroke, while promising increased military and economic aid to his Syrian ally, Gorbachev pressed him strongly to take a more flexible attitude toward the PLO and the Iraqi regime, to which Moscow has sharply increased its aid in recent months in its war against Khomeini's Iran.

Gorbachev's Arab strategy is coherent and relatively simple. It is focused around the two hot spots in the Middle East — the Israeli Arab conflict and the Gulf war. At a time when the US administration, bogged down in the scandal of arms sales to Iran via Israel, seems more than ever in collusion with "the enemies of the Arabs," Moscow is championing the Arab cause in every respect.

The Kremlin's charm offensive is not restricted to its traditional allies, including Iraq, with which it has warmed up its relations after a bit of a chill in 1985. It has even touched Washington's clients. A high-ranking Soviet delega-

tion has recently made a tour of the Gulf emirates, assuring them of Moscow's resolute support for their security (against Iran).

The USSR has also leased three oil tankers from its fleet to Kuwait, which is under threat from Tehran. Finally, Moscow has generously rescheduled the military debt it is owed by Egypt



East. And nothing could better symbolize this than the crucial role played by the USSR delegation in the deliberations in Algiers.

This success came in the midst of a general political offensive by Moscow directed at the Arab countries — another illustration of the more dynamic foreign policy of the USSR under Gorbachev.

(\$3,000 million) on very favorable conditions, embarrassing the Reagan administration, which, at loggerheads with a Congress obsessed by the size of the US budget deficit, cannot offer such boons.

However, Moscow could find no better device to revive its image as champion of the Arab cause than an "international conference" to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict. It shares entirely the official point of view of the Arab states, favoring an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967 and the creation of an independent Palestinian state in exchange for peace and secure borders. It is even firmer about this than some of the Arab states, such as Egypt not long ago and Jordan today. So, it would have a magnificent opportunity for denouncing Israeli-American complicity. And that would be the sum total of what such a conference could offer, because there is no way that the Zionist state would accept these conditions.

In reality, Moscow has no interest in seeing "peace" established between Israel and the Arab states. The Israeli-Arab conflict is much more costly in financial and political terms for the United States than it is for the USSR. For this same reason, Washington is anxious to reach a "Pax Americana" between its Arab clients and Israel.

International conference no more than a fig leaf

Since the time when Kissinger headed the State Department, the US government has been engaged in an intense effort to achieve separate settlements between Israel and each of its Arab neighbors, with the exception of Syria. This policy had its first and main success under Carter, with the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It suffered a grave setback under Reagan, with the collapse of the treaty laboriously arrived at between Israel and Amin Gemayel's Lebanese government.

Today, the US administration is concentrating its efforts on the Israeli-Jordanian front. But King Hussein cannot afford to adopt an attitude like that of Sadat. His kingdom is much too weak for that. He needs an international cover in order to be able to negotiate officially and conclude an accord with Israel. But at the same time he is in agreement with his Israeli Labourite pals and the US administration to exclude any international conference "with full powers," in which the USSR and Syria would have the right of veto.

This is why Hussein, Peres, and the US secretary of state George Schultz have worked out together their own conception of an international conference. After an opening session with

great pomp and circumstance, it would split up into bipartite commissions that would examine the conflict between Israel and each of its neighbors, which would be fully independent in their decisions.

In a nutshell, such an international conference would be no more than a fig leaf — to use the apt expression of the US magazine *Newsweek* — for direct and separate negotiations between Jordan and Israel.

However, even supposing that the opposition of the Likud hawks to any territorial compromise on the West Bank and in Gaza could be surmounted, such a fig leaf would be very much in danger of proving transparent, inasmuch as Syria and the USSR could not go along with such an operation.

That leaves the PLO. Its exclusion from the whole process, for different reasons, suits both the Jordanians and the Israelis. In this connection, by making a participation of the PLO in a fig-leaf conference still more improbable, the last session of the PNC should, on all counts, have satisfied Peres and Hussein.

In particular, the closing of the PLO offices in Egypt, which was accompanied by an invitation to Cairo for Abul Zaim, a Fatah renegade on the Jordanian payroll, represents an alignment of Egyptian policy with that of Jordan in this matter.

Nonetheless, Mubarak's Egypt, like Saudi Arabia, in reality ardently hopes that the PLO will continue to follow the trajectory it set in the past four years and come to make the ultimate concessions that would make it possible to involve it in negotiations with Israel in the framework of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

In fact, while Hussein and Peres have no intention of including the PLO — no matter how chastened — in their joint administration of the West Bank, Washington's other Arab partners do not share their motivations. Quite the contrary, they think that a Palestinian cover — which only Arafat's PLO could offer — is still more necessary for a settlement of the fate of the two Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 than an international one.

Without that, any settlement would face opposition and a very dangerous upping of the ante by Moscow and its Arab allies, including the PLO and the majority of the Palestinians following it. This is why the Egyptian attitude, unlike the Jordanian one in 1986, cannot be interpreted as excluding the PLO but rather as putting pressure on it to bring it back into Cairo's orbit.

In this way, therefore, the Arafat leadership found itself being subjected once again to strong contradictory pressures in the aftermath of the Eighteenth Session of the PNC. Once more,

it is at a crossroads.

On the one hand, Moscow is putting the pressure on to get it to complete the step begun at the PNC by making a reconciliation with Syria. Gorbachev prepared the ground on the Syrian side, and George Habash immediately devoted himself to this task after the Algiers session. He has been received in Damascus by Hafez El-Assad, who told him that the last PNC was "a step in the right direction" that he hoped to see confirmed politically and completed by a reunification with all the other member organizations of the PNSF.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt pile on the pressure

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are putting on the pressure to get a virtual wiping out of the political results of the last PNC not only through a re-establishment of the PLO's official relations with Egypt but also with Jordan, and even a renewal of the Amman accord.

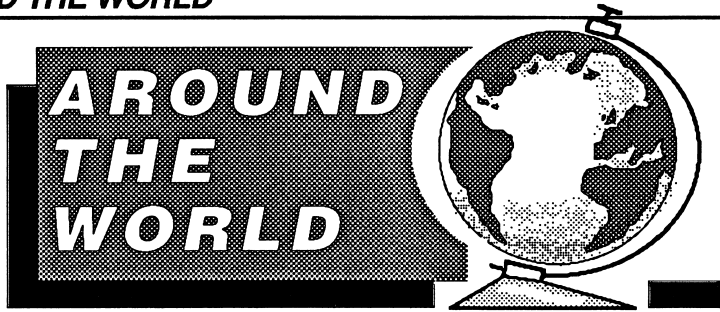
Facing these two opposing paths, as a rightist bourgeois leadership, the Arafat team inclines firmly toward taking the second. This is despite the last PNC, which it accepted as a compromise imposed by the circumstances and which it would be only too happy to cast off, as soon as it thinks that is possible.

In any case, the Arafat leadership will by no means firmly commit itself to the Soviet-Syrian side, unless it has no other choice. In other words, it will continue unceasingly to explore the other road, in hopes that it will open up.

For example, at its first working meeting the new Executive Committee elected by the Eighteenth session of the PNC — dominated, as usual, by the Arafat faction — decided on May 17 (despite the demands for collective leadership bandied about by the left) to send a delegation to Cairo in the near future headed by Arafat himself, while another high-ranking Palestinian delegation is to go to Amman!

The representatives of the PFLP, the DFLP and the PCP in the Executive Committee "expressed their reservations." On May 20, a representative of the PF declared that this organization "notes with concern this clear violation of the resolutions of the PNC and sees it as a sign that does not favor the reunification of all the Palestinians."

The Stalinist and nationalist petty-bourgeois opportunists have always been more conciliatory toward the bourgeois leaderships than the latter have been toward them. These opportunists have always lost in this game. That is an old lesson in the history of national struggles. ☆



FRANCE

Solidarity with South African railworkers

A UNITED Assembly of activists in the December rail strikes met in Saint Denis, a working-class suburb of Paris, on May 23. The gathering was called by former members of the Coordination Nationale des Agents de Conduite (National Coordinating Committee of Train Crews), who had organized in the Liaison Committee of Railway Workers.

"The idea of an assembly of rank-and-file activists came from the former leaders of the strike committees and the Coordinating Committee of Train Crews in late February. A Liaison Committee of Railworkers was immediately set up on the ashes of the Coordinational Nationale," Gilles Suze wrote in the *Le Matin* of May 24.

Massive protests against firings

"The objective was not, any more than in the past, to substitute for the unions but both to get the maximum number of workers to join in opposing sanctions and to 'force' all the unions to act together. This was not without its reasons, because four months after the massive and relatively united struggle, old practices from before the strike began to re-assert themselves.

"For example, at the Lyon station, the CGT [the Communist Party-dominated union] refused to join in an action launched by the CFTD [close to the Socialist Party] to fight the firing of three railworkers. On the other hand, in Metz, under the impetus of the Vigilance Committee there, protests against firings were massive, and were able to lead to a demonstration of more than 500 railworkers."

The meeting adopted a draft of a common statement of European railworkers and a message of solidarity with the strike of Black railway workers in South Africa:

"Since the strike of French railworkers, several meetings have taken place between delegations of workers from various European state railroad sys-

tems.

"The presence of a delegation from the French Comité National de Liaison to the demonstration of Italian train crews in Rome, called by the magazine *Encora en Marcia*; and the participation of a delegation from the former Coordination des Agents de Conduite to the assemblies of railworkers on all lines that was held in the Atocha station near Madrid, called by the Workers' Commissions were important steps in building ties of solidarity and mutual understanding among railworkers in Europe. The same is true of the meetings of French railworkers with colleagues from Belgium, Luxemburg and Britain."

The statement went on to note that railworkers throughout the Common Market were facing the same threat from general deregulation, which would be stepped up with the implementation of the Single European Act in 1992. "The single market will go hand in hand with the sharpening of fierce competition among rail, road and air transport. The European governments will try to set us against each other." The declaration ended by stating: "We will apply in Europe the watchword of the South African railworkers who suffered cruel attacks in their struggle against the racist regime in Pretoria: 'An injury to one is an injury to all.'"

The following is the text of the motion of solidarity with the South African railworkers:

"The United Assembly being held today in Paris wishes to convey to you its deeply felt solidarity and its grief at the murder of six of your fellow strikers by the police on April 22, 1987.

"Our Committee arose after the December-January strikes. It brings together all those who stood in the forefront of the movement, members and non-members of trade unions, those who have taken the initiative in the organization of general assemblies, strike committees on all lines, and members of the former Coordination Nationale des Agents de Conduite.

"This is a meeting of all those who want to defend and reinforce the major gains of our struggle — the rank-and-file unity, solidarity in struggle and the democracy that continue to make us feel that our fight was worth while, despite its meagre results.

"We want to put an end to the sectarianism and division among the unions that have already done so much harm.

"Our struggle has enabled us to begin to establish links with railway workers of various European countries. We shall inform all of them of these fraternal greetings sent to your trade union and to all your members. We are sure that they will join us in wishing you success in the interests of solidarity among railway workers." ★

USA

High court attacks right to bail

THE SUPREME Court has codified another encroachment on the Bill of Rights. By a 6 to 3 majority, it has given legal sanctions to pre-trial "preventive detention," without any right to bail, to individuals deemed to be "dangerous" by the government and its cop agencies.

The May 26 ruling has been condemned by supporters of democratic rights. The American Civil Liberties Union accurately branded the decision a "dangerous setback for civil liberties."

In its ruling, the Supreme Court majority reversed a lower court decision that found the 1984 Bail Reform Act to be unconstitutional. The Bail Reform Act was passed by a bipartisan vote of Congress, with the support of key Democratic Party leaders such as Senator Edward Kennedy.

By giving judges the power to lock up and deny bail to anyone they label "extremely dangerous to the community," or who they say poses "a substantial risk of flight," the law marked a sharp blow to the democratic guarantee that one is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The act was challenged in court as a violation of the Constitution's Fifth Amendment guarantee against punishment without due process and of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against excessive bail.

Codifying an established practice

The Supreme Court decision, written by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, simply brushes these objections aside. The Bail Reform Act's pre-trial detention provision "does not constitute punishment before trial," Rehnquist claims, because it is simply "regulatory in nature." And, he argues, the Eighth Amendment's bar against excessive bail is not violated — because the act provides for no bail at all!

This ruling codifies a practice that is already being implemented. In the 18-

month period leading up to February of this year, judges, acting at the request of federal officials, denied 4,800 defendants any right to bail. Besides the federal act, 24 states and the District of Columbia have similar laws. The high court's ruling will strengthen this reactionary trend.

Giving the capitalist government and its police even more arbitrary powers of detention is a threat to the democratic rights of all. It will be — and has been — used for purposes of political repression.

The first use of the Bail Reform Act was against nine Black and Puerto Rican activists who were seized in New York City in October 1984. The law has also been used to deny bail to some Puerto Rican independence activists.

The labor movement, fighters for the rights of Blacks, Latinos and women and all supporters of civil liberties should condemn the Supreme Court ruling and act to safeguard the constitutional right to bail. [From the US weekly, *The Militant*, June 5.] ★

U S S R

Interview with Dudintsev

THE MAY 10 *Pravda* devoted nearly half of its third page to an interview with Vladimir Dudintsev about his new book *Belye Odezhdy* ("White Clothes"), on the suppression of genetic research under Stalin. The author first gained international notice for his novel *Not by Bread Alone*, which was one of the notable works of the period of the "thaw" that followed Stalin's death.

"Blind faith is dangerous"

The interview stressed the harmfulness of the dogmatism associated with Stalinism, and this was apparently not his only intention. He was asked: "Your main hero says that one of the main causes of his errors was an unfounded faith in his own truth. In so doing, he thinks of the old woman who brought a bundle of logs to put in the fire in which Jan Hus was burned. What did you mean to say by that, that people should not be certain of what they believe?" The author replied:

"Blind faith is dangerous. What is needed is not faith but knowledge. Science is not religion. Skepticism is not a hindrance to scientists but helps them verify whether their discoveries are true or not. In faith, you have to surrender your will to another, and that

is filled with perils for you, and for your work."

Dudintsev also presented his new novel in a way as a victory over the freeze that again followed the thaw. In response to the question about what had given him the impulse to write his new novel, he said:

"In 1956, in the criticism of *Not by Bread Alone*, the ones who stabbed me from various platforms were those

against whom the book was directed. They thought that they won, but their victory was relative and temporary. My opponents did not suspect that a part of me jumps for joy when I get valuable new first-hand information. I remember how I wrote down the actual words of those who reviled me. The more these people tried, the more material I got for my new work." ★

Anti-intervention march in Sydney



SYDNEY, Australia: 1,000 people took to city streets on May 9, in protest against United States intervention in Central America. The march, organized by the Central America Peace Coalition — a grouping of the major Latin and Central American solidarity organizations — was motivated by the recent stepped-up US military manoeuvres in Honduras.

No doubt inspired by the successful mobilizations in the US on April 25, the colourful contingents of trade unionists, solidarity and peace groups spread across several blocks demanding an end to US intervention, support for Nicaragua's revolutionary government and solidarity with the Salvadoran people and the FMLN/FDR. Of particular note was the contingent of lesbians and gay men marching behind the United Fruit Company banner announcing "las lesbianas y los gays contra el imperialismo yanqui!"

Leading the march were Glenda Monterrey of the Sandinista Front of Nicaragua, Filipina human rights activist Joy Balazo and Antonio Hernandez of the FMLN/FDR of El Salvador.

Monterrey, Balazo and Hernandez spoke to the marchers at the demonstration's finale, and while a torrential downpour of rain made further activities planned for that day impossible, it did not dampen either the stirring sentiments of the speakers or the enthusiastic response of the crowd.

Supporters of the Fourth International organized in Solidarity, along with other activists, took important initiatives in establishing the CAPC and ensuring the success of the day. While the Sydney rally was not anywhere as large as the North American demonstrations, it stands as an example of the sort of militant, mass-action, united-front response that is needed in this country to stay the hand of US imperialism. (Photo: Jeffrey Saynor) ★

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A memory of Benjamin Linder

THE MURDER of international aid worker Benjamin Linder by the contras in Nicaragua sparked off a number of protests in the USA (see the last issue of *International Viewpoint*). Foreign aid workers from other countries have been murdered and kidnapped by the contra forces, but Linder was the first US citizen to be killed by them.

Linder's death focused attention once again on the Reagan government's continuing support for the counter-revolutionaries in their attempts to overthrow the Sandinista regime. Ben Linder's commitment to the revolution and to the people of Nicaragua is illustrated in this personal tribute from a fellow aid worker.

JACK BRESEE

I MET Benjamin the second time he came looking for me at the house in which I was staying in Maximo Jerez Barrio, Managua. The woman of the house told me he had come by earlier and would return at 5.00pm. I asked her who he was and she told me his name, but it didn't mean anything to me.

I asked her for more details — what did he look like, was he "Nica" or North American? She said she didn't know. He looked like a "gringo" but sounded like a "Nica." He spoke Spanish as if it was his native tongue, with a perfect Nicaraguan accent, she ex-

plained. Then she said he worked for the energy department, and I remembered.

During my stay at Casa Nicaraguense de Espanol the coordinator of the school, a woman, gave him my name, since I expressed an interest to stay on in the country and work after my time at the school ended. She knew of Benjamin's efforts. All internationals seemed to know of his work — and his love of things Nicaraguan, of the country's people and of their language.

Now he was coming by to meet me. He wanted to know if I would be suitable for a position with the water systems project in San Jose de Bocay, in Jinotega province. When he returned at five I liked him at once. Most people I saw him with liked him as well. He always seemed incredibly calm — *tranquilo* as the Nicas say — considering the places he was known to be working in. He smiled and laughed often. He told me he had studied to be a professional clown. The Nicaraguans nicknamed him *payaso*, which means clown in Spanish....

During that first meeting we talked on the patio — a dirt floor, small but cool. He lay down in a hammock Nica-style, and talked of the work he had done. He asked me many questions and I asked some as well. Then he told me of the project in San Jose de Bocay. His department was making this a total effort for the people of San Jose, who had never had running water, toilets, sewers or electricity. He said the government felt that these were the most deserving of Nicaraguans and he agreed.

The government believed that if the people had these kinds of tangible things, decent things, to protect and fight for, they would better understand the arguments in favor of the revolutionary process — and he agreed with that too. "Some things," he said, making a little joke, "are worth fighting for. No-things are not worth fighting for."

He told me that the very young men of the village now saw little promise for the future. That made it easier for the contras to buy their services as mercenaries, since they had plentiful *yanqui* dollars. With something worth staying for in San

Jose they will be less likely to leave and join the enemy.

During the next two months Benjamin and I talked often. I would walk to his house in the next barrio where all who lived close to him seemed to know him and keep track of his comings and goings. I could leave messages and he would always get them — and that is not often the case in Nicaragua.

Benjamin was a professional in every respect that I could measure. He wanted to make absolutely sure that I could contribute to his life's work: building Nicaragua....

Contras are mercenary, destructive and cruel

Ben was killed by people inferior to him in every respect. Not only inferior from a cultural or intellectual point of view — for that can be attributed to an accident of birth — but from a human point of view. They are cowardly, mercenary, destructive and cruel. They are, no doubt, much like the profiles of captured contras often published by *Barricada* [the Sandinista's paper], or like the captured contras sometimes presented to the townspeople in places like Esteli or San Jose de Bocay. The government shows what the contras are like not to inflame the people or create a vigilante spirit. They do it so people know the contras for what they are.

In a few cases they are simply poor, scared, bewildered individuals who signed up for food and money. "Oh!" the people say when they see one. "He is so young. It is sad to think of it." "Ah, look at that one! I know that one."



Ben Linder in Nicaragua (DR)

His family lives next to my cousin. Oh, they were so poor, and such a large family."

But for the most part, the stories read like those of Al Capone or Charles Manson. These are the real contras — who have their roots in the Somoza National Guard. Their most important duties before the revolution were to act as pimps for exploited prostitutes or extort protection money from the shopkeepers in their district. They enjoy the excitement of destruction, the feeling of power over innocent people. They have a personality which manifests itself in depravity and violence.

These pathological personalities are the ones the US State Department and the CIA support with weapons, money, and talk of "religious freedom." These are the people who killed Benjamin Linder. They committed this heinous crime because Linder was working to build a better future for impoverished people whom he loved deeply. The term "reactionary" is abundantly appropriate when applied to Linder's assassins. They want to kill not only this man, but the entire future for which he was working. Their desire is to return to the brutal past in which they, and others like them, were free to prey upon the Nicaraguan people.

Only the further advance of the Nicaraguan people's revolution can compensate us for the great loss we have suffered. Our revenge for Linder's killing must be taken with the same spirit and understanding that Tomas Borge [the Minister of the Interior] showed when he spoke to his former jailers and torturers from the National Guard: "My revenge will be to see your children well fed, well educated and healthy."

"We can live without compromise"

Ben cannot be replaced. His death is a certain loss: for his family, for those who knew him, and most of all for Nicaragua. But others will come forward to carry on his work — to help to fill the void created by his murder. Ben's existence demonstrates once again that a life dedicated to the advancement of working people everywhere in the world — the poor, the oppressed, the exploited — is not utopian. It is real, it is concrete, it is possible. We can live without compromise, struggle without giving up. In death, as in life, he is an example to us, one which illustrates full well the validity of the Sandinista slogan: "Aqui ni se vende! Aqui ni se rinde!" — "Here we don't sell out! Here we don't surrender!"

[From the June issue of the US journal published by the Fourth International Tendency, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.] ☆

The fight is on for a new Equal Rights Amendment

THE NATIONAL Organization of Women (NOW) is marking the 200th anniversary of the US Constitution with a "Bicentennial Drive for the New Equal Rights Amendment."

This article, from the June issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, looks at the history of the battle for an Equal Rights Amendment and the lessons of that experience for today.

EVELYN SELL

CURRENTLY the largest women's rights organization in the world, NOW launched its campaign "to include women in the Constitution" with a national mailing to all members outlining the campaign.

Lobbying activities were kicked off by sending postcards to the two majority leaders in Congress. Future plans include: phone-banking to pressure US congresspersons in key districts; contacting members of Congress as the new ERA comes up for committee and floor votes; and holding the NOW national conference in Philadelphia during the week of July 16 — the same time and place where Congress will gather to commemorate the bicentennial of the US Constitution.

In the "Bicentennial Membership Action Alert" packet sent out by NOW, it is explained, "The mistake can be corrected — two hundred years after Abigail Adams urged the Constitutional Convention to include women in the fundamental law of the land, our elected representatives once again have another chance to right a grave wrong."

The men who wrote the Constitution deliberately excluded women — it was no mistake! It was also no mistake when the 14th Amendment specified "male citizens" in safeguarding voting rights for ex-slaves. The Constitution was deliberately constructed to maintain the privileges of an elite minority of property holders. It required revolutionary struggles to add the first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) and then to abolish slavery and to spell out legal rights of Blacks. It took a powerful and persistent women's movement to add the 19th Amendment in 1920. Voting rights for women were

won after suffragists carried out 480 campaigns to get state legislatures to submit their amendment to voters, 277 state and 30 national campaigns to get party conventions to include women's suffrage planks in their platforms, 19 campaigns for the amendment in 19 successive Congresses, and many other battles over a 72-year period.

ERA battle started in 1923

Suffrage leader Alice Paul proposed the next step: an Equal Rights Amendment. Feminists started their effort to win an ERA in 1923. For many years ERA resolutions were bottled up in the House Judiciary Committee which was ruled by anti-feminist Emmanuel Celler. In the late 1960s, however, the organized women's liberation movement powerfully challenged traditional attitudes and practices. The first Women's Strike for Equality Day was held in 1970, and immediately became an annual event to press for feminist demands.

The impact of this development reached into Congress. A significant breakthrough came in the spring of 1970 when Congresswoman Martha Griffiths collected more than enough signatures on a discharge petition to bypass the Judiciary Committee and take the ERA directly to a floor debate. The House of Representatives approved the resolution 346 to 15 — but the Senate did not approve the resolution. The ERA was again stopped dead in its tracks. That's part of the ingenious system erected by the Constitution-makers to thwart the popular will and preserve the status quo: toss measures

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back and forth from one part of Congress to the other.

In 1971 the House again approved the ERA resolution by 354 to 23 — but again the Senate blocked further progress. Significant sections of the women's rights movement gave the ERA top priority, and the march and rally for the 1972 Women's Equality Day was organized with a focus on the ERA. Responding to mounting pressures, the US Senate finally approved the ERA resolution on March 22, 1972, by a vote of 84 to 8. Then came the next series of roadblocks set up by the Constitution-makers: 38 state legislatures had to approve the ERA before it could be included in the Constitution.

Anti-feminist forces galvanized

At first it appeared that the ERA was rushing towards victory. Thirty states approved the amendment during the first year. But ratification sputtered from that point. The total crept up to 34 by the beginning of the 1976 bicentennial year. Four more states were needed. Then, Indiana ratified in 1977 — the last state to do so before the March 22, 1979, deadline.

The initial success of the ERA — which reflected majority support for women's rights — galvanized anti-feminist and reactionary forces across the US. Stop ERA became the best known of these. Opponents of the ERA argued that child support and alimony benefits will be abolished; women will be drafted into the armed services and thrown into frontline battles; women will lose their right to privacy in public restrooms, dressing rooms and prisons; homosexuality will be legalized; women will lose existing protective laws covering rest periods, maternity leave and other job-related measures.

These myths and outright lies were answered by a wide variety of means: publications of fact sheets, public meetings and conferences, media debates, presentations at marches and rallies, advertisements in all types of media and informational picketing.

Although NOW relied most heavily on direct lobbying of state legislators, other tactics were utilized to pressure legislators and to involve women's rights supporters in ERA campaigns. For example, in February 1976, NOW called an economic boycott and urged organizations not to hold their conventions in states which had not ratified. Within eighteen months, 45 groups had pledged not to meet in the targeted states. When the attorney general of Missouri unsuccessfully sued NOW for damages, he stated that the boycott had cost St. Louis \$11 million and Kansas

City \$8 million in convention business.

NOW received most of the media attention but many established organizations campaigned for the ERA and new groups, such as ERAmerica, were formed. Pressed to put more weight behind his pro-ERA stance, President Carter proclaimed August 26, 1977, "Women's Equality Day." The ERA was the focus of events held around the country.

"Star power" was utilized in fund-raising parties, media statements and personal appeals to legislators. A 1978 party at Marlo Thomas's estate drew 500 film industry celebrities who paid \$100 each. Director Robert Altman pledged the £2 million profit he expected to make from his film, *The Wedding*. As part of a special project of the National Women's Political Caucus, Carol Burnett and Valerie Harper pushed for the ERA during talk shows. Fund-raising dinners in New York City were sponsored by well-known theater, film and television figures.

In 1978, ERAmerica worked hard to get pro-ERA supporters to the polls in Florida and Virginia to elect candidates pledged to ratification. The limitations of such election efforts were shown over and over. The ERA was killed in the South Carolina Senate when five legislators withdrew their support after they had assured their constituents that they would vote for the ERA. Ratification was blocked in the Illinois Assembly by a series of switched votes and abstentions — including one pro-ERA legislator who abstained because he said he was tired of voting so often on the ERA! In Nevada and North Carolina, the ERA vote was lost when legislators who made election campaign promises to vote "yes" cast "no" votes at the last minute. ERA campaigners were hit hard when ratification lost by six votes in the Illinois legislature in June 1978 — the second time in a year — in spite of \$150,000 spent lobbying legislators, efforts to defeat anti-ERA candidates and a personal appeal to the state's attorney general from President Carter.

ERA supported by majority of Americans

With the deadline less than one year away and ratification completely stalled, ERA supporters mobilized to win an extension. It appeared that given another seven years (until March 22, 1986) all obstacles would be overcome since the ERA continued to be supported by the majority of Americans. In the week before the Florida legislature rejected ratification by two votes, 65 per cent of those polled in the state wanted the ERA to be part of

the Constitution. In Virginia, where 59 per cent wanted the ERA, the resolution was killed in a committee before the full house could vote on it. In Arizona, 54 per cent of the people supported the ERA.

To pressure Congress to extend the deadline, a march and rally were held in Washington DC on July 9, 1978. It was the largest women's rights demonstration in US history. The movement won a limited victory in October when Congress voted to extend 39 months, until June 30, 1982.

This new lease of life spurred the renewed lobbying efforts. In March 1979, a strategy-planning meeting was held by representatives of 200 pro-ERA groups. Individuals and groups which



July 1978: 100,000 marched in Washington

had been silent up to this time began to speak out in favor of the ERA. But the drive to win three more states was hit by one blow after another. Ratification was blocked or defeated again and again. Responding to conservative pressures and positioning itself for the 1980 Reagan presidential campaign, the Republican platform committee canceled the party's forty-year support for an ERA.

With only one year of the extension left, NOW organized "ERA countdown rallies" in about 180 cities on May 30, 1981. In August, NOW's Countdown Campaign raised over \$1 million in walkathons around the US. In October, NOW carried out its first-ever multi-million dollar media blitz to raise funds to fight for the ERA. NOW President Eleanor Smeal announced that women

were taking time off from jobs and college classes to work for the ERA "missionary project" — a campaign in states which had not yet ratified. NOW activists concentrated on Illinois, Oklahoma, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia and Missouri while other groups, such as the National Women's Political Caucus, focused on Virginia and Georgia.

As 1982 opened, ratification efforts were defeated in Oklahoma, Illinois, Georgia and Virginia. During the hundred days left before the June 30 deadline, ERA forces stepped up their activities in a final push. Large advertisements appeared in major newspapers, door-to-door canvassing took place in targeted states, millions of letters were

ratification. The 35 states which had ratified contained a majority of the American population. In terms of legislators' votes, the losing margin was so tiny that a change in ten votes in three key states would have resulted in an ERA victory.

After the ten-year fight ended in defeat, ERA supporters offered various assessments of why they had failed: the country had swung to the right, the economic downturn in the 1970s engendered fear of change, the ERA movement hadn't organized itself early and strongly enough, but had been too complacent about the irresistible power of the women's movement, legislators had been antagonized by "overly-militant" activities, the ERA movement was weakened by differences over strategy and tactics while its opponents were strengthened by the combined power of conservative forces (major church groups, political groups like the John Birch Society, anti-feminist organizations like the Eagle Forum founded by Phyllis Schlafly).

Wheeling and dealing in the electoral arena

NOW President Smeal charged, "History will record that President Reagan and the Republican right were the people most responsible for blocking the equal right amendment." Smeal, still focused on wheeling and dealing within the electoral/legislative arena, wrote in her January letter to NOW members: "I believe the time is ripe for a new ERA. We have a clear signal to take action. The results of the 1986 elections present a rare opportunity. The US Senate is now back in the hands of a pro-ERA majority. The House of Representatives has a stronger pro-ERA majority than ever."

However, Smeal's attention on the US Congress is misplaced. It shows that she has learned little from the defeat of the last campaign for the ERA — in which NOW and others poured millions of dollars into lobbying and electoral efforts. Mass mobilizations to express popular sentiment were rare and exceptional events, secondary and subordinate to the lobbying effort. There is, today, a "clear signal to take action" again on the ERA, but it comes from another source and indicates a different approach.

Over the past few years the anti-intervention and anti-apartheid movements in this country have displayed an impressive growth and vigor, which can encourage and stimulate other struggles. Student activism is on the rise — a sign of fresh resources to be tapped. The women's rights movement has continued to defend past gains and to win new victories in spite of right-

wing violence and an economic downturn. The enthusiasm for mass actions to defend abortion rights was proven by last year's demonstrations of over 125,000 in Washington DC and Los Angeles. Women recently won important victories in comparable worth and affirmative action cases — rulings that show that advances can be made. There is a favorable climate for a renewed fight for the ERA.

Obviously the battles to come must include tactics to win legally required votes in Congress and state legislatures. But as the 1972-82 experiences prove, lobbying efforts are not the primary nor the most effective means "to include women in the Constitution." The key to success is a strategy which mobilizes the pro-ERA majority for independent mass actions. Such actions educate and win over hesitant elements in the population — including legislators who must retain the support of their constituents or find another line of work.

Pressures exerted 200 years ago resulted in the addition of the first amendments. Persistent mass mobilizations can win the new Equal Rights Amendment. ☆



for equal rights (DR)

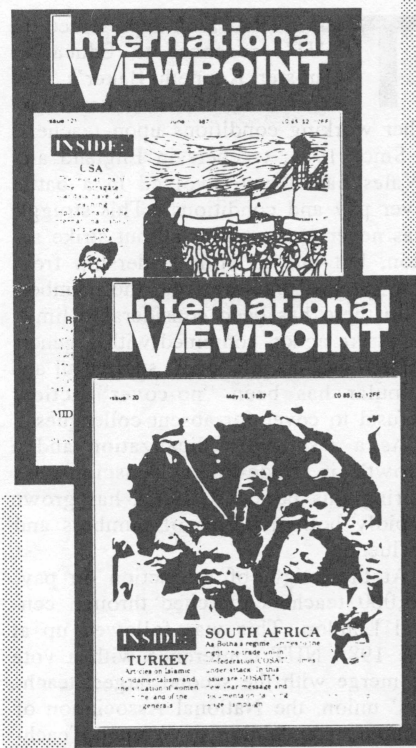
sent to legislators, television commercials in targeted states featured Alan Alda, Betty Ford and Representative Claude Pepper. NOW organized mass rallies on June 6 in the capitols of four target states. About 10,000 rallied in Tallahassee, Florida; 7,000 in Springfield, Illinois; 11,000 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and over 5,000 in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The final nails in the coffin were hammered in when the ERA was defeated again in Florida and Illinois. Not one state had been won over during the 39-month extension although a national poll, taken just before the deadline, showed that there was 73 per cent support for the ERA. Over 450 national organizations, representing 50 million Americans, endorsed the ERA; most of these groups had actively worked for

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Teachers face an uphill struggle

THE CONFERENCE of the National Union of Teachers (NUT — the largest teaching union in England and Wales) has stepped back from the challenge thrown to it by the Tory government. Instead, the Broad Left leadership (which includes Communist Party and right-wing Labour supporters) have embarked on a course of compliance with Tory plans and hostility to the left of the union, in particular the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA).¹

RAY SIROTKIN

THIS STRATEGY represented the NUT's response to Education Minister Kenneth Baker's new legislation, imposing new, harsher working conditions upon teachers.

Since 1985, teachers in England and Wales have been involved in a battle over pay and conditions.² This struggle has never amounted to all-out strike action, but due to both leadership from the left and pressure from the membership there has been considerable limited strike action combined with a generalized work-to-rule. Most successful and popular has been "no-cover" action: refusal to cover for absent colleagues.

As a result of radicalization and a growth in trade-union consciousness during this period the STA has grown rapidly both in terms of numbers and influence.

At the height of the action on pay, 35,000 teachers marched through central London. This was followed up at the 1986 NUT conference with a vote to merge with the second largest teachers' union, the National Association of Schoomasters/Union of Women Teach-

ers. Its realization will establish a qualitatively more powerful union in education.

However, since May 1986, the Broad Left-dominated executive have engineered things so that the course of the action has turned to an avenue of disaster. This started by calling off the planned strike action and weakening the no-cover action in return for an interim pay award. However, this betrayal was opposed vigorously throughout the country and much of the no-cover action was maintained.

The real suicidal plunge had begun. Yet the worst was to come. Pay and working conditions had always been negotiated separately. In August, during the school holidays, a major step towards a trade-off of these two aspects of negotiation was realized at a meeting between the union negotiators and representatives of mainly Labour-Party led local authorities.

Education becomes a major political issue

Even then, this sell-out was so widely ridiculed that the executive had to renegotiate a new formula, this time definitely linking pay and conditions — known as the ACAS settlement.³

Throughout this period, the Tories had been on the defensive. A crisis had developed with school students frequently being sent home through strike or no-cover action. Education had become a major political issue, with widespread support for the teachers coming from other trade unions and the community at large.

The ACAS deal, however, opened up an opportunity for the Tories to regain ground lost during the dispute. Baker introduced an Education Bill incorporating all the clauses from the ACAS deal with only one significant addition, namely that teachers would have their negotiating facilities abolished. It was quite clear that this course was opened up by the NUT leadership.

At a special conference of the NUT which followed, the only surprising thing was the scale of the opposition to this deal. A card vote produced 45 per cent of delegates voting against ACAS. This was followed in a ballot with 42 per cent opposed, despite the executive charging their opponents of being "traitors". This opposition was primarily from the Inner London Teachers' Association (Inner London NUT) and the STA.

In the confusion Baker was able to force through his legislation while teachers waited for an effective response from their leaders. It wasn't to come. The centrepiece of this union's "assault" on Baker was a petition aimed at that most democratic of bod-

ies, the House of Lords!

The membership saw things differently. They wanted immediate action. So ILTA called for a one day strike. The bureaucracy went berserk, and suspended the entire ILTA council from union membership — allegedly for breaking the rules of the union. Despite this, on January 13, on one of the coldest days this century, about 3,000 NUT members marched through London with the majority of ILTA members on strike.

At a subsequent union hearing all ILTA members were re-instated. The political victory, vindicating ILTA's action, was achieved when the national executive called for strike action against Baker.

This was the background to the 1987 conference. It had the most unbelievable prelude. The national officers of the union appealed against the lenient sentences meted out on ILTA members. As a result three were expelled and five suspended — all STA members.

The bureaucracy needed the ILTA leadership out of the way for the coming conference. Their bankrupt low-level strategy was exposed. They had banked on persuading the electorate to accept that all would be well in education if Neil Kinnock was prime minister. As Labour are unable to overturn the Tories, the bureaucracy have entered into a crisis in which only the left is giving any answers in the form of proposals for action. The bureaucracy have only been able to answer this by witch-hunting the left.

The bureaucracy will not feel comforted by the fact that the left emerged intact and with wider support than before. Teachers are still taking action, often unofficially. The demand for the reinstatement of ILTA officers is well supported, as is the demand for effective action against Baker.

At the NUT conference, Giles Radice — Labour's spokesperson on education — called at a fringe meeting for a moratorium on action in the run up to the general election. The Labour Party leaders as a whole have failed to take up the fight for education in a positive way, leaving this cause to be championed solely by left wingers such as Member of Parliament Dennis Skinner. Had they done so, the Tories would have been unable to return to centre-stage on education, and Labour's own popularity would have increased rather than declined. ☆

1. The STA is the leading class-struggle left force inside the NUT, including both independents and supporters of *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook*. STA supporters are also now active in the second largest teaching union, the NAS/UWT.

2. Education in Scotland is organized and legislated for independently under the authority of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

3. ACAS — Arbitration and Conciliation Service, set up to arbitrate industrial disputes by the 1974-79 Labour Government.

Unions compromise over shorter workweek

THE FIGHT for a shorter workweek launched by the major West German union IG Metall in 1984 attracted wide international attention. In particular, it was the main example of an offensive struggle by a decisive union against the effects of the world economic crisis.

There was a head-on confrontation between the bosses, backed by the government, and the union for a prolonged period of rolling strikes. The bosses responded with the massive lockouts, in particular "cold" lockouts — locking out workers in plants and regions not on strike in order to increase the union's expenses. This tactic was backed up by the rightist Christian Democratic government through denial of unemployment benefits to locked-out workers.

When the IG Metall contract came up for renewal in April of this year, a major new test was expected. The first mobilizations carried out by the union seemed promising. And then suddenly a settlement was reached. This article takes a look at the results of the second round in IG Metall's fight for a shorter workweek.

MANUEL KELLNER

MILITANT trade-unionists and revolutionary socialists were preparing for a sharp and decisive confrontation with the bosses. The IG Metall leaders had talked about the possibility of a "radicalized struggle" and an alliance with the social movements to force the bosses to retreat and to counter their weapon of the "cold" lockout.

That weapon had become more dangerous because of the new legislation (Article 116) passed by the Conservative Liberal majority in parliament, which meant that the Labour Office would no longer reimburse lost wages, even for those locked out outside the strike-affected regions.

From the beginning of February until the second half of April, hundreds of thousands of workers were mobilized by IG Metall in warning strikes. This was not exactly what it seemed. In part, these actions were not really militant measures because the participants could often "make up" their "lost time." But even so, IG Metall demonstrated its capacity for mobilization.

Bosses shift their strategy

The demand for a shorter workweek after 1984 became so popular that the bosses changed their strategy. In 1984, reduction of working time was taboo — not a minute less than 40 hours! And the Kohl government attacked that section of the trade-union movement demanding a 35-hour week head on as irresponsible, ridiculous and dangerous.

In 1987, it was a different story. The line was "a shorter workweek is OK, but don't go overboard." Above all, the bosses claimed, the rigid rules of the past had to be thrown out. Worktime had to be organized in a flexible way, in accordance with the needs of the plants.

On this question, IG Metall's reaction was ambivalent. The union's congress had adopted a fairly clear position against "flexibility," but the leadership did not wage an intransigent public campaign on this question.

On the contrary, Steinkühler, the

president of IG Metall, and other leaders publicly talked about the need for more flexibility. They touted alternative "models" to those of the bosses, which, they claimed, took more into account the needs of wage earners.

In the evening of April 21, all of a sudden, there was a screeching turn. There was no longer any question of a radical struggle, no question of a hard fight. A compromise with the bosses was right around the corner, within reach. It was virtually decided. What had happened?

In the regional negotiations, it had been impossible to come to an agreement. Then, a "summit meeting" was set up between Franz Steinkühler and Werner Stumpfe, president of the metal industry employers' association. And these two reached an agreement, which they "recommended" to their respective regional negotiating bodies, and set May 6 as the deadline for adopting it.

What were the points of this recommendation, which was adopted unchanged by all the regional bodies, leaving those bodies the task of settling the important question of whether or not Saturday would be a workday? They included the following:

- No reduction in 1987.
- From April 1988 to April 1989, a workweek of 37.5 hours instead of 38.5 hours.
- From April 1989 to April 1990, a workweek of 37 hours.
- Apprentices, who were excluded from the reduction of the working time granted in 1984, were to get a workweek of 38.5 hours after April 1988.
- New negotiations and the possibility of a new agreement on worktime in April 1990. After that date, worktime would be the same for apprentices as for other wage earners.
- Starting in April 1988, regular individual worktime could vary between 37 and 39.5 hours. (This principle was adopted in the 1984 contract, which provided for a variation between 37 and 40 hours.) Moreover, in individual cases, workweeks of more than 38.5 hours would be accepted up until 1990, if the companies reported these cases by the end of May. By and large, they did so.
- Extra time over the regular worktime set by contract would have to be compensated for by hours or days off over a period of six months. (In the 1984 contract, the time for adjustment was two months). But such free time could not amount to more than five consecutive days off.
- Regular worktime for workers necessary to keep the machines running would be 50 hours a week.
- Raises of 3.7% in 1987, 2% in 1988 and 2.5% in 1989. This is after deductions of 2.7% and 1.4% respectively for the reduction in worktime of one hour per week in 1988 and half an

hour in 1989.

The question of Saturday working was to be settled in regional negotiations. (The subsequent results differed so much from region to region that it is impossible to give the details.) In general, the door was opened for a whole section of metalworkers regularly working at least part of Saturday, while up until then Saturday work was almost always considered overtime.

The general tendency of the agreements on Saturday work was to assign responsibility to the Plant Councils. And everyone knows the sort of pressure these bodies are under when the bosses confront them with the company's "needs" — competition, the threat of layoffs and so on. It will be the same regarding overtime. Everyone is against it in principle, but unless they are very conscious, very militant and strongly supported by a big majority of the ranks, they will accept it.

In a good number of West European countries, and perhaps even in countries further away, a lot of union militants were probably impressed by the terms of the contract. To achieve such a result without struggles, without sacrifices, might seem enviable. A lot of workers have had to fight to get less in the way of wage increases and reductions in worktime.

Contract no help in fighting unemployment

The West German bosses were every happy about the way things went. Also the same Kohl government that attacked IG Metall as "irresponsible" in 1984, which waged a head-on struggle against the demand for the 35-hour week, hailed the outcome this time, finding nothing but praise for the 1987 contract.

So, by class instinct already revolutionary socialists in Europe probably have doubts. What was plotted by a social democrat trade-union bureaucracy and praised by the great majority of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois politicians could not be good for the working class.

In fact, revolutionary socialists in West Germany, including in particular the United Socialist Party [VSP, to which the members of the Fourth International belong] have a very critical analysis of this contract. At the same time they do not deny that on this occasion — unlike 1984 — the bosses in their longer-term interests really did make a concession without a prior struggle. There was a compromise, and it was possible to win something without a real struggle.

There are many reasons for criticising the agreement. The demand for the 35-hour week was supposed to be at least a

partial response by the unions to the problem of mass unemployment, a demand unifying workers in work and the unemployed.

IG Metall put forward the slogan, "shortening the workweek is fighting unemployment." Already, the 1984 agreement partially gave the lie to this slogan. IG Metall claimed that this agreement created 10,000 jobs (while, according to the dubious official figures themselves, the jobless number more than 2 million). This is very hard to prove because, in present conditions, who can verify why someone was hired or not laid off?

In any case, the claim that the union has at least a partial answer to unemployment no longer has any basis of credibility. In stages, the workweek will be reduced to 37 hours in 1989, and even then the possible effect on hiring will be largely wiped out by the effects of the rules for flexible working hours, which in practice will be graver than the letter of the contract.

Only a massive and immediate reduction in working hours and a reversal of the move toward flexibility of working hours accepted since 1984 would have a real and measurable effect on the labor market. And even then it would be necessary to introduce hiring proportional to the working hours lost, plus workers' control, or at least elements of it, over hiring and firing.

This question is a very serious one for the West German trade-union movement, for its capacity to fight back, for its power of attraction for social forces and, for its potential to unify aspirations, including those of the layers hardest hit by unemployment. There is no longer any trade-union answer or perspective for fighting the key evil of the capitalist crisis — massive unemployment.

It is absolutely wrong to think that criticism of the elements of flexible working hours is only sectarian hairsplitting. Once again, the first victims obviously are the more disadvantaged youth and women, and workers in the hardest-hit regions. But factors of division that can undermine the working class have now been introduced even in the traditional "bastions."

The creation of different categories region by region, factory by factory — and even within enterprises — with increasingly varying work schedules, has been going on for years right under our eyes. Now it has now been clearly been endorsed and strengthened by this contract.

In the medium-term, this will considerably undermine the strength and potential of the working class to fight back, since such capacity is largely bound up with the collective nature of the workers' position in society and on the job.

What is more, flexibility is totally counterproductive in terms of jobs, because its purpose is precisely to avoid as much as possible any "loss" of time from the standpoint of production and of surplus value for the bosses.

Wage differentiations increased

Recent years have been marked by a loss of real wages for workers. The contract is far from compensating for these losses. It may serve to maintain the present standard of living for those in work, above all for the better paid, since the increases are calculated in percentages rather than absolute sums. So, once again social differentiation among wage earners has been increased.

Since wages are now fixed for the coming three years, the bosses are happy to have a stable base for their calculations, and have no fear of more "radical" wage demands for the period of the contract. This was a handsome gift from Steinkühler and company! But there is more.

Everyone is talking about an approaching recession, foreseen already for the fall of 1987. Only After the January 1987 election, as might be expected, bourgeois economists acknowledged that it was coming. In these conditions, who can predict the behavior of consumer prices? Certainly not Steinkühler.

But even if prices remained stable, the Kohl-Bengemann government has a lot of anti-social projects designed to lower the living standards of the masses. And through fixing the new contracts for three years the IG Metall leadership has wiped out any possibility of a trade-union fightback by raising demands for compensatory increases! What a blank check for the bosses and their direct political representatives!

This contract also has to be compared with the demands agreed by the last congress of IG Metall. These decisions have obviously been pushed aside and without any struggle, without creating the relationship of forces necessary to achieve them. That goes for the 35-hour week, which has now been buried; for opposition to flexible hours; and the demand for an intransigent defence of free Saturdays.

Furthermore, there is no factory where the workers would let representatives of theirs deal behind closed doors with the bosses without any checkup on what they were doing by their comrades, by the ranks. But Steinkühler met alone with the chief of the metal industry bosses "at a summit." And no one did, or could, challenge the result, as long as there is no majority in IG Metall for another president.



Steinkühler himself, who comes from the Nord Württemberg-Nord Baden leadership of IG Metall, traditionally the most advanced section of the union.

It is quite clear that, without sowing illusions, all serious militant unionists have had, and still do have, a duty to give the maximum support to the more "left" sections of

the apparatus, in order to make the battle for a shorter workweek a real fight, for example. They cannot stay "neutral" between a Steinkühler and a Rappe.

However, the practical experience of of spring of 1987 has thrown a bit more light on the character of the differences in question, and has changed slightly the tactical position of the militant elements in the unions.

Militant trade unionists face attacks

It is very clear that the Steinkühler leadership did everything possible to avoid a fight. It did everything possible to come to new terms of agreement with the bosses. This leadership deliberately paid the price of deepening divisions, of abandoning the weaker strata. It restricted itself to waving the threat of a "radical" struggle and a link-up of its forces with those of the social movements (the peace, women's and ecology movements, youth and so on).

What was previously clear only to Marxists is now glaring. This leadership represents only a variant of the class-collaborationist conception — a more intelligent, more flexible variant — but still a variant. Its existence makes the grouping of trade-union activists who hold a totally opposite conception, a class-struggle conception, no less necessary.

Today, such activists have less possibility for using arguments and decisions coming from the leadership as levers. The perspective of the leadership for the coming years is days of action that do no harm to the bosses, demonstrations and deals. Any serious struggle, primarily today in steel, can only be launched from below, against the official policy of the leadership.

It is in the interest of such activists, moreover, to unite quickly and to link up with all demonstrations of discontent and of a will to resist among the ranks. Since the IG Metall leadership today has no need for militant activists, who are always the most loyal and active when it comes to struggles, its anxiety to isolate them, to marginalize them and, on occasion, to get rid of them, is growing. ☆

IG Metall's weight in the trade-union movement as a whole is immense. It has 2.5 million members out of the 8 million in the German Confederation of Unions (DGB), which includes virtually all the unions in the country. It plays a correspondingly large role in determining the general relationship of forces among the classes.

After the IG Metall settlement, the small printers' union no longer had any chance to win a solution to its problems. For structural reasons, it had to present more advanced demands than IG Metall, for example in demanding a seven-hour day. In fact, it got a little less than IG Metall, and its perspectives for surviving over the long term were greatly reduced.

The union of bank, insurance and store workers, the HBV, for the first time had mobilized a large number of bank workers in warning strikes in a fight against bosses who have been pushing hard on flexible working hours. It was hardly encouraged, to say the least, by the contract in the metal industry. It just managed to avoid a catastrophe.

And what about the active and conscious unionists in the public workers' union, who had been counting heavily on their union finally taking up the fight for a 35-hour week at the end of the year? That has been put in question now.

Furthermore, the steelworkers, also separated from the rest of the metalworkers, will only renegotiate their contract at the end of the year. They have been hard hit by the crisis, by closures and by massive layoffs. Until now, IG Metall has only organized symbolic fightbacks. It is characteristic of the IG Metall leadership that it did nothing to link the anger and radicalization in the regions hit by the steel crisis to the fight for the 35-hour week in the spring of 1987.

"Bosses and government can now breathe easy"

As for the effect of IG Metall's attitude on unions such as IG Chemie — which have always refused to participate in the fight for the 35-hour week — there is no need to state the obvious.

The bosses and the government can breathe easy: if only the IG Metall leadership maintains its control over its rank and file, and for the moment nothing indicates that it will not, there will be no struggles for three years. Three years that will further undermine the potential social power of the work-

ing class. Three years that will deepen the traditional divisions and create new ones. Three years for the capitalists' government to push its multifarious reactionary projects without having to fear the most considerable power that stands in the way of its long-term objectives — the potential power of the great working-class bastions.

The seemingly prudent and intelligent IG Metall leadership is playing with fire. It is not sure that it can maintain the fighting capacity of such an organization for three years without permitting at least limited experiences of struggle.

Once again the West German working class can fall victim to its legalism and its habit of obedience to the traditional leaderships. The present leadership risks finding that in 1990 no one will take it seriously, either among the ranks of the workers or in the bourgeoisie, if it starts waving the threat again of a "radical" struggle! The reactionary Article 116 was not combated effectively, either by immediate protests or by a consistent and united struggle. The weapon of the "cold" lockout is not going to be left in storage by the bosses, and other weapons against the workers' movement will be forged in parliament, without the unions being able to oppose this effectively.

In West Germany, for some years we have become used — and correctly so — to talking about two wings of the union apparatus. There was the "Gang of Five," the unions that relied totally on social partnership, on social peace at any price and on open class collaboration even at the political level (they prefer a "great coalition" of the social democrats and Christian Democrats to collaboration between the social democrats and the Greens). This included IG Chemie and the right-wing social democratic deputy Hermann Rappe, as the symbolic figure.

On the other hand, there were the union leaderships that pretended to have a more militant orientation, that talked about the need for organizing resistance to the plans and policy of the bosses and their government which are designed to "solve" the crisis at the expense of the workers. This wing was symbolized by IG Metall and IG DruPa (the printers' union), and still more by

THE SOUTH African Communist Party was founded on July 30, 1921. It came out of the fusion of several organizations. The largest of them was the International Socialist League (ISL), established in 1915 as a left opposition to the social democracy.

At its birth, the Communist Party was an organization of whites. It was among white trade-unionists and intellectuals that the political transformations in the European workers' movement managed to find a reflection. The African community, because of its status and its history, was by and large divorced from these debates.

However, the party carried with it the paternalism of the old European social democracy on this colonial question. At times, even, the apparent inertness of the Blacks led it to adopt a patronizing attitude toward the "natives."

Speaking to the Communist International meeting in 1919, David Ivon Jones, leader of the ISL, tried to analyze the political backwardness of the South African Blacks:

"The native is captivated by a piece of machinery, and will seek out its inmost pulsations and tend it as a god." Or: "On every possible pretext they will work in unison, raising and lowering the pick, with rhythmic flourishes thrown in, to the time of their Zulu chants. Ever and anon the time or the times changes in an endless variety from the ancestral repertoire in perfect harmony and rhythm — an impromptu chorus of the wild, charming even the dullest. No gaffer can speed up such a gang. And when the same gang tries to sing a simple Christian hymn it makes a most discordant mess of it. Such is arrested development!"¹

The party line was then focused around two apparently complementary objectives — to spread class conscious-

Three phases in the Communist Party's history

RECENT POLITICAL developments in South Africa have underlined the need to study the Communist Party, but its underground existence has made this difficult until now. The CP's integration into the African National Congress added to the problem, and helped to veil the party's identity.

A lot of people in South Africa have neglected this question, because the CP seemed so weak. For a long time it was identified as a party of whites and consequently treated as marginal. Observers only recognised the urgency of this study when the CP proclaimed its existence more openly.

For about three years, the CP's influence has been growing. First, in the ANC's apparatus, then in the various social movements. Its impact is still modest, but given the weakness of other political currents, it is worth taking account of. It still claims to be the sole "proletarian vanguard party." When the ANC elected CP general secretary Joe Slovo to its national leadership — making him its first white leader — this was hardly calculated to be discreet.

The ANC press has not been sparing in its references to the Communist Party. The US government also attaches a great deal of importance to the CP — demonstrated by its attempts to split the ANC's "nationalist" and communist wings.

The following article lays out the key turning points in the history of the party.

PETER BLUMER

ness to the Black masses, seen as historically backward; and to overcome the present divide by forging working-class unity around a socialist perspective.

The manifesto adopted at the founding congress of the CP gave no place to the national question as such: "For the immediate future, indeed, the main duty of the party and of every member of it is to establish the widest and closest possible contact with workers of all ranks and races and to propagate the Communist gospel among them."

The leadership then did not see any contradiction between a very pessimis-

tic analysis of the class consciousness of the Blacks and its project of winning them over as quickly as possible to the perspective of a proletarian revolution. The party did not offer any bridges. It was at best ignorant of the national question, and proposed only socialist missionary work by white activists among Black workers.

This attitude was to lead it to take opportunist positions, such as its support for the 1924 coalition between the Labour Party and the National Party in the name of casting a useful vote against the ruling right, when it could be foreseen that this coalition would do nothing to alter the discrimination against the Blacks.

The turn was to come from the leadership of the Communist International. At the time, it was involved in a debate on the "Negro" question in general, in particular in the United States. The debate over South Africa was to a large extent inspired by an analogy with the American case.

In 1917, Lenin compared American Blacks with the former serfs in Russia.

Later, he came to the conclusion that they constituted a nation. The American John Reed did not share this point of view, because he thought that a substantial part of these people considered themselves first as Americans and felt at home in the United States.

This debate was to continue for several years. Should American Blacks be analyzed from the standpoint of their situation in the agricultural South, or rather from the standpoint of their

1. "Communism in South Africa," David Ivon Jones. Speech given to the Executive of the Communist International on behalf of the ISL of South Africa.

growing integration into the industrial North? What was the real dynamic of their insertion into the American social formation? It was, moreover, a rather strange time when world Black congresses were held in Moscow and the International Bureau for Negro Affairs was headquartered in Berlin!

So the leadership of the International approached South Africa on the basis of this analogy. And it found that the South African CP was following a paternalist line that would never enable it to gain a base among the Blacks.

At the meeting of the League Against Imperialism in Brussels in 1927, a motion was adopted, with the agreement of the South African delegation, calling for "the right of self-determination through the complete downfall of capitalist and imperialist rule."

Later on, one of the South African CP delegates, La Guma, went to Moscow. In the Soviet capital he discussed with the authorities of the International a document calling for the creation of an "independent native republic, as a stage toward a workers' and peasants' government." The bridge now being offered — at least on paper — was the perspective for the "natives" of forming an independent nation.

While the debate was still raging in the American CP, the document brought back by La Guma had major reverberations in the South African party and led to breaks, since some people thought that national independence should not be put ahead of the class struggle. In many cases, moreover, an apparent intransigence on class positions concealed a totally condescending attitude on the part of white activists toward the Black workers.

Comintern leads debate on national question

In October 1928, the political secretariat of the Comintern denounced in a resolution "the demoralization of the white workers through the theory of the superiority of the white race....The Communist Party must become the leader of a national agrarian revolutionary movement of the native masses."

The "independent republic" turn was designed above all to capture the attention of the Black masses. It was a democratic slogan aimed at mobilizing the Blacks, starting from their present level of consciousness. In this way, the Communist International hoped that the party would soon be able to win a predominant influence.

The party was in fact to change somewhat, including a greater number of Black members. But the real leadership was to remain for a long time in the hands of the whites.²

The International strove, therefore, to

bring its South African party forward and to transform it through the debate on the national question, without this always being to the liking of the members.³ Over and above the debate on orientation, the international leadership generally tightened its reins over the party.

But in this period, the leadership was becoming more and more ossified by bureaucratization and dictatorial centralization. As in many other cases, Moscow's intervention did not stop at an honest "Bolshevization." Little by little it subordinated the communist parties to the sole interests of the Stalinist leadership.

The South African CP did not escape this sad fate. While some parties, such as the Chinese one, were able thanks to their strong national base to attenuate the damaging effects of Moscow domination, the South African Communist Party did not have such advantages. Its "Stalinization" was correspondingly more rapid and thorough going.

The South African CP was therefore to follow the turns in Soviet policy. The official history of the party, in fact, does not hide it: "After the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in July-August 1935, had endorsed Georgi Dimitrov's call for a broad united front to halt the drive to fascism and war, the Communist Party of South Africa acknowledged its own sectarian errors of the past and sought to ally itself with other anti-fascist and anti-racist elements amongst both blacks and whites."⁴

All of a sudden, the "independent republic" was put on the shelf. The task was to establish an anti-imperialist front, and for that it was necessary to "draw the widest native masses into the national liberation movement against the growing imperialist exploitation and oppression — for the independence of this country."⁵

So, the CP made a major turn toward a "democratic" faction of the white bourgeoisie. But the "popular front" that it set up remained under its domination. No doubt the elementary democratic demands on behalf of the Blacks that were put forward in this front were not very attractive to "white anti-fascists."

During the Second World War, the CP again made a turn in its definition of the world conflict and the local alliances it called for. In 1981, the party wrote: "The whole character of the war was altered by the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union."

Once again, the party's policy became detached from national reality, being inspired by Soviet needs and European debates. Of course, the two white communities, the Afrikaners and the English speakers, divided essential-

ly between the Axis and the Allied powers. But this was basically a division within the ruling class and the white aristocracy of labor.

What place should have been given to these tactical debates when, in any case, they were of very little interest to the overwhelming majority of Black working people? South Africa was a prison for Black people regardless of whether it had a "democratic" government favorable to the Allies, or a "fascist" one favorable to the Nazis.

CP's dependence on Moscow

The CP's dependence on Moscow, moreover, was not simply bureaucratic. Given the composition of its leadership, the CP had not yet freed itself from its original Eurocentrism. Stalinist pressure penetrated more easily because the policy of the International was reduced to defence of the Soviet state and "building socialism in one country."

In characteristic style, the CP issued a communique on June 3, 1943, expressing satisfaction at the bureaucratic dissolution of the Comintern by Stalin: "The decision of the Governing Council of the Communist International to recommend its dissolution is in the first place inspired by a desire to bring about the maximum degree of unity between the United Nations in the struggle against Hitler and his allies."

It was necessary to wait for the post-war period, the 1946 Black miners' strike, the coming to power in 1948 of the National Party and the hardening of segregation, for the party to start to produce more sophisticated documents than in the past.

The slogan of an "independent republic" was designed as a sort of bridge for mobilizing Blacks. But fundamentally the Comintern thought that this right should really be offered to Blacks. The background to this position was Lenin's writings on the right to form a nation state. But South African society was more complex than that, and most importantly of all it was undergoing major social and economic changes.

2. At the beginning of 1928, the CP had 1,800 members. At the 1929 congress, it is supposed to have had 20 Black delegates and 10 white delegates to represent 3,000 members. (E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, 1948).

3. On this see, Jack and Ray Simons, *Class and Colour*, IDAF, 1983, p. 405. On the Black debate in the Communist International, see E H Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia*, chapter 89. Leon Trotsky took up this idea of a "Black Republic" again in 1935 in his critical letter to one of the two South African Trotskyist organizations, proposing it in the same terms as the Communist International did in 1927.

4. *South African Communists Speak*, Inkululeko Publications, London, 1981, p. 125.

5. *The Liberation Movement and the Tasks of the Party*, September 1936 Congress.

Paradoxically, when the Blacks did not seem even to have the strength to demand a "separate nation," when major tribal prejudices persisted among them, they were very quickly going to want to demand a totally democratized and de-racialized South Africa. This advance in consciousness was related to the uneven but dialectical development of the South African economy.

"Colonialism of a special type"

In January 1950, the Central Committee of the CP wrote: "The attitude adopted by the working class movement towards national movements in Eastern Europe during the last century is not necessarily the correct one to be adopted now, when socialism has become an established fact in a large part of the world...The distinguishing feature of South Africa is that it combines the characteristics of both an imperialist state and a colony within a simple, indivisible, geographical, political and economical entity."

This idea was to be taken up again in 1962 in the party's new program, "The Road of South African Freedom." It was on this occasion that the CP explained in detail its conception of two superimposed societies — an exploiter white imperialist nation, which oppressed another Black, colonized nation within a single territorial space. It was a concept of "internal colonialism." But this analysis was a mechanical one.

The Communist Party did not say a word about the dominant social relationships. But that question was, nonetheless, decisive — not only for discussing the expected revolutionary dynamic, but also to predict the major social changes within the so-called colonized nation.

This theory led in fact to a frozen view of South African society, since it was thought that the social changes underway could only be secondary with respect to the major contradiction between the two nations. It was not a question, however, of a hierarchy among the problems but of the dialectical relations between the national question and social classes within the Black majority.

The CP's analysis was curiously focused on external factors, as some third worldist analyses can be for the neo-colonial countries, even though it recognized that everything was happening in a single territory with a single state, one unified market and with an autonomous ruling class.

Even if you accepted this idea of "two nations," it would have to be added that they are not juxtaposed but that they are in a dialectical inter-relationship, and that both are evolving in accor-

dance with the needs of South African capitalism. In a nutshell, you would have to start by saying that capitalist social relations prevailed in this country, combining with racial divisions.

If the CP has put so much effort into defending this theory, this is because, as it said in 1962, it looked toward building a democratic state "on non-capitalist lines," according to the new terminology adopted in 1960 at the international meeting of 81 communist parties in Moscow. The South African CP's 1962 program, moreover, explicitly mentions this meeting as the basis of its own elaboration.

While South African society was moving toward prodigious economic development and an enormous growth of the Black working class, the CP's new position led it to think that "there are no acute or antagonistic class divisions at present among the African people." This was in flagrant contradiction to what the Communist International recognized thirty years before in proposing to break the Black workers away from the influence of the chiefs and the Black notables and petty bourgeois.

Thus, in the early 1960s the CP limited itself to tacking on the Soviet stages analyses of the Ghanaian or Guinean societies, which were supposed to be without real class conflict, and to have been set on a "non-capitalist road" by the Nkrumah and Sekou Toure regimes. According to the terms of the 1962 document, the democratic program to put forward is not one for socialism, and its perspective is not one of a socialist state.

Since 1955, for the Communist Party, the democratic program to be put forward has been represented by the Freedom Charter. If the CP thus separates its democratic program for immediate mobilization and the perspective of a social overthrow of apartheid, it is because it remains attached to the Stalinist analysis of historical development.

In the CP's view, the existence of an "internal colonialism" would call for the establishment of a "democratic" state. Since the party leadership knew very well how the social content of any state has to be defined, it more or less relied on the Soviet definition. The future South African state would therefore be equated to a state on the "non-capitalist road," a definition that was all the rage at the time in the third world among the groups and parties following Moscow's line.⁶

PROGRAM AND strategy form the main foundations of any political organization. In the case of the South African Communist Party, its program and strategy have been fundamentally determined by

its international reference points and its Stalinist affiliation. But the definition of a real party operating in a concrete situation cannot be reduced to these elements alone.

Despite its turns, the CP has been marked by certain forms of continuity. And it is these in the present phase of revolutionary developments that have enabled it to make gains where other forces have been bogged down.

The first element of continuity is the CP's relations with its great Soviet home base, which has offered the political and logistical aid necessary for the totally clandestine existence the party has led since 1961. This link, which involves a strong dependence, could have very unfortunate consequences when Moscow decides to include South Africa in its bargaining with Washington.

The second element of continuity seems to have been the work put into building up the organization, especially after the early 1960s.

Finally, the third element of continuity — and certainly the most important — has been the integration and maintenance of CP members in the main national movements, not just as observers but as disciplined members of a centralized party.

Communists enter the ANC

The communists officially entered the leadership of the ANC in 1927. La Guma, the party's delegate to Moscow, was himself secretary of the Cape branch of the ANC. At the same time, the party was very much involved in a movement that had both a trade-union and political character, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). In 1926, the communists were expelled from it, and a few years later the ICU disappeared.

The Communist International's document adopted by its Executive Committee after the Sixth World Congress stipulates: "The party should pay particular attention to the embryonic national organizations among the natives, such as the African National Congress. The party, while retaining its full independence should participate in these organizations, should seek to broaden and extend their activity. Our aim should be to transform the African National Congress into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organization."

In its 1928 program, the CP took up this theme again: "The work of the party in its turn has come to centre more

6. Among these "non-capitalist" states were Nasser's Egypt, Sukarno's Indonesia, Sekou Toure's Guinea, Nkrumah's Ghana, and Nyerere's Tanzania.

than ever on native agitation, education and organization, political and industrial extension of the party's influence wherever possible in native bodies like the African National Congress or ICU."

The delegation to Moscow in 1927 included the ANC leader Gumede, who was apparently not a member of the party. On his return, he declared himself a "convinced and enthusiastic supporter of the communists."⁷ A strong conservative wing remained in the ANC always ready to appeal to the British to force the Afrikaners' hand. But from that time on the CP has had an influence in the Congress and good relations with a section of its members.

The CP's role was important enough for it to be able to write in 1981: "Party members also played a key role in the revival of the African National Congress towards the end of the 1930s."⁸

From that time, the ANC was fully included among the forces that the CP wanted to bring together in a broad front. At the end of the 1930s, the CP was well rooted in north Transvaal. In that region, Alpheus Maliba, one of the ANC leaders, was a Communist Party member. The Indian Yusuf Dadoo, who presided over the Non-European United Front during the war, before becoming leader of the South African Indian Congress, was also a member of the CP.

In 1944, the party adopted a program. It was a new turn. The perspective of a socialist republic reappeared. The democratic part of the program strongly resembled the Freedom Charter that was to come into being 11 years later. It was, therefore, possible to combine a democratic revolution and a socialist one!

The party did not restrict itself to entering national movements. It put forward its own policy. The entry into the ANC leadership in 1947 of the young people from the Youth League (Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo) created new conditions for a radicalization of the Congress. But the CP did not stop there. Its Central Committee wrote: "Mr. Mda, President of the Congress Youth League, states that 'we are inflexibly opposed to national oppression and to foreign white domination' ... But the people are not told what kind of 'freedom' they are to struggle for, or what is to be the content of the 'true democracy and just social order.'"⁹ In the 1980s, the CP would virulently attack such statements when they were made by others.

In the same Central Committee document, it was clearly set down that the national organizations such as the ANC should be transformed so that they would lead the national liberation struggle in a revolutionary way. The



Yusuf Dadoo (left) and Nelson Mandela in 1951 (DR)

Communist Party was to remain the guiding party, the party of the communist vanguard.

In 1950, the party was banned. It was apparently ill-prepared for this, since it was to write in its 1962 program: "Despite its great achievements and struggles, the Communist Party of South Africa proved incapable of surviving under illegal conditions. Legalistic illusions had penetrated into the ranks of the Party, including its leading personnel. The party was unprepared and unable to work underground."

Nonetheless, most of the party members in the bodies of the national movements remained in their places. The ruling National Party now threatened all the organizations, and stepped up its repression. Yusuf Dadoo began calling in 1952 for a vast national convention around the ANC to oppose apartheid.

A Congress of Democrats appeared, bringing together some groups of white democrats, which was supposed to represent this sector within the convention. In reality, the Congress of Democrats was also a means of public activity for the white members of the Communist Party. Then came the drawing up of the Freedom Charter and the People's Congress, a huge mass meeting in June 1955, which symbolically adopted this program.

Defeat and reconstruction

The banning of the ANC in 1961 and the flight to exile of a part of its leadership changed the whole situation. The CP, and behind it the Soviet Union, pushed for a complete recasting of the national movement's political strategy. This was the period of the end of the Algerian war, when the na-

tionalist organizations in the Portuguese colonies opted for rural armed struggle. In South Africa itself important uprisings occurred in the reserves.

Everything seemed to indicate that this turning point was decisive. In December 1961, an armed movement, Umkhonto we Sizwe, was officially created. In reality, it was the result of an accord between the CP and the ANC. It was an independent body with a joint leadership. The CP found in it a decisive element for a pact of solidarity and collaboration with the ANC.

In the mid-1960s, it seems, pressed by the growth of its rival, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), the ANC reaffirmed its character as a "Black" and "African" movement. But after the Morogoro Congress in 1969, the ANC slowly transformed itself, taking on the appearance of a broad movement welcoming activists of all races. The main problem obviously was the whites. But it was difficult to demonstrate such breadth.

Nothing was easy for the ANC in that period. The armed struggle failed. The movement was greatly weakened inside the country, and in exile disorder reigned. What is more, the Black consciousness movement was growing as a rival among the African youth.

The reconversion did, however, take place, essentially in the apparatus and the foreign delegations, no doubt with the active participation of the CP. Coloureds, Indians and whites, formally members of allied organizations of the ANC in 1955 at the time of the People's Congress, little by little found places under the ANC flag and under the clearly established leadership of its Af-

7. E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, p. 219.

8. *South African Communists Speak*, p. 125 and pp. 131-132.

9. *Nationalism and Class Struggle*, January 1950.

rican members.

The principle of unity among organizations representing separate "national communities" became blurred, at least in practice. The CP then more openly integrated itself in the ANC. But this did not fail to pose some problems.

In 1976, when a small group of oppositionists was expelled from the ANC, the CP restated its position: "We pioneered the concept that the main content of the present phase of the South African revolution is the liberation of the African people. For this reason, we have always recognized that the leading role in the liberation front is played by the national organization of the African majority, the ANC."

Further on, with regard to those expelled, the CP said: "On the surface, their main complaint is against the Morogoro decision to integrate non-African revolutionaries into the ANC's External Mission."

However, in their way, the oppositionists pointed up the contradiction there was in presenting the ANC as a great, fundamentally African democratic force, and at the same time accepting in communists, including whites. The real problem was not racial, as many of these oppositionists believed, but strategic. The integration in a nationalist movement of a party claiming to represent the proletariat and communism posed some problems for dogmatic supporters of the national democratic revolution. What purpose could the communists and their party serve, if the revolution was to unite all the oppressed classes on a basis of equality?

The CP itself had to find a justification that took some liberties with its rigid gradualism: "In our view, therefore, it is impossible to separate nationalism from class struggle; and the depth and closeness of this connection will have a vital bearing on the future of the South African revolution."¹⁰ In other words, the members of the "communist vanguard" party represented in the ANC the hidden (class struggle) face of the democratic revolution.

In the years between 1930 and 1950, there were important debates on the question of unity. Was it necessary to unite the non-whites among themselves by striving little by little to blur the racial barriers that apartheid had introduced among Indians, Coloureds and Africans? Or was it necessary to aim at a broader alliance with

democratic sectors, and in so doing to maintain the organizational independence of each "community"?

The Trotskyist-influenced left upheld the first view, seeing the second as the surest road to class collaboration. In this debate with the CP, the ANC was a decisive stake, as well as the organization of the Coloureds.

The crisis of the left, its incapacity to build itself as a national, united stable force, limited its ambitions. Although they very often upheld a more coherent and "class" conception of the national question, the currents to the left of the CP were incapable organizationally and tactically of profiting from this programmatic advantage.¹¹

The Communist Party, even though following the latest ideas from Moscow, has undoubtedly proved more pragmatic, at least at certain moments, than the currents to its left.

Today, facing a very extensive radicalization of the mass movement, the

CP can hardly remain hidden in the ANC. The country's social formation is no longer the one that it described in its 1962 program, seeking to justify a democratic stage. The Black workers' movement exists, and is clearly combining a struggle for democracy with a fight against the bosses. The theory of a "colonialism of a special type" cannot stand up to the facts.

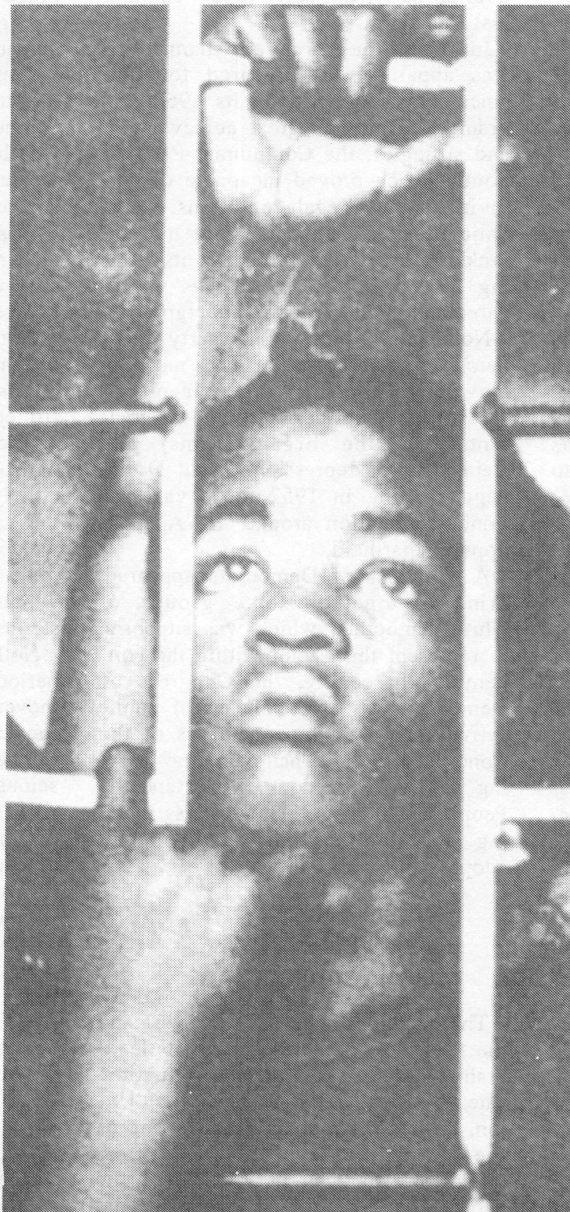
It is now unquestionable that the CP has gained an important place in the ANC. A comparative reading of the ANC organ, *Sechaba* and the CP's, *The African Communist*, gives a clear picture of that. The concerns and lines are similar, and sometimes even the signatures are the same. This, of course, does not rule out crossfire debates between the two magazines, although it is impossible to know whether they represent real differences between the ANC and the CP.¹²

But in the final analysis, how can we characterize the CP's role in the ANC?

Is it entryism? Is it the CP that leads the ANC? Or does it just seem to do so, being tolerated because it is useful?

None of these answers is valid. Joe Slovo, the present leader of the CP and a member of the ANC executive, offered an answer when he denounced "the comic strip image of stereotyped communists who infiltrate a mass organization." According to him, there is a "special relationship" between the CP and the ANC. Reading his statements, you almost get the impression that he wants to refer us back to the character of South African society — a special kind of colonialism is matched by special kind of revolution and a special kind of relationship between the ANC and the CP!¹³

STARTING IN 1980-81, little by little independent radical trade-unions established itself within the country, given impetus by the growth of big industry over the preceding ten years. Among these, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) emerged as the dominant force. It was a very well organized



10. "On the Activities of the 'Gang of 8,'" *The African Communist*, second quarter of 1976.

11. Maurice Hommel, *Capricorn Blues*, Paul Roubais Editions, Toronto, 1981. Also Neville Alexander, "Aspects of Non-Collaboration in the Western Cape, 1943-1963", a speech given to the Centre of African Studies, Cape Town, *Social Dynamics*, 1986.

12. See article by Peter Blumer on the "dual power" debate in *International Viewpoint* 109, November 24, 1986.

13. Interview with Joe Slovo, *Die Zeit*, April 10, 1987.

non-racial federation based on industrial unions.

It was FOSATU that forced a debate on trade-union unity. It most clearly expressed the refusal to divide its ranks by joining the United Democratic Front, which was formed in 1982, as the latter proposed. It was also from FOSATU that opinions emerged about the need for building a new political movement of the working class.

The fight for the trade unions

FOSATU is therefore a special symbol in the history of the South African workers' movement. It is in itself the mark of an indigenous development, from which the exile movements were more or less isolated.

The union leaderships have concentrated their efforts on rooting themselves in the enterprises. They have wanted to consolidate the trade-union instrument not only where that is possible, but also where it is most urgent. The perspective of building roots in the communities, in the townships, was put off until their base was consolidated in the factories.

From that time on, a spectacular political battle was waged for nothing less than hegemony over the mass movement. The ANC had a very weak trade-union base. There was undoubtedly a modest communist tradition in the unions in the Cape region, but this is insufficient.

The orientation adopted by the ANC and the CP was to back the principle of general unions, such as SAAWU, for which organizing on an industry-wide level was by definition very secondary, while the important thing was integration in the communities. Influenced by Chartism (that is, the current that looks to the Freedom Charter), the general unions were all to join the UDF.

During this period, it was the CP and its exile paper that assumed the task of attacking the "leftists" in FOSATU, who were on occasion accused of being rightists because they presumed to believe in legal trade unions. Nothing was left to chance. There was an attack of this sort in every issue of *The African Communist*.

Paradoxically, during these years the policy of the ANC and the CP was to be rather leftist. A desire to put forward SAAWU in an exaggerated way as the Chartist union par excellence was to put it at the center of the repression. Moreover, the option for general unions proved usually to be wrong. The virulent attacks against FOSATU's tactical attitude toward the question of quickly registering legally proved to be inopportune.

At the same time, through the UDF,

the ANC broadened its following in the communities. It was so successful in this regard that it can be said that in 1985 there were two juxtaposed authorities — the independent trade-union current in the big enterprises and the ANC in the townships. Since the political movements to the left of the ANC proved incapable of serving as a bridge between the union movement and the struggle in the communities, these were the only two players in the game.

In November 1985, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched. In conformity with the options established in the negotiations, its leadership included leaders from all the unions. It still had to unite all its forces in each industry and to set up regional leaderships through local congresses. None of this would be easy.

However, the conflict ceased. The ANC and CP quite intelligently made a turn and clearly decided to take a different tack toward their former adversaries. Not a single new attack, even an implicit one, has been published to this day in the press of either movement. The only attacks that are still being made are directed against the Black consciousness movement, which in any case was in the past amalgamated with all the other "ultra-leftists" and "splitters."

This turn was obviously made necessary by the coexistence of all the currents in a single union, even though there were still some major conflicts in COSATU in 1986 in the region of Port Elisabeth, East London and in the Transvaal.

There was, however, another reason for this change. The ANC is aware of the great strength that it has in the communities, some of which is also present in the base of the unions. The UDF operation has been successful in imposing virtual dominance of the ANC in the townships. At the same time, it has managed to win international authority, having been the only organization to have spent 25 years building up foreign representations. It knows that at this stage there is no way anyone can go around it, not even that section of trade-unionists who might have long-term views about a recomposition of the workers' movement. It knows that the union itself limits the political pretensions of those who would like to work through it to assert another legitimacy.

In the united front that is gradually being consolidated — it is no doubt more than simple peaceful coexistence — the ANC is playing the role of the political movement, while the others have to be satisfied with the mass structures. The others can always talk about working-class hegemony. They remain trade-unionists.

We saw then the setting up of a COSATU-UDF axis. Next, after the formation of a front of UDF youth organizations, the South African Youth Congress, we have seen a very clear axis between the unions and the youth movement.¹⁴

This does not resolve everything for the Communist Party. Preaching at those who in the past raised the perspective of a "workers' party" on the Brazilian model could not answer the underlying problem. The real social movement has very quickly washed over the barriers of dogma. The factory strikes led by liberal "democrats" are promoting the development of an overall anti-capitalist consciousness. From this has arisen a series of new demands not provided for in the Freedom Charter, for which the CP itself would have a hard time finding a precedent in any of its writings.

Thanks to the gains made by the trade-union movement in 1980-1985, in a confused way the idea of the need for a revolutionary workers' leadership is making progress among the broad vanguard, in the working class and the youth. This does not necessarily mean a leadership in opposition to the ANC, but rather "alongside it."

The old schemas were no longer enough. It was no longer possible simply to present the relationship between the ANC and the CP as reflecting two sharply distinct kinds of revolution. The CP was therefore going to try to make up for lost time and project itself more systematically.

CP gives itself a higher profile

Outside the country, first of all, the Communist Party did this by having its main leader, Joe Slovo, speak out more extensively. Moreover, now he is appearing at the side of Oliver Tambo at big public events. Inside the country, an attentive observer can recognize in a university article or a UDF pamphlet the influence of the Communist Party and its concerns of the moment.

This change in attitude has a two-sided effect. On the one hand, it reveals that the base of the CP, while not spectacular, is still more substantial than people imagined. On the other, it is pushing some small radical sectors, especially in the UDF youth, to identify today as much with the CP as with the ANC.

Many CP articles show that it re-

14. At the end of 1986, some sectors of COSATU protested about the way the common campaign with the UDF had been carried out. See, in particular, the journal of the CCAWUSA (the shop workers' union), November 1986.

mains vigilant in defence of its own interests, while the ANC is the target of ambitious maneuvers by an imperialist faction and South African liberals. Under the pressure of the present radicalization, the party has also to mention socialism a lot more than it has done in the last fifteen years. After all, do not its legitimacy and the explanation of its existence require mentioning the demands of the working class? This is another example of the pragmatism I referred to earlier, a pragmatism that goes hand in hand with a virulent sectarianism and distinct bureaucratism in its apparatus outside the country.

Where does the Communist Party stand now? How much of the change is tactical adjustment and how much genuine evolution? Very few people outside the party could answer this question today.

Joe Slovo gave a long interview to the British Communist magazine *Marxism Today*. He was asked, "What is the role of the party, given that many other liberation movements have been successful without the need for a separate party?" Slovo replied: "The answer is one sentence, because there is a need in South Africa to work for the ultimate achievement of a socialist South Africa....The ANC cannot, and should not, tie itself to the aspirations of that single class [the working class] that we communists represent ... But apart from this there is still the socialist perspective, which although not on the immediate agenda of the struggle, cannot be filed away until the so-called first stage has been reached. As far as we are concerned as communists, there is no Chinese wall between the first stage, so called, and the second stage, so called. The revolution is going to be a continuous process."

Lifting the veil on party policy

Has Slovo become a Trotskyist? Here he is repeating what his journal denounced a few months before. Despite the insistence of *Marxism Today's* reporter, he refused to identify its project with the Mozambique or Zimbabwe models. But he certainly gave no clear definition of the post-apartheid state, which led him to mix up two questions of very different economic and political natures:

"This implies that I don't believe we can envisage the possibility of a sudden socialization of all the means of production, and the abolishing of private enterprise at all levels. I believe there will be a mixed economy in the post-liberation period, in which in particular the black middle class and small black bourgeoisie will come into their own."¹⁵

More recently still, Joe Slovo lifted the veil a bit further on his party's policy. With regard to the relationship between the party and the mass movement, he said, "I would not like to discuss about other communist parties in Africa, especially not about what they have done within the unions and other mass organizations. We have stayed out of that. That explains the unique confidence we enjoy in the ANC. Many comrades are disturbed by the way we operate. But if we operated any other way that would disturb us."

Without a doubt, Joe Slovo wants to keep in step with Gorbachev too: "Stalin and Mao set socialism back 75 years."¹⁶ He also wants to be a democrat to an altogether unreasonable degree: "I am convinced that if we achieve a democratic society in South Africa, the question of an advance to socialism will be settled in debate rather than in the streets."¹⁷

It is a great pity that journalists never refer to the party's official documents when talking to him. The answers they might give would perhaps clarify a bit more the line of his organization. How could one fail indeed to see the contradiction between articles advocating preparation for armed insurrection in a supposedly "dual power" situation and Joe Slovo's statement, "I am convinced that change in South Africa will come through negotiations."¹⁸ He argued, moreover, that the key to getting such negotiations lay in international pressures and economic sanctions.

Are there two strategies, or different languages for different people?

The CP has never ceased to present itself as the workers' party par excellence. Any attempt to go around it was, in the best Stalinist tradition, denounced as splitting the working class and ultra-leftism. But it cannot by itself solve two major problems today. The first is how to give the mass movement a revolutionary socialist leadership embracing the various sectors of the vanguard that have emerged in the last ten years. The second is the problem of self-defence and mass violence in order to solve the question of power.

In both cases, the CP's answers have not been very convincing. On the question of the party, it has until now taken a rigid attitude — the party has already been formed, the CP is it. All that has to be done is to join it and accept its view of the world, its history and its international ties.¹⁹

Such a conception is possible as long as South African political life remains locked up in the state of emergency and clandestinity. "The fittest will survive." But this Darwinian conception cannot convince all of those who wonder about the Stalinist history

of this organization, about the way it functions, about the sectarianism it displayed only recently.

The CP has not arisen from the latest developments, even though now it is trying to come out of the shadows. It carries with it 70 years of history in a country where there is a still a democratic, anti-Stalinist current of socialist thought.

Strategic question remains unanswered

The strategic question remains. To negotiate or not to negotiate? Of course, the ANC-CP bloc is not a grouplet of a few dozen members. Negotiations can have a value in some circumstances in order to reorganize the mass movement, divide the ruling class and prepare the way for a new stage of struggles. But there cannot be the slightest illusion about a democratic non-racial state coming into being through negotiations.

Mass struggles and force will remain decisive. The armed propaganda of the ANC is more of a snare than it is an answer to these questions. Useful for building the ANC, it no longer really serves to weaken the state.²⁰

But this question will become a timely one when the balance sheet of the years 1986-87 has to be drawn and it is necessary to look to the future. New voices will be raised to say that it is impossible to overthrow this system by mass mobilization, and therefore a strategy is needed that is definitely focused around imperialist pressure on Pretoria.

What will remain then of the perspective of a non-racial South Africa? And of the perspective of socialism? These questions will come sooner or later to the heart of the political movement because they will arise from the immense difficulties that this revolution will encounter.

For the Communist Party, as for all the other currents fighting apartheid, the decisive tests are to come. Nonetheless, the Communist Party has become a link in the problem. To ignore it would be to shortchange history. ☆

15. *Marxism Today*, December 1986.

16. *Die Zeit*, April 10, 1987.

17. *The Observer*, March 2, 1987.

18. *Die Zeit*, April 10, 1987.

19. The CP in turn supported the Soviet interventions in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. With respect to Africa, it has defended until now the Soviet orientation of supporting the parties in power in the Congo and in Ethiopia. It has also defended the so-called peaceful co-existence policy.

20. Joe Slovo announced in April 1987 that he was leaving the leadership of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed organization, because he was overloaded with work as a result of his election to the post of general secretary of the CP in 1985.

4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

FRANCE

LCR conference discusses presidential elections

THE MAJOR discussion at the May 28-31 congress of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International, dealt with the crisis of the French Communist Party and the opposition current (the *Rénovateurs*) growing within it.

The French workers' movement is undergoing decisive changes, and a recomposition is beginning to take shape. The LCR congress adopted the following motion by 70% of the delegates, covering the conditions and bases on which the LCR could support a candidate from the Communist opposition in the 1988 presidential elections. [The resolution has been slightly shortened for space reasons.]

1. In the run up to the presidential elections, the LCR congress considers that a candidate is needed to wage a campaign on the following program:

- Support for the demands, for building the struggles and for unity to defend social security, jobs and wages; opposition to the proposed changes in the Citizenship Law; support for equality and democratic rights for immigrants, women and youth; support for the public schools; for independence for Kanaky; for peace and disarmament.

- Commitment to keeping a candidate of the right from being elected, promoting a dynamic of unity, and calling on all left candidates to pledge clearly, from the start of the campaign, that they will withdraw in favor of the one in the best position after the first round. For a new majority of workers' parties and a government based on it.

- Opposition to a repeat of the 1981-86 experience [the period of the Union of the Left government]. Support for a real change and not just administering austerity. No coalition with the bourgeoisie, its politicians or its parties. Dissolution of the National Assembly. For workers' demands to be met in full, and for a working-class solution to the crisis. A policy of breaking with capitalism and opening the perspective of socialism.

To this end, the LCR is taking all the necessary steps (gathering the names of 500 mayors on a nominating peti-

tion and launching a fund drive) to put up a candidate immediately.

2. The congress considers that a very broad accord is possible including the essential points of the above program for a unitary candidate to wage this campaign. This concerns forces such as Lutte Ouvrière, the United Socialist Party (PSU) and the Movement for a Proletarian Party (MPPT). But a new possibility is that the crisis of the Communist Party will lead to the presentation of a presidential candidate from the Communist opposition (the Coordination Nationale des Communistes *Rénovateurs*).

The congress considers that, in the present situation, such a candidacy would be the most desirable one. From now on, the LCR will work towards this possibility.... In the opinion of the LCR such a candidacy should put forward:

- An intransigent defence of the interests of working people against capitalist attacks.

- An emphasis on the urgency of defeating the right and blocking the extreme right, and a pledge to withdraw for the best-placed left candidate.

- Support for all forms of united mobilization and self-organization of struggles.

- Opposition to all forms of cohabitation or collaboration with the right.

- A critical balance sheet of the Union of the Left and an affirmation of the need for a socialist solution to the crisis.

In the event of such a candidacy, the LCR will seek the best forms of organization at the base and at the top to bring together most effectively all those currents and activists who agree with such a move, and to assure that such a campaign will be the expression of a collective will embodied in a common platform. Such a campaign would also be a practical test of the possibilities for the emergence of a new revolutionary political force. ★

PHILIPPINES

Greetings to Bisig congress

BISIG — Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa — is a grouping of socialists occupying a distinct place in the Philippine revolution-

ary left (see IV 110, 8 December, 1986). The following solidarity message was sent to its recent congress from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International:

Dear comrades of BISIG, on the occasion of your national congress of June 7, 1987, we send you our most fraternal greetings.

The evolution of the situation in the Philippines merits being attentively followed by everyone all over world who supports liberation movements and fights for socialism. Your country is rich with a tradition of popular struggles going back many years. After 14 years of hard resistance against the power of martial law, the fall of the Marcos regime in February 1986 represented a great victory against dictatorship.

However, we know how these precious democratic conquests gained by mass action remain fragile. The revenging right and sectors of the army have not stopped to threaten the menace of a coup d'etat. Bloody repression continues to periodically hit peasants' demonstrations and pickets of workers on strike in factories and in the export-processing zones. Trade-union freedom and the rights of popular organizations have not been fully recognized. The most urgent economic and social measures in favor of the urban and rural poor have yet to be implemented, beginning with genuine land reform.

In these conditions, you, together with other revolutionary and progressive forces, continue to carry on a long and difficult struggle which demands the affirmation of international solidarity in an active way. This solidarity is all the more necessary as imperialist powers intervene directly in the political and economic life of your country. The use of the debt as a means of pressure, and the US bases, represent serious attacks on popular and national sovereignty. The United States supports an army that has not been seriously purged. In concert with the Aquino government, it has committed considerable resources to implement new conceptions of counter-insurgency, nourished by the experience of "low-intensity conflicts".

Much more than being a key economic zone, the Philippine archipelago represents a major geo-strategic stake in the eyes of the imperialist powers. For progressive forces and the international workers' movement, it should become just as important in terms of solidarity. It is this unitary and militant solidarity toward the struggle of the peoples of the Philippines that the Fourth International appeals for. It is this solidarity, without conditions, and respectful of the proper identity of your organization, that we wish to express in this message. ★

Britain's political murder

THE MASSACRE of eight IRA men and the ruthless murder of a passerby on May 8 in the village of Loughgall by the British elite killer unit, the SAS, illustrated the terms of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The victims were local people. Their deaths were mourned by their neighbors. Most of them had lived like other ordinary people in the area until they were cut down by a special force trained and equipped by a great imperialist power for scientific murder anywhere in the world where it considers that it has interests at stake.

GERRY FOLEY

WHAT FULLTIME IRA fighters were involved could only have survived if they were sheltered and fed by families in the area who did so at great risk to themselves. The sister of one of those killed, Pdraig McKearney, said that her brother would have wanted her to thank all the people in Tyrone and the border counties who "took him into their homes and their hearts" while he was on active service. Pdraig McKearney was an escapee from Long Kesh. He chose to remain in Northern Ireland and remain active in the fight against the British forces.

Pdraig McKearney's death also illustrated the continuity of the fight against the British forces in Ireland and the sacrifice that has maintained it. One of his brothers, Tommy McKearney, is serving a life sentence in Long Kesh concentration camp. He came to the point of serious illness or death in the first H-Block hunger strike, the one that was called off when the prisoners thought that the British authorities

would grant their demands. Another was killed in an IRA operation 13 years ago. His sister is a fugitive.

At the age of 17 Pdraig McKearney was jailed for blowing up a British government building in his home town of Moy that his grandfather had blown up almost 100 years ago. During the second H-Block hunger strike, I met and talked to the elder McKearneys. They are quiet people of great dignity.

In the biographies of the Loughgall martyrs, the fact stands out that these people were highly regarded by their neighbors. In the funeral of Paddy Kelly in Dungannon, the priest described him as "an upright man, a truthful man, a man who loved his family, his Irish culture and his country." Jim Lynagh, one of the eight who lived across the border in the formally independent part of Ireland, had been elected to the Monaghan Urban District Council in 1979. Before that he had been badly injured in a bomb blast in 1973 and then served five years in Long Kesh.

RUC surrounded funeral

The republican paper, *An Phoblacht*, noted that Lynagh's name was "repeatedly raised by RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] detectives interrogating people....They offered massive bribes to set Jim Lynagh up and vowed that they would kill him before next Christmas."

The republican paper described the devotion of the large crowd at the private funeral of Eugene O'Kelly:

"The silent crowds ignored the heavy force of RUC men which proceeded the cortege. Heavily-armed RUC men also surrounded the grounds of the hill-top chapel. The building was packed to overflowing for Requiem Mass and outside, mourners waited. Only a British army helicopter fractured the stillness of this remote spot.

"The cool air and sunshine repeatedly gave way to torrential downpours and biting hail, but the people stood motionless, with angry dignity seeking what shelter they could from each other and from the tall, swaying trees enclosing the graveyard."

Two of those killed at Loughgall were neighbors of Martin Hurson, one of the H-Block prisoners who died on hunger strike in 1981. One, Seamus Donnelly, was only 19. He had been a victim of police violence since the age of 15. *An Phoblacht* said

"Seamus was arrested and frequently singled out for beatings by the crown forces. But his carefree nature and ability to bounce back in the face of pressure was an important characteristic which often sustained him in the next few years as an active service volunteer."

Speaking at the funeral of 24-year old Tony Gormley, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams stressed: "In Loughgall on Friday night, strangers came. These strangers weren't the Volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann [the IRA]. Tony Gormley, a young man from this parish...wasn't involved in terrorism, wasn't seeking a military career, wasn't seeking any gain or advantage over his fellow citizens in this country."

The eight IRA men were killed during an attempted raid on the RUC station at Loughgall. The British forces apparently had information about the operation. An SAS unit was lying in wait when the IRA unit began its attack. It had the site surrounded, and opened fire when the IRA unit began its move. The withering barrage also killed a motorist passing by. According to the republicans, the IRA unit had no chance to shoot back, and the wounded men were executed where they lay. For a number of years, the British forces have appeared to follow a policy of executing out of hand people caught involved in IRA operations, even unarmed people carrying out logistical tasks.

Since the British forces do not face a professional army in Northern Ireland, these shootings amount to a political policy of terror against the nationalist youth. They are the crowning touch of a massive deployment of repressive forces and continual harassment and provocation of young people in the nationalist areas.

Unfortunately, since the end of the H-Block hunger strike mobilizations, the political terror of the repressive forces has not been answered sufficiently with a political campaign of exposing it and organizing an outcry against it in Ireland and internationally. The Loughgall massacre points up dramatically and tragically the need for a massive international political campaign against the repression in Northern Ireland. ☆

