

# International VIEWPOINT

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## Occupied territories:

# The uprising continues

**WORLD PUBLIC OPINION continues to be outraged by the brutality of the Israeli repressive forces in the occupied territories, in particular by the shooting of many Palestinian demonstrators. Under this pressure, the Zionist authorities have tried to maneuver, claiming that they were trying to find non-lethal means of maintaining "law and order."**

**Mahmud Hawari, a representative of the Revolutionary Communist League, the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state and occupied territories, explained the facts of the repression and the development of the Palestinian uprising in the following telephone interview on January 27, conducted by Gerry Foley.**

**WHAT DOES the Israeli authorities' alleged shift from lethal to non-lethal force to control the Palestinian demonstrations amount to?**

This policy is dictated by Yitzhak Rabin, the minister of defence, to counter all the demonstrations, strikes, the popular uprising, by beating up people instead of shooting them. So far, after a week of implementing this policy, Rabin is far from curbing the uprising, from curbing the demonstrations in the occupied territories. I think that this is a foolish policy, because if the Palestinian young people who are demonstrating are not deterred by bullets, they are not going to be deterred by beatings.

In the media, Rabin has been talking about a relative calm in the last week. But in the West Bank and Gaza, it is far from being calm so far. Though the Israeli authorities are trying to break demonstrations and put an end to the shopkeepers' strike by force, the strike is still going on. We have less demonstrations, but we are very far from a calm situation.

**Has there actually been a noticeable decrease in the use of lethal force? Does it seem that the Israeli soldiers are less quick to use firearms?**

I don't think that there is less use of armed force. I would say the opposite. I don't think that the Israeli soldiers have stopped shooting using live ammunition. What they do now, in addition to using live ammunition, is they use beatings. They did not get orders to stop shooting.

We hear every now and then that in addition to the beatings in many villages, refu-

gee camps and towns that people are still being hit by live ammunition, rubber bullets, and so on, and hospitalized. So, I think the policy of beating was mainly introduced as a means of revenge, not only against demonstrators, but also against peaceful passers-by who happen to be Palestinian. But it is also meant to get the frustration out of the soldiers, because they have been building up a lot of frustration within themselves during the last few weeks of the uprising.

**What do these beatings amount to? Are they deliberate punitive beatings, or do the soldiers just clobber people that they run up against in demonstrations?**

Both. Beatings are meted out as a punishment to those who are caught at demonstrations, but there is also random beating. They just stop people in the street and beat them up, regardless of whether they are young men or old men or women or even children.

**Do you have any idea what the total number of prisoners is?**

There is a big controversy about the number of prisoners. Israeli sources speak of about 1,500 people picked up. Palestinian and foreign sources talk about several thousand people taken in in the last six to seven weeks of the uprising.

**Are there systematic arrests going on, besides the arrests at demonstrations and those of known political activists? Are there systematic roundups in the Palestinian communities?**

They are doing both. At demonstrations, the army will not only arrest people on the street but they will break into nearby houses and take away young people who just happen to be there. This is one way. The second way is planned arrests. They have lists of people, mainly activists. They go around arresting these people according to the list, without their being involved directly in the demonstrations or in the uprising.

**Have the recent demonstrations by the Peace Now movement and Yesh Gvul changed anything? What do they represent?**

Since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, there have been a lot of divisions within the Israeli society, a lot of controversy among Israelis about the uprising. That is in public opinion in general, and particularly in the political parties. These divisions and this controversy symbolizes the polarization within the Israeli society which started quite a long time ago, especially after the Lebanese war. The Israeli national consensus has broken down to a large extent. This recent Palestinian uprising has also contributed to this polarization.

The Peace Now movement is known to be a pressure group on the side of the Labor Party. The Peace Now movement has been paralyzed in the last few years, since the formation of the National Unity Government, when the Labor Party joined with the Likud Party to form the government. The Palestinian uprising has forced the leadership of Peace Now movement to react. But they have not taken the sort of position they did after the Lebanese war, when Peace Now raised the slogan for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. The West Bank and Gaza are a different matter from Lebanon, or south Lebanon. They are much more important to the Israeli state.

After several weeks of the uprising, Peace Now finally decided to move. But the slogans that they have raised in the demonstrations that they have organized — two small ones in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and the big one a week ago in Tel Aviv, which drew several tens of thousands of people — have not been radical ones. They did not call for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the West Bank and Gaza, or even from the most heavily populated parts of these territories. The main slogans are along the lines of "We need a political solution!", and "We don't like what has been done in the occupied territories." No slogans have been raised for solidarity with the Palestinians, or demanding self-determination for the Palestinians or anything like that.

They say that Peace Now is very worried about the Jewish, Zionist character of the state of Israel, that they think that Israel should find a way by which a peaceful political solution can be introduced and that it will have to be part of a political settlement. In other words, Peace Now is advocating a solution very close to the one proposed by Labor Party, which is to nego-

tiate with King Hussein for an alternative involving territorial concessions to Jordan.

**■ In the past, the Yesh Gvul ["Enough," or "There is a Frontier"] has gone ahead of Peace Now. What has it done in the present situation?**

This movement of reserve soldiers, which arose at the beginning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in fact was kept alive all these years with very, very little activity. Just before the uprising, a discussion started within this movement about refusing to serve in the occupied territories. The question was not resolved. There were people who were saying that you should refuse to serve on the West Bank because these are occupied territories. Others did not have any opinion, while still others said it would have to be a collective refusal to serve and so on and so on.

Now, with the uprising, and especially when the Israeli army was sent to suppress the uprising, the voices calling for a refusal to serve in the occupied territories have become much stronger. During this time also, the movement attracted a lot of people, more activists, more soldiers, who did not like what was being done in the occupied territories. And so naturally the movement has widened. One of its first activities in protesting against the terror and repression on the West Bank and Gaza was a demonstration organized on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, at an army roadblock, in which they raised slogans against the oppression and called on other soldiers not to obey their orders to beat up people. This demonstration drew several hundred people.

I think that this movement will gain more influence as the results of the suppression of the uprising in the occupied territories and the brutality and the atrocities committed by Israeli soldiers there are exposed in the Israeli society.

**■ What attitude have the Communist Party and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality taken toward the uprising?**

The Democratic Front and the Communist Party, which is its largest component, were taken by surprise by the uprising. These parties and organizations, especially the Communist Party, were busy trying drum up support for their call for an "International Peace Conference for the Middle East." They neglected organizing Palestinians and Israelis against the policies of the government. So, the uprising just did not fit into their priorities.

These parties, especially the Communist Party, have of course had to support the uprising. But they are far from taking part in it and far from benefitting from it. The Communist Party in Israel finally agreed to calling a general strike for the entire Palestinian population inside Israel, inside the Green Line [which separates the occupied territories from the pre-1967 Israeli state], in the third week in December in sol-

idity with the uprising. This was as a result of the pressure upon the party from the masses, from the Palestinian masses inside Israel who felt the need to support their brothers and sisters in the West Bank and Gaza. Now the Communist Party at the state-wide level is completely passive, although local branches are trying to be active in support of the uprising.

**■ What about the Progressive List [a coalition of left Israelis, including left Zionists, such as Yuri Avnery and Matti Peled, and various Palestinian currents]?**

The Progressive list is in even worse shape. It has been going through a number of splits. Only a month or two ago, a group of activists withdrew from the Progressive List because they claimed that the leadership had not progressed very much and because there was a lack of democracy within the movement, among other things.

**■ Were they Palestinians or Israelis?**

Mainly Palestinians. They are also very disillusioned with the Israeli part of the list, because they say that in fact most of the movement is made up of Palestinians, but the leadership itself is shared and that gives too much weight to the Israelis in the party. They also said that the party was not doing very much, that it was not developing. About 30 activists withdrew collectively from the movement. And now the Progressive List sees that it is in very bad shape. There is a danger that it will not get any seats in the next parliamentary election.

**■ Was this split centered in Nazareth?'**

Yes, centered in Nazareth and in the northern part of the country, where most of its support comes from.

**■ Within the occupied territories, is there any sort of united organization developing?**

The uprising itself was spontaneous. It stemmed from the anger and frustration that has built up during 20 years of occupation. There were no specific reasons for the beginning of the uprising. I think it was just that there was a growing feeling that the occupation could not go on like this and that if Israel is not stopped now, the situation will become worse. People realized that only resistance and struggle will stop the Israelis.

So, in the first few weeks of the uprising, we could see wave after wave of demonstrations and strikes and acts of resistance, which welled up in a sporadic way, and later on activists tried to direct and organize it. So, in the last four or five weeks, we have seen that the uprising has become very well organized, especially in the Gaza Strip. Popular committees have been formed in order to organize the uprising. They are mainly based on coordination among the activists in the several Palestinian factions. In particular, in the Palestinian

camps, the popular committees were composed of representatives of all the Palestinian factions in that camp. We can't say that these committees are very well representative of the population, but activists from all factions of the Palestinian movement are involved in them.

**■ What are these factions?**

The main factions of the PLO. That includes Fateh, the PFLP, the DFLP, the Communists, the Abu Musa faction, and in some places, as in Gaza, also the Islamic fundamentalists.

**■ Was it only in Gaza that the fundamentalists have taken part in the committees?**

It has been mainly in the Gaza Strip. In other refugee camps on the West Bank there was a kind of "cease-fire" between the nationalists and fundamentalists. And all efforts were focused against the occupation forces. But we can't say that on the West Bank there was a united front with the fundamentalists. I think this was because in the Gaza Strip, the fundamentalists are much stronger, so that the nationalists were forced to accept this sort of pact with them.

**■ On the West Bank, it was the nationalists who opposed bringing the fundamentalists in?**

I don't think we can say they opposed it. It just happened that because the nationalists are the strongest, they simply ignored the fundamentalists. And the fundamentalists just went along and participated in the uprising as organizations or as individuals.

**■ Could you say that the fundamentalists were the leading force in the Gaza Strip?**

No. But the international media and particularly the Israeli media have tried portray the fundamentalists as leading the uprising. This is not true at all. What is more, I would say that the uprising in the Gaza Strip was headed not only by activists and leaders of the mainstream of the PLO such as the Fatah people, but also by the left in Gaza. That is, by the PFLP and the DFLP and even the Communists. Some of the leaders, such as Haydar Abdul Shasi, are identified with the left. He is an important figure in the Gaza Strip and in the uprising.

**■ What about still more conservative forces, such as supporters of the Jordanian regime? Are they involved in this at all?**

The popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza has actually shown that the Jordanian current and the other reactionary currents in the West Bank and Gaza have no

1. The strongest Palestinian support for the Progressive List comes from the Democratic Movement of Nazareth, a heterogeneous opposition to the Communist Party. The latter controls the city administration. Within the Israeli state, the strongest Palestinian communities are in the northern region, especially the mountainous parts.



popular support whatsoever. They did not even show up and take part in the uprising. And that is in contrast to their attempt before the uprising to gain some power and support. Through buying people off, offering money and jobs and so, there was a kind of revival of these currents, especially the pro-Jordanians and the pro-Abu Zaim, Abdullah Abdullah people. You know, the one who defected from the PLO and supports Jordan. He split from the PLO and fled to Jordan. He also was trying to get some kind of support in the occupied territories. The village leagues that were supported by Israel are non-existent now. So, all the pro-Jordanian currents were given a blow during this uprising. They have been the main losers.

#### ■ Are age and class differences showing up in the uprising?

One of the characteristics of this uprising is that it has united all sections of the Palestinian community, young and old, residents of refugee camps and residents of cities and villages, workers, university students, high-school students, merchants and so on. This uprising is distinct from past ones in that it includes all sections of the Palestinian population. It has not even been divided by class. Even petty-bourgeois and bourgeois people have been propelled into the uprising.

Previous uprisings were mostly by young people, who are called *shebab* by the Israeli leaders. Now this uprising is far from being led and organized by the *shebab*, because if you look at TV films from the Gaza Strip refugee camps, you can see among the people who are fighting against the Israeli army young people alongside older people, women, children — all are forming one body.

#### ■ What do you think are the perspectives for this uprising?

This uprising represents a qualitative shift in the balance of forces between Zionism on the one hand and the Palestinian national struggle on the other. It also represents the beginning of a new era in the anti-Zionist struggle. This uprising has also shown that after the blows that the PLO, the Palestinian national movement, were dealt during and after the Lebanese war the center of gravity of the Palestinian struggle has shifted from Lebanon, from the outside of the country, into Palestine itself, into the occupied territories themselves.

The uprising has also shown that the Palestinian masses in these territories are playing a decisive role in the Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian national movement should reorganize itself in accordance with this reality. It should base itself on the Palestinians who are living in Palestine. Therefore, the Palestinian national movement should try to formulate a new strategy in order to organize and to mobilize the Palestinian masses in Palestine. To this end, it must try to find out what forces there are in the Palestinian population and try to draw

all these forces into the struggle.

Until now, the Palestinian people here have been led to believe that their liberation would come from outside the country. In its action and strategy, the PLO have always emphasized that liberation would come from outside the country. In the beginning, it was from the Arab regimes. Later on, it was from guerrilla warfare mounted from across the borders. And then, and up to this moment it has been, from diplomatic initiatives. Recently, the slogan has been for an international peace conference.

This uprising has shown that the Palestinian masses are miles ahead of the leadership. It has shown that the leadership is backward in that it has been preoccupied with these diplomatic maneuvers. The Palestinian movement has to base its strategy on the masses of Palestine in order to change the balance of forces within the country itself. This strategy should take into consideration that the Green Line has now in fact disappeared. The oppressive policies implemented by the Israeli authorities are not limited to the occupied territories but they are moving into Israeli society

itself.

So, at the moment there is a great need for uniting the struggle of the Palestinians as well as progressive Israelis against the common enemy.

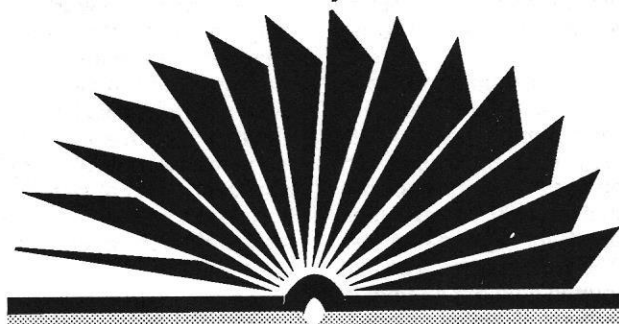
#### ■ What concrete demands are you raising in this respect?

On the front page of our paper in Hebrew, we set out such demands. They include calling for the release of all the detainees, stopping all the deportations, stopping all the oppressive measures in the occupied territories, political rights for Palestinians, the rights to organize, the right to protest, the right elect their own municipal governments, equality in taxation.

We think that this uprising has shown that such immediate demands can be raised and achieved.

We think that after 20 years of occupation, it is much more realistic, more reasonable, to start raising demands against the anti-democratic and religious sectarian system imposed through the territory, demands that people in the whole territory can mobilize behind, than to call for a Palestinian state alongside Israel. ★

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## A new chapter in the West German class struggle

SPEARHEADING attacks on jobs in the steel industry has been the Krupp company. In 1982, it announced that it would shut down steel section production in Duisburg-Rheinhausen, eliminating 4,000 jobs. For the first time in a long while, strong resistance developed. Since then, the Krupp workers have taken the lead increasingly in mobilizations in the steel industry. Between 1983 and 1987, plans for cutbacks were linked to a number of proposed mergers that failed to go through.

On May 21, 1987, Krupp announced that it would lay off 6,000 workers throughout the company before 1988, including 2,000 at Rheinhausen. On July 16, Krupp boss Cromme declared that the elimination of 30,000 steel jobs in the Rhine and Ruhr regions was "unavoidable." The workers and a part of the factory council held out against it. But under the threat of "either rationalization or total shutdown of the rolling plant," and because of the unreadiness of IG Metall [the metalworkers' union] to fight, the factory council was finally forced to sign an agreement with the management on September 10, 1987, that opened the way for job cuts.

The elimination of jobs was possible only if the workers were ready to accept the social welfare measures offered and voluntarily leave. The main points of the agreement signed on September 10 were the following: maintenance of all the Krupp steelworks (Rheinhausen, Bochum, Siegen-Gelsweid); investment to bolster these works; a social plan providing for 90% of the last net wage until early retirement at 60; no further reduction of personnel until 1991; introduction of a two to three year "leave period" for younger workers. The latter could also leave their jobs with a guarantee of 90% of their last net wage for retraining, and have a guarantee of re-employment. There was also an extensive guarantee of the existing training facilities, and on assuring and creating jobs (developing new products, and so on).

6

## Steelworkers' militant fightback against job losses

A POWERFUL struggle was launched by workers at the Krupp Rheinhausen steelworks on November 27 in opposition to management plans to close the factory. Plant shutdowns are a regional problem in West Germany's traditional center of heavy industry, the Ruhr. In most cities, the unemployment rate is over 15 per cent. The fight of the Rheinhausen workers has offered a striking example of militancy in combating the capitalist offensive.

However, the ink on this agreement was barely dry before a "slip" made the factory council aware that the Krupp management had worked out a wide-ranging cooperation agreement with Thyssen and Mannesmann (whose main production centers are also in Duisburg), which called for a total shutdown of Rheinhausen. The Mannesmann foundry in Duisburg-Huckingen was to take over all basic steel production, and Thyssen all the rolling mill work, before the middle of 1988.

### Social democrats offer "pie in the sky"

This was the last straw. Those who wanted to defend jobs had organized early in Rheinhausen — as far back as 1983, a Citizens' Committee had been formed. In the 1987 factory council elections, a left majority was elected. The present council chair still belongs to the old social-democratic majority.

The Social Democratic Party's line was not to maintain jobs but to provide "substitute jobs," preferably in high-tech industry, but also in environmental protection. That fits in with the SPD's structural policy in Nordrhein-Westfalen, which accepts that the "old industries" have to be trimmed and relies on a rise of the so-called industries of the future. The state government has adopted a "Coal, Iron and Steel Initiative for the Future" backed by 2,000 million DM, two thirds of which is to be provided by the federal government. But no obligations have been placed on private or public companies to create jobs.

The Rheinhausen workers' struggle has broad community support and has

been marked by many dramatic episodes. *Inprekorr*, the magazine of the German Fourth Internationalists, commented on the significance of these actions in its January issue.

IT HAS BEEN a long time since we have seen such things in West Germany — enraged steelworkers keeping Krupp's Rheinhausen plant under a de facto occupation; storming the Hügel Villa, the Krupp family palace for a century and the temple of capital and its politicians; occupying streets and bridges in Duisburg. In the last weeks of 1987, a powerful blast of class struggle swept away another bit of the myth of the "twilight of the working class."

For a brief moment, power was in the streets. At least the masters on top were given a clear demonstration of what West Germany could look like if workers no longer limited themselves to polite protests directed from above, but were also determined to win their demands themselves.

Since November 26, no piece of work has gone out of the factory grounds without the approval of the factory council. [These bodies, set up in the framework of "co-management" laws, are elected by the entire workforce.] The when, what and how much is produced are being decided by the personnel and not by the management. The tactic of the fight is to "stop and go" — that is, the workers stay in the factories but there are enormous shortfalls in production (amounting to as much as half of the normal monthly total), and the management is quite unable to make any plans.

In Lorraine, on the French side of the Rhine in 1984, while the bargaining for the 35-hour week was going on here, the steelworkers besieged union and party headquarters. It was the same syndrome. A region had been made into a poorhouse. The union leadership co-administered this



development, and the parties (notably, the left ones) offered only vague promises of "substitute jobs" and "investment programs."

Rheinhausen is writing a new chapter in the class struggle in West Germany. Instead of trade-union protest actions, a spontaneous movement of the entire workforce has developed.

The workers are organizing their struggle independently and in a democratic way. They are forcing their plant councils to account for its actions, especially in negotiations with the management. And decisions about action are being made in in plant assemblies.

The official union apparatus is not leading the struggle. It is more or more or less tagging along, calling big industry-wide days of struggle, such as the one held by IG Metall on December 10. But it is raising quite feeble demands and attempting to shift the buck to Bonn and Brussels.

## Workers won't be fobbed off

The actions by the workforce are radical. They are not letting themselves be fobbed off anymore with symbolic protests. They are fighting to win their demands. A quotation is going around that illustrates this spirit. "If it really blows up here, the Hafenstrasse hellions [Hamburg squatters who have defended their homes against the police] will be like teddy bears compared to us." This has really frightened the bourgeoisie.

Among the population, the workers, with their determination, have received a widespread positive response. Churches, associations, women's groups, cultural groups, shopkeepers, and even sections of the media, all support this struggle because everything depends on steel. On December 3, there was a support demonstration by 10,000 high-school students.

Moreover, the workers have not limited the range of their action to Rheinhausen. They know that the struggle in the steel industry can only be won at an all-industry level. They are trying to draw in the workforces at other steel plants. To achieve this, the resistance of social-partnership oriented plant council majorities has often to be overcome.

If the union leadership wants to keep this struggle under control, then it has to offer a real perspective for the fight and not shift the responsibility onto the politicians. If they do not do that, it is possible that we may see here what has already begun in our West European neighbors. Alternative leaderships may take form in the workplaces.

The Krupp struggle points toward that. The workers at Rheinhausen are a great hope. They have shown that there is an alternative to yielding to the dictates of capitalism and to the passivity of the union leadership. ★

# "It's clear that we have got to put on more pressure"

**THEO STEEGMANN is deputy chair of the factory council at Krupp Rheinhausen and a leading representative of the new left majority on the council. He is a steelworker who has been a factory council member for six years. The interview was conducted by Hermann Dirkes on December 30.**

## IS PRODUCTION going on again at the moment?

Yes. When the struggle began at the end of November, the workers decided on flexible tactics. At the outset, some workers favored an unlimited strike until the closure concept was eliminated. But finally they opted for these flexible tactics, because the technical arrangements in such steelworks are very complicated. The longer the mechanisms are out of action, the more difficult it is to get the furnaces going again and bring them up to the right temperature.

This tactic is called "stop and go". In this way, the management cannot calculate when the workers are going to strike and when they are going to produce. This naturally assumes that the workers are technically able to control such operations. They have shown that they can do that.

## What is the relationship between the workforce and the union?

The central point in a big plant in the steel industry is the factory council. The last factory council elections in April 1987 very markedly changed its composition, giving it a left, a more radical majority. For the first time in 26 years, we had a choice of individual candidates rather than

the traditional slates. The blue- and white-collar workers could check 29 candidates. That led to a big increase in confidence. From the outset, we said, the workers and the factory councils are waging this struggle together. The factory councils are making no decisions not first discussed and approved by the workers. This approach has further increased confidence, although the workers are understandably nervous. All important questions are being widely discussed before decisions are made. Compromises or results of negotiations are first put to the workers for a vote before the factory council endorses them. Over the whole period, the factory council has stuck to this.

## Are negotiations going on now with the management?

We have always stressed that we are ready to negotiate, as soon as the management abandons its closure plans. On December 12, we reached a temporary compromise, in which the management again pledged to respect the agreement it concluded with us on September 10. We have also managed to get negotiations over various models designed to keep the factory operating. Subsequently, it has become clear that Krupp wants to maintain its cooperation with Mannesmann and Thyssen, because that is more profitable. Naturally, that has not helped to reassure the workers. They see that the danger of elimination of the steelworks still exists.

## It seems that the determination to defend existing jobs and not rely on vague promises of substitute jobs is quite strong.

Yes. But there are two levels, and that is also true in the policy of the union. We are demanding that the factory be kept open, because we cannot let ourselves be reassured by such phrases as "We will create 8,000 substitute jobs by and by." No one today can answer the question of where these jobs are supposed to come from. From the outset, people consider all that a political maneuver or deception. And they are right, in view of all the past experience.

On the other hand, we are not fighting necessarily for maintaining a particular workplace. None of us is especially anxious to work in the furnaces — the work there is not particularly pleasant, no one likes working seven-day swing shifts. But as long as there is no guarantee of new jobs in

**Theo Steegmann (DR)**



sight, we will fight for the livelihood we have today.

Naturally, we also want to see new industries come in and new jobs with them. We have already developed programs for this. Training programs for our fellow workers that would enable them to learn other trades so as to bring about a certain structural change in the region. But all of this was wiped out by the factory closure plan.

■ **It is said that too much steel is being produced in the world, that there are enormous surplus capacities.**

That is a very interesting question, which we have also discussed. As regards, "surplus capacities," my thinking is as follows: We make a product here that we are proud of, rails for trains and also for trams. We think that there is a great social need for this product, not only in the countries of the third world, but also in neighboring East Germany.

The problem does not lie in any lack of demand, but in the lack of ability to pay. It would be much more reasonable if the federal or state governments offered these countries interest-free credit so that they could build up a rail network and a public local transport system. In this way, among other things, an outlet for our products could be assured within the framework of a sensible international division of labor.

■ **In any case, in steel the "free market" is a myth. What is your attitude to the need for nationalization?**

This demand has long been in the basic program of the DGB [the German Confederation of Unions] and in the statutes of IG Metall. Since 1983, it has been brought up to date by the shop stewards in the whole industry. Since 1985, IG Metall has had a program for steel that calls for nationalizing the whole industry, including the profitable concerns.

The struggle has to be waged, in the last analysis, with this perspective. The precondition for success is, of course, a decisive change in the political relationship of forces in West Germany as a whole.

■ **What do you plan for the near future?**

We have taken advantage of the holiday period to discuss and prepare the actions for January and February. It is quite clear that we have to put on more pressure. Our strategy is aimed at bringing the workforces of other steelworks more into the movement, especially our fellow workers in Mannesmann-Huckingen, who are already involved in the cooperation plan [see preceding article]. We want to bring in our fellow workers at Thyssen and at Krupp Steel in Bochum.

We want also to try to get IG Metall to take advantage of ongoing wage negotiations in steel to put on more pressure industry-wide. We want to put forward demands that can offer all the workforces in all the steel complexes a common perspective. ★

# Political landscape begins to change after government's defeat

**FOR THE FIRST TIME** in Western Europe, a monetarist government has fallen. In Belgium, the Martens-Gol government was forced to resign in the wake of parliamentary elections in mid-December provoked by an apparently petty linguistic border dispute between Walloons and Flemings.

The following article explains that something much more important was behind the governmental crisis than that. It describes the very complex new political stage opened by the gains of the left and deep-going erosion of the capitalist parties.

FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN

A DOUBLE paradox emerged from the December 13, 1987, parliamentary elections. The bourgeois parties of the outgoing Christian Democratic and Liberal coalition kept their majority in parliament. But they are politically unable to continue to govern without the Socialist Parties [the parties have both Walloon and Flemish sections], who were the victors in the election. On the other hand, while the bourgeois parties lost the elections, the workers' movement is far from having won as regards any immediate possibility for reversing the austerity policy.

Belgium is entering a grave political and governmental crisis in which the reformist leaders of the social-democratic and Christian workers' movement will try to come to an agreement. Within the workers' movement, the strategic debate around the question, "what is to be done about the crisis?" is more to the fore than ever.

A new political situation is gradually taking shape, against a background of persistent class polarization (the result of ten years of active working-class resistance to the crisis) and of a new international recession. Moreover, with the perspective of a single European market, the new phase of social and political life can be expected to be distinctly more turbulent, spasmodic and political in character.

To start with, let us look at the raw election figures (see Table 1). The "political families" in the government declined slightly in vote percentages.<sup>1</sup> The Social Christians (PSC/CVP) lost 1%; the Liber-

als (PRL/PVV) remained stationary. In the Chamber of Deputies, they retain a slender majority, 109 seats out of 212. Theoretically, a Liberal-Christian Democrat coalition remains possible. A political will to continue was displayed clearly throughout the election campaign.

## Bosses support Thatcher-type policies

In order to relegate the Socialist parties to opposition for another legislative term of four years, a fiscal reform was announced with a demagogic fanfare and an obvious vote-catching intent. Belgian politics was thus coming into line with Thatcherism. This orientation had the avowed support of the bosses. Before, during and after the elections they openly proclaimed their position, which is something rather unusual in Belgium.

What is more, mathematically, the outgoing coalition could possibly count on the 16 Flemish Volksunie deputies coming to their aid. This party has transformed itself from a petty-bourgeois nationalist into a respectable party by separating from its fascist wing, which has become the Vlaams Blok

1. Since the traditional parties split on a linguistic-national basis, the term "political family" is often used to describe the "old" parties. There are thus three political families: the Socialists (PS/SP); the Liberals (free enterprisers, PRL/PVV); and the Social Christians (PSC/CVP). They run single slates in their own "regions," that is in Flanders and the Walloon country. On the other hand, they all run slates in the "Brussels region."



**Table 1: Election results 1946-1987 (% of votes)**

	1946	1949	1950	1954	1958	1961	1965	1968	1971	1974	1977	1978	1981	1985	1987
<b>BELGIUM</b>															
PSC/CVP	43	44	48	41	47	42	34	32	30	32	36	36	26	29	28
PS/SP	32	30	35	37	36	37	28	28	27	27	27	25	25	28	31
PRL/PVV	9	15	11	12	11	12	22	21	16	15	16	16	21	21	21
RW/FDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	11	11	7	7	4	1	1
Volksunie	-	-	-	2	2	4	7	10	11	10	10	6	10	8	8
Communist Party	13	8	5	4	2	3	5	3	3	3	3	4	2	1	1
Ecolo-Agalev	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	6	7
<b>WALLONIA</b>															
Socialists	37	39	45	48	47	47	36	35	35	37	39	37	36	39	44
Social Christians	26	31	33	30	34	30	23	20	20	22	25	27	20	23	23
Rass. Wallon	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	11	21	19	10	10	6	0.5	0.6
Liberals	9	15	12	12	11	12	26	27	17	15	19	17	22	24	22
Communist Party	22	13	8	7	5	7	10	7	6	6	5	6	4	2	2
Ecolo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	6	6
<b>FLANDERS</b>															
Social Christians	56	54	60	52	57	51	44	39	38	40	44	44	32	35	31
Socialists	27	24	26	29	28	30	25	26	25	23	22	21	21	24	24
Liberals	8	13	9	11	10	12	17	16	16	17	14	17	21	17	19
Volksunie	-	-	-	4	3	6	12	17	19	17	16	12	16	13	13
Ecolo-Agalev	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	6	7
<b>BRUSSELS (19 communes)</b>															
FDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	19	35	40	35	35	23	11	11
Social Christians	30	31	35	25	34	28	20	28	21	23	24	24	16	17	17
Socialists	35	30	41	45	43	42	26	20	21	21	17	17	16	20	26
Liberals	13	25	18	19	17	18	33	26	14	6	12	11	23	34	31
Ecolo-Agalev	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	6	7

million wage earners). Even though the CSC is organizationally independent from the CVP, its leadership and cadres have been historically, and in the case of the generation now leaving the scene, personally and ideologically very much attached to the CVP/PSC.

The irreversible decline of the CVP is undermining this system of domination. In fact, it can only continue to function on two conditions. First, the CVP's near political monopoly has to continue. In order to satisfy the appetites of the party's very broad clientele, it needs an almost continual hold on the state apparatus. Secondly, "balanced" class collaboration within the party has to satisfy all the groups concerned. The drop in the party's vote from 60% in 1950 to 31% in 1987 shows that it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet both of these conditions.

**Socialists make big gains in Wallonia**

What is more, deputies openly linked to the Christian Workers' Movement are now in a majority in the party. Representing 35% in 1946, they have come to represent more than 50% in 1987. The more the CVP weakens, the more the MOC is gaining influence within it, and the less the party is able to remain the foundation of the Belgian system of class collaboration.

In a broader political perspective, the Belgian bourgeoisie has good reason to be worried by the CVP's decline. First of all, the CVP's virtual political monopoly in Flanders has always been an essential counterweight to the "threat" of a "red" Walloon country. Moreover, while the CVP is declining, the PS [the French-speaking Socialist Party] is making spectacular gains. Having got 44% in the 1987 elections, it is now on the verge of an absolute majority of the Walloon seats. There is a very clear "left majority" in the region, if you add up the votes of the PS, the greens,

2. Fourons is a group of villages transferred administratively in 1962 from the Walloon country to Flanders in a typical Belgian "trade-off". The population voted by a two-thirds majority for restoring the area to Liège, a Walloon city. The mayor, Happart, understandably refuses to speak Flemish, which arouses Flemish national feelings. That is also understandable, because the area is supposed to be part of Flanders. In fact, underlying this whole tug-of-war is the national problem and the inability of the bourgeoisie to undertake the great democratic reform of reorganizing the Belgian state on a federal basis.

[Flemish Bloc]. But the bourgeoisie would take a very great risk in trying once again to govern against the opposition of the Socialist workers' movement. In that case, the Socialists would be in opposition for 11 years, from 1981 to 1992. Therefore, the return of the Socialist parties to the government, either with the Christian Democratic family or in a "tripartite" national union, seems inevitable. In order to understand this situation, you have to look beyond the raw figures and national averages.

Belgian big capital has two reasons to ponder what orientation to follow, even aside from the persistent strength of the workers' movement. Its political project is disintegrating. The CVP has plunged into a deep crisis. The bourgeoisie's political instruments for controlling the working people and the youth are faltering, especially in Flanders. Of the four political parties directly on its payroll, only the Flemish free enterprise party, the PVV, came out of the elections in good shape. It increased its vote from 17% to 19%, taking about a third of the votes lost by the other bourgeois party, the CVP.

However, the other three traditional bourgeois parties, the French-speaking Liberals (the PRL) and the two Christian Democratic parties, the PSC and the CVP lost ground. The PSC stagnated, and even lost one seat. It was this party that, under the pressure of its wing linked to the Christian Workers' Movement (MOC) brought the government down, using the Fourons incident as a pretext.<sup>2</sup> It is true that this maneuver undoubtedly enabled it to cut its losses.

With 31%, the CVP registered its lowest score ever. It has gone into a deep political crisis, which at the same time is striking at the heart of the Belgian bourgeoisie's system of political domination. Since the "his-

toric turn" of 1894, this system has rested on a simple mechanism but one deeply anchored in the reality of the society.

The pivot of this system is the Christian Democratic Party. This is an inter-class bourgeois party. It openly embraced — and in Flanders this structure persists — the organized social classes (the Christian Workers' Movement, the middle classes, farmers' associations, the bosses), which send representatives to the party's local committees. These classes wage a political struggle within the party at every election (from this standpoint the municipal elections are still more important than the parliamentary ones!) to increase their respective weights — always in the name of "the general interest" and against "class struggle"!

**Historical decline of main bourgeois parties**

The Christian Democratic Party is not an electoralist collection of notables, but has a very dense network of powerful social organizations (unions, mutual aid societies, schools, hospitals, churches and their parallel social structures). The PSC has remained perpetually in government, allying itself successively with the Liberal (free-enterprise) Party or the Social Democratic Party, and in exceptional cases taking part in tripartite national unity cabinets with both. On the social front, it has been able to drive a deep wedge into the workers' movement.

The Christian union confederation, the CSC, which is part of the MOC, includes slightly more than half of organized workers (1.2 million, as against 1.1 million in the Socialist union, the FGTB, out of 3.3

the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Party (POS/SAP — Belgian section of the Fourth International), and the Belgian Workers' Party [(PTB/PvdA — Maoists).

Secondly, the CVP's electoral losses, which undermine its ability to dominate Flemish society and, through the national state apparatus, Belgian society as a whole, also reflect a loss of social control over the Christian workers' movement and the "Catholic" youth, which have been in ferment since 1965.

### **A clear victory for the Socialist Parties**

Finally, all this comes at a time when the political project undertaken by the bourgeoisie in 1980-81 has been upset by universal suffrage. The bourgeoisie had taken a real turn in seeking to exclude the Socialists' parties from the national government (and from the Walloon and Flemish "governments") for a whole period in order to reduce the considerable weight of the organized workers' movement (both in the political and trade-union spheres) in society. Unable now to continue "the line" of 1981-87, it cannot make a simple about-face back to the class collaboration of the 1970s.

Fortunately for big capital, the social democratic and Christian democratic reformist leaders have again offered themselves as its best servants. The Socialist parties have just won a clear electoral victory. Throughout the country, they increased their vote by 3%, and (as in 1936) they have become the leading "political family" in the country. This observation has, however, to be qualified, because the workers' movement has not regained the 40% and more that it got in the elections of 1925, 1932, 1946 (45%) and 1961 (after the general strike).

In the Walloon country, the PS won back

the support it lost after 1965, regaining the votes of the left "Wallonists". Once again, it has emerged as the dominant force. The Flemish SP regained a certain vigor, but it was blocked by the greens (Agalev: 7%) and the revolutionary left (very much in a minority, but highly visible).

However, the PS/SP's election victory came at an awkward time, since it followed yet another defeat of a major working-class upsurge in May 1986, which almost led to an all-out general strike. The social-democratic leaders — who did everything possible first to break the momentum toward a general strike and then to anesthetize the workers' combativity — managed to gather the fruits of an undeniable and persistent socio-political polarization between the social classes, but in a period of downturn in social struggle.

Nonetheless, the working class, which was blocked but not beaten, is continuing to show its opposition to the austerity policy. Direct evidence of this is the vote for the PS/SP. Indirect evidence is the fall of the Martens-Gol government, which led to the snap election of December 1987. This was precipitated by the working-class wing of the Christian parties in the government. Fearing a dismantling of social security for the sake of a pro-bourgeois fiscal reform, the MOC used the Fourons affair to prepare the way for a shift of governmental alliance.

Moreover, it is no accident that for the first time in ten years the government that comes into office will find on its table a common memorandum from the FGTV and the CSC. This declaration does not, any more than the PS/SP election programs and the MOC candidates on the CVP/PSC slates, go outside the framework of the austerity policy. But it still formulates demands that the bourgeoisie has just resoundingly rejected. Unless some unexpected development upsets things, we cannot expect this election "victory" and this

increased pressure from the joint trade-union front to bring about a rapid revival of cross-sectoral social struggles.

The workers' parties to the left of social democracy (the Communist Party, the POS/SAP, and the Mao-Stalinists of the PTB/PvdA) did not manage to capture a significant part of the working people's discontent. The notion of "making your vote count" in order to "finally" get rid of Martens-Gol once again led a whole layer of workers to vote for the PS/SP. This was the case even though — as we saw clearly in our campaign — distrust of the PS/SP was deep and widespread even before its return to the government.

Together, the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Party, the Labour Party of Belgium (PTB) got 197,134 votes in 1981. In 1987, they fell to 127,678 votes, or 2% (see Table 2). But this figure has to be properly interpreted.

### **Dramatic drop in Communist Party vote**

First of all, there was the green vote, which in large part was a vote to the left of the social democracy and the Christian democracy, even if these parties (Agalev and Ecolo) cannot be considered an integral part of the organized workers' movement. The greens got 7.1% (+0.9%). Secondly, the decline of what is seen as the far left in Belgium is entirely owing to the dramatic drop in the Communist Party's vote. From 151,500 in 1977, it fell to 52,000 in 1987. With its 75,675 votes, the revolutionary left for the first time has outdistanced the CP!

Even though all this remains a marginal electoral phenomenon at the national level, this ceases to be true when you take a look at those cantons [the basic election district, often corresponding to a city and its suburbs] where there is a strong concentration of urban workers. For example, in Antwerp, where the social democracy is the leading force with 27.3% of the vote, the "left of the left" (Ecolo, CP, POS/SAP, PTB/PvdA) got 14.3% — a total amounting to more than 50% of the social democratic vote. In a whole series of cantons, the PTB/PvdA and the POS/SAP got more than 1.5% of the vote and sometimes more than 2%.

In fact, there is a lag in the electoral expression of the weight that the revolutionary left wields in society at large and in the workers' movement. This weight can be seen for sure in struggles, but also in certain phenomena of recomposition in the organized workers' movement. Militant trade-unionists (including many revolutionary activists) got the support of their fellow workers in the April 1987 social elections.<sup>3</sup> They are increasingly breaking through into leaderships of factory locals and into

3. These social elections are held every four years over a three week period. The workers in the private sector elect their delegates to the factory councils and to the health and safety committees.

**Table 2: Results of POS/SAP, PTB, PCB 1981-1987**

	1987	1985	1981
<b>POS/SAP</b>			
Total	30513	14003	12352
Flanders	15830	8233	7110
Wallonia	10923	4731	3717
Brussels	3760	1039	1525
<b>PTB</b>			
Total	45162	45685	45804
Flanders	34389	36457	40446
Wallonia	8448	7574	2955
Brussels	2325	1654	2403
<b>PCB</b>			
Total	52003	71703	138978
Flanders	14621	16173	42265
Wallonia	30572	46910	80040



the national union executives.

Another phenomena fits into this framework — the POS/SAP's breakthrough in the media and its spectacular election gains. With nearly 31,000 votes, we doubled our score, gaining in every single electoral district. The POS/SAP has become the second party of the far left in the Walloon country and in Brussels (behind the CP in both cases, but ahead of the PTB/PvdA); and in Flanders (ahead of the CP, but after the PTB/PvdA). The CP's decline, the PTB/PvdA's stagnation and the POS/SAP's gains have upset the relationship of forces to the "left of the left."

The bourgeois press (*Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, De Standaard*) did not fail to take note of the "POS/SAP phenomenon." Now, the chance for the far left breaking through into parliament is necessarily linked to unity between the POS/SAP, PTB and CP — something that we have been fighting for for years. The shock that the PTB and CP have just suffered, each in its own way, has provoked some initial movement. The CP, which is at its historic low-point, is all over the place.

Three currents have appeared. The first is impelled by trade-union officials (both Stalinists and Euro-communists). They are arguing for going back into the social democracy, especially in the Walloon country. The second is the ultra Euro-communist current (which is in the majority in Brussels). It is preparing to submerge itself into a movement with the greens. And the third is a current that is in the majority in Flanders, which seems to be orienting toward unity with the POS/SAP and the PTB/PvdA. The PTB/PvdA, for its part, has just lined up behind Gorbachev, and is trying for a rapprochement with the CP. At the same time, it has launched a violent campaign against Trotskyism and the POS/SAP.

## A breakthrough for the POS/SAP

However, the demand for unity is very strong in the politicized vanguard, and this sentiment exists at a time when local and European elections are coming up in October 1988 and June 1989 respectively.

The POS/SAP is approaching this new stage with an increased political and organizational energy. Above all, the gain we made from our election campaign was a breakthrough in the media, in broad public opinion, which took note of the existence of what it saw as a "new" socialist party. We were number one on the lists, which drew the attention of a broad public to us. So, our political message, which we improved over our previous election campaigns, aroused interest and made a significant impact.

Over the last ten years, the POS/SAP has undergone a major political and organizational change. By shifting the center of gravity of our base toward the big private

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and public enterprises, by waging political battles in the trade-union movement, by intervening with our political line in the successive social upsurges since 1977, the POS/SAP learned how to accompany the working-class and youth vanguard that emerged from these struggles toward achieving an overall political perspective based on a working-class united front.

This broad political and social agitation was systematically projected into the electoral arena. With growing strength and organizational experience, the POS/SAP has participated in all the general, that is, country-wide elections — the parliamentary elections in 1977 and 1978, the European elections in 1979, the parliamentary elections in 1981, the municipal elections in 1982, the European elections in 1984 and the parliamentary elections in 1985 and 1987. (We also participated in the social elections in 1979, 1983 and 1987).

Such regular electoral activity requires a higher level of organization in terms of a system of mass propaganda and collecting signatures in order to get slates on the ballot and to fill them with candidates for deputy and senator. It is advantageous to have complete slates, since in the Belgian elections there is only one round and there is ranked voting for multi-candidate slates [alternative preference votes are redistributed as first-preference candidates are eliminated].

Thus, in 1985, we campaigned in all of the country's 30 electoral districts for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. We fielded about 325 candidates, which was essential to get access to the mass media and to involve the maximum number of sympathizers in the party's electoral activity.

At the same time, we learned to see elections as a real struggle to win votes "one by one." This mass work to convince people (in the factories, in trade-union meetings, in the markets, door-to-door) had a considerable impact on the application of our political line. Breaking with an abstract and somewhat ultra-left propagandism, we refined our message. We took account of the real consciousness of the masses and oriented systematically toward an overall "political solution." We consistently pushed a resolute anti-capitalist line; sup-

port for a working-class united front; and firm political support for a "workers' government." At the same time, the CP hugged the social democracy, and the PTB/PvdA locked itself into sectarian self-affirmation — support for struggles combined with abstract anti-capitalist propaganda.

## Contradictions of situation present a challenge

The special character of the situation in Belgium lies in the eruption of mass self-activity on a level rarely attained, which has continued for ten years now, since 1977-78. At the same time the austerity of defensive and militarization have gathered steam. In all, workers, women and youth have waged a large-scale political battle. So the increasingly defensive position of the masses has been accompanied by an accumulation of political experience (with and without direct struggles). This has created a socio-political polarization among the classes, a "raw" politicization and a radicalization among the vanguard. The fruits of this on the electoral level remain limited.

On the social level, the results are of another order. For the POS/SAP, "access" to the working class has continually grown, and the beginning of a recomposition can be seen in the trade-union movement. Building a united anti-capitalist pole of attraction is vital at a time when a very grave international recession is looming on the horizon and the Belgian social democracy is going to have to face it with governmental responsibility on its shoulders.

What will be the response of a broad current of social-democratic workers who are already very much opposed to the right and very distrustful of their own leadership? What repercussions will the changes in the East European countries have on the politicized vanguard that is interested in political debate in the full sense? How are the greens, the CP and the PTB/PvdA going to respond to the difficult problems of program, line and tactics that will be posed by the conjuncture that is emerging?

All these questions present will present difficult, but at the same time interesting, challenges for building the POS/SAP in the future. ★

# Revolutionary socialists participate in elections

SEVEN YEARS after the reactionary military coup of September 12, 1980, and four years after the first general elections held in October 1983 under the supervision of the generals, Turkey went to the polls once again to elect 450 representatives to the National Assembly at the end of November.

Overall, election results confirmed the continuing hegemony of conservative and reactionary parties in political life. The ruling Motherland Party of prime minister Turgut Özal gained a plurality of the votes (36%) and, thanks to the new election code specifically designed to create a "stable majority", a much higher proportion of seats (65%). Together, five right-wing parties polled 65% of total votes.<sup>1</sup>

Despite competition by a similar party led by former prime minister Bulent Ecevit, the Social Democratic Populist Party led by Erdal İnönü managed to keep its position of second biggest party by receiving 25% of the ballot. An important aspect of these elections was the participation of socialist candidates in elections for the first time since 1979.

## YAVUZ KARPAT

**S**INCE 1980, Turkey has been going through a phase of capitalist reaction coupled with a fierce program of economic austerity inspired by the neo-liberal monetarism of the Friedman school. Two decades of powerful class struggles and a profound economic crisis that set in in 1977 culminated in the austerity programme of January 24, 1980, and the military coup in September the same year.

The junta that held the country under its sway for three years waged a powerful assault on the working class movement, disbanding the only class-struggle oriented workers' federation (DISK), driving underground all left-wing movements, jailing and torturing hundreds of thousands of socialist and working-class militants. This was accompanied by a radical restructuring of political and trade-union legislation, involving severe limitations on formerly existing rights and liberties. All of this, coupled with permanent austerity policies, led to a drastic fall in the living standards of workers and poor peasants alike.

The return to a regime with a civilian façade was initiated by the general elections of October 1983, a grotesque affair in which only three of the newly-established parties proving acceptable to the generals in power were allowed to run. Turgut Özal, former deputy prime minister under the military government, won the elections and ruled the country until November this year, when he was re-elected to office.

The first term of the civilian government was politically dominated by the debate over the hides of former bourgeois politicians who were banned from politics for ten years by the military via an article written into the new constitution of 1982.<sup>2</sup> This internal struggle of bourgeois political forces culminated in a referendum held in September this year over returning the right to these bourgeois politicians to participate fully in politics. The votes were split almost equally between "yes" and "no", but by an extremely slight margin (50.2% to 49.8%), those who voted in favour of the restitution of the political rights of former politicians obtained the majority.

Foremost among these politicians were Sulyeman Demirel (now leader of the second largest right-wing party), Ecevit (now leading the weaker of the two so-called "social-democratic" parties), Erbakan (leader of Islamic fundamentalism) and Türkes (fascist leader). Due to this immediate political background, the elections were first and foremost a battle between this "old guard" of bourgeois politicians and their rivals of more recent vintage, primarily Özal and İnönü.

## Battle between "old" and "new" politicians

This battle ended with a clear victory for the "new" politicians, Özal and İnönü together polling 61%. The gravity of the defeat suffered by Demirel and Ecevit can be gauged by comparing their combined 28% in 1987 with their combined share of the votes throughout the whole of the 1970s, a share that fluctuated between 70%-80%. It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that this was the beginning of the end for these two. Already, immediately after the elections Ecevit (who received 9% of the vote but no seats due to the electoral system) declared his withdrawal from active political life — although this may well turn out to be a new addition to his list of endless tactical manoeuvres. Demirel, whose party obtained 19%, is likely to remain in limbo for some time to come, but his prospects do not look particularly bright either.

The possible disappearance of these two politicians from political life will certainly be no loss to the working masses, since Demirel's right-wing populist demagogy thinly veils a political line essentially identical to that of Özal, and Ecevit has recently combined adherence to so-called "free market" liberalism with a thoroughgoing anti-communism in the ideological sphere.

It seems, therefore, that with these elections Turkey has moved closer to the two-party system long desired by the main forces of the bourgeoisie. The two pillars of this system are likely to be Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP), embodying a type of "third world Thatcherism", and İnönü's Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) which, notwithstanding its name, is closer in structure, programme and political orientation to the North American Democratic Party or the Brazilian PMDB than to western European social democracy. The SHP, a renovated heir to the People's Republican Party (CHP), poses as a party of hope to the workers, peasants, youth, urban poor and intellectuals, all of whom suffer — in different ways — the combined consequences of three years of military dictatorship and the rule of reactionary capitalist politics under ANAP.

1. See also "Özal profits from election results and the opposition's weakness" by Fuat Orçun, *IV* 133, January 25, 1988.

2. See "Reconciliation between the generals and the politicians" by Fuat Orçun, *IV* 124, July 13, 1987.



# IMAYIS

## DISK



Despite its rhetoric, however, it is clear that the SHP is simply another bourgeois party that offers the ruling classes a different form of class domination based on a political project closely linked to Turkey's integration into imperialist Europe. Worse still is its adaptation to the repressive political regime that is the legacy of the military dictatorship. In spite of these characteristics, a majority of the Turkish left, primarily but not exclusively Stalinist groups, has insisted on tail-ending this party. The most recent move in this direction was the wholesale support extended to the SHP by a majority of the left during the November elections. It is in this context that the exact significance of the independent electoral campaign of a section of the left can be correctly understood.

It has now become a well-established tradition for broad sectors of the Turkish left to give full electoral support to the reformist and modernizing wing of the Turkish bourgeois political forces. Since 1973, in election after election, very diverse tendencies and groups within the left, which oth-

erwise differed tremendously over almost every other issue, concurred in supporting first the CHP and later the SHP. (The major exception were those groups that persisted in the tactics of boycotting the elections no matter what concrete conditions pertained.)

### A socialist electoral platform

It was only during the partial elections in 1979 that several groups departed from this practice, each of them putting forward their own candidates. It was thus a major step forward when six different socialist periodicals (*Gelenek, ilk Adım, İşçiler ve Toplum, Yeni Asama, Yeni Öncü* and *Zemin*) and their supporters joined forces in an electoral platform. They presented candidates on an independent slate in four districts in Istanbul and one in Ankara. Given the extremely adverse political climate of the period, this was a considerable achievement from the point of view of raising the

independent class banner of socialism.

The platform brought together several wings of the well-established family of centrist organizations within the Turkish left and Trotskyists of different tendencies. (There was also a small group of Stalinist origin, which at present defends extremely contradictory positions with respect to questions of history and theory.) Moreover, two of the five candidates were Trotskyists.

This composition has a two-fold significance. On the one hand, it confirms a more and more palpable tendency, that of the rapid increase of the prestige of Trotskyism within the Turkish left — gone are the days when an overwhelming majority of organizations still characterized Trotskyism as “counter revolutionary” and so on. On the other hand, it is a further indication of the profound process of recomposition and possible regroupment on the Turkish left, opening up the possibility of the formation of a mass revolutionary workers' party in the medium term.

### Common election manifesto

The electoral campaign was built on a common electoral manifesto (which the authorities hastened to seize), a joint electoral bulletin of which several issues were published and distributed, several panels in Istanbul and Ankara and numerous meetings organized in working-class neighbourhoods. Its major axes were the defence of class independence from bourgeois political forces and the propagation of socialist ideas. The election manifesto heavily attacked the repressive political regime, denounced the policies of the government, exposed the demagoguery of the so-called “social-democratic” parties and put forward a list of transitional demands.

It included, in a carefully couched legal form, unequivocal support for the right to self-determination for the oppressed Kurdish people. A major innovation for the Turkish left was the manifesto's advocacy of an independent women's liberation movement. Although the independent socialist candidates did not receive a large number of votes, the campaign was lively and received much attention and considerable support within working-class neighbourhoods.

Both the general situation in the country and recent developments within the left point to the opening up of a new period after the elections. At the general level, the most important factor will be the evolution of the economy. Within the last two years, Özal had considerably relaxed his policy of monetarist austerity, primarily for the purpose of gaining electoral support (first in the partial elections of 1986 and later for the November elections this year). He is now certain to tighten the screws once again and to impose a new round of capitalist discipline on the economy, further attacking the standard of living of the

working masses.

With international recession looming on the horizon, there will be increasing tension between the government and the working class in the years ahead. Already, the extensive price rises of the products of state enterprises immediately after the elections have provoked widespread discontent among the working population. The two opposition parties with seats in the parliament (those of İnönü and Demirel) will certainly try to capitalize on the discontent of the masses, but will in all probability fail to dominate the mass movement totally. A major factor will be the overwhelming majority captured by Özal in parliament thanks to the new electoral system. This system has certainly been able to cope with the endemic "problem" of coalition governments (a nightmare for the bourgeoisie after the experience of the 1970s), but only to replace it by a tension between the parliamentary majority and social forces outside the parliament. We can thus predict a definite rise in extra-parliamentary forms of struggle in the near future.

### New developments on the left

On the left scene, the major development has been the return to Turkey in the pre-election period of two Stalinist leaders formerly in exile, with the stated purpose of forming a new CP on a legal basis, to be christened the Unified Communist Party of Turkey ("unified", since it will be the product of a fusion of two different Stalinist parties).<sup>3</sup>

Although the two leaders are now in jail (and have reportedly been subjected to extensive torture by the political police), the possibility that the Özal government will give them the green light in the not so distant future is not ruled out, the main reason being Western European pressure on the Turkish government in the wake of Turkey's application for full membership in the European Community. Should this happen, it will mean a tremendous change for the Turkish political scene. A renovated, unified and legalized CP (faithfully aping the ideas and manners of Gorbachev) is likely to become a major pole of attraction for left-leaning workers, many confused socialist cadres and complacent leftist intellectuals.

Both the struggles ahead and the probable formation of a legal CP impose formidable tasks on revolutionary Marxists. The process of recomposition unfolding within the ranks of the Turkish left opens up the possibility of the eventual formation of a mass revolutionary workers' party. The role of Trotskyists will be decisive in the formation of such a revolutionary pole in the Turkish workers' movement. ★

## Central demands raised by the independent socialist candidates

### ● On political and democratic rights:

Abolish all political prohibitions. Shut down the state security courts. Unconditional general amnesty. Abolish the death penalty, used as a means of taking revenge. Stop torture — call all torturers to account. All political police files to be opened. Abolish and destroy the illegal police files. End the practice of security investigations.

### ● On workers' rights:

For all laws relating to working life to be changed. For workers' representatives to participate in actual fact during the process of preparation of these new laws. Abolish all obstacles restricting contract and strike rights. Ban lockouts. For the right of the unemployed and apprenticed to organize in unions. Abolish state control over trade unions. Workers' control of trade unions. Trade unions must be held accountable only to their members. End the practice of discrimination preventing women and young workers from becoming leaders and representatives in workplaces and trade unions. For contract negotiations to be held in open meetings which can be followed by all workers. Remove all trade union officials, trainers and advisors who are collaborationist and supporters of the capitalists.

### ● Against the high cost of living, unemployment and inequality:

All wages to be automatically adjusted for inflation every three months. Authority for determining the official rate of inflation to be given to workers' representatives. Freeze prices — stop inflation-fanning payments of the foreign debt and military spending. End sackings. Workers' control of the state-owned economic enterprises (KITs). For existing jobs to be shared by reducing working hours without a cut in wages. End mass firings. Job security and unemployment insurance. End the intensive labour trick aimed at closing the deficit in SSK funds, which are being handed over to the capitalists behind workers' backs. Workers' control of the SSK. For the right of workers to inspect production and halt it when necessary. Open the account books. Freeze the prices of building sites, housing and rents. For empty land and houses to be made available to those who need them. No separate minimum wage for agricultural workers. End the application of wage differentials for apprentices, young and women workers. For the right to leave of absence after giving birth, not only for women but for fathers as well. Men have children too — for day-care in all workplaces, even where there is not a single woman worker.

### ● An end to every type of discrimination:

An end to all official, unofficial and customary practice of discrimination resulting from differences of sex, sexual preference, language, religious faith, race, national identity and age. Children, apprentices and young people must have the right to resistance, shelter and protection against beating and patriarchal oppression. Every type of official or unofficial practice of approaching homosexuals as if they were "ill" must be stopped.

### ● Sexist oppression of women exists simply on account of their being women:

End sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Abolish the requirements for husband's approval on the issues of working, travel and abortion. Precedence to be given to women in education, job-finding and fields of work. The right to safe, free and easily obtainable birth control and abortion. The right to immediate divorce in cases of battering — battering must become an issue for public trial.

### ● For the right of nations to self-determination:

End national oppression, chauvinism and assimilation policies. A nation oppressing others cannot be free! ★



# The contras: a view from the inside

ON JANUARY 15 and 16, the presidents of the five Central American countries who signed the Esquipulas accords back in August last year — Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — met to review the progress made. It has not been a great success. Fighting has been as intense as ever in the region since August.

Faced with the threat of renewed US financial and military aid to the contras, and confronting a serious economic crisis because of the war and a US-led aid and trade blockade, more pressure is being put on Nicaragua to comply with the accords than on the other so-called "democracies". After the meeting, Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega announced that the Sandinista government would take following measures: lift the state of emergency imposed in 1982; hold ceasefire talks with the contras; expedite the application of the wide-ranging amnesty law; and call direct elections for the Central American parliament and domestic municipal elections.

Meanwhile, the contras, disoriented since the signing of the accords, have been concentrating their attacks on economic targets inside Nicaragua, hoping to aggravate the economic crisis. The following interview with ex-contra Lester Ponce is from the Nicaraguan review *Envío*, and gives an idea of what life is like inside the contra camp. His testimony, although incoherent and full of contradictions — if not lies, in some cases — throws an interesting light on the functioning of the counter-revolutionary forces.

ON AUGUST 17, I was at the El Paraiso telephone exchange. "Is the line to Nicaragua working?" I asked. "We'll try," they told me. I talked with my mother. She told me all about Esquipulas and asked, "In December?" "No, I said," today, we're playing for double or nothing." It was 2.30 in the afternoon. I came that day. At 5.00, I crossed the frontier, avoiding customs. I came with my wife and two children, and another boy who also wanted to return to Nicaragua. He had left to avoid military service here.

Since everybody in the area knew me, I went into a house looking for help. They helped me out, and we slept there that night. In the mountains, I went to a frontier guard post and told them that I was so and so from such an such a village, and that I wanted them to put me in touch with state

security.

The *compañeros* only asked me where I had come from. "I've come from the other side," I told them. "OK," they told me, "we are going to the guard post." From the frontier guard post, they took me to Brigade 3-12 and from there to the Ministry of the Interior, then to Esteli and finally to Managua.

■ **That's the end of the story. But what is the beginning? Why did you part company with the counter-revolution?**

It's a long and strange story. I was a Sandinista fighter. My father inculcated the principles into my head. My home was a political school, and I left it for the mountains to join the guerrillas on August 2, 1978. After the victory, I was in the army until about October 1979. I left it because I

am an administrative technician, and I thought that at that time it was more useful to go work in the economic sphere, to rebuild the country. At the start, I went to work in the lumber industry.

After three months, the enterprise was on its feet, and was on the point of exporting and everything. They sent a fellow who had been in the National Guard to replace me. That was a very bitter blow, very bitter. I left.

■ **Was he an opportunist?**

I don't know what he was, but the fact is that a lot of them claimed to be pure socialists, but I don't know them, and I do not know what they are. But this was a very bitter blow for me. After that, I worked in the social service programs. After three months, I realized that wasn't for me. I left for a while. I worked as a bus conductor on a transport line, and ended up going to Matagalpa. In a year and a half, I became the manager of the enterprise — the government had sent me on courses.

But in Matagalpa there were situations that I did not like at all. Some people were privileged, others had weaknesses, like the people we fought against, the weaknesses of the past. I had dreamed of the changes the revolution would make. And seeing these weaknesses — well. These things bothered me. There were personal clashes. One day, I had a problem and was put in jail. I got three months. I got out in March 1984.

I left for Ocotol, still looking for a way to help. I think that that is the best thing in me. I started working with other *compas* [*compañeros*], trying to change things, trying to take measures with the little that we had in the way of knowledge and the means we had. That is how the break began. Why? Because a lot of the *compas* were twisted. That is the reality. I was there a year, and then I gave up.

After a year, I started working independently, cutting wood in the mountains. Then I had other problems, because I was supposed to be a contra, because I was supposed to be a courier, because I was in the counter-revolution. In reality, that was false. I got another month in jail here in Ocotol. When I got out, they started putting pressure on me to do bad things to certain elements. I did not like that.

One day, like a lot of people, I was a little drunk, and I picked a fight with the police. I decided that I had to get out. That was in July 1985. At the beginning, I had the idea of going to the United States. I had my passport and all my papers in order. But I went to Honduras first, by unwatched roads, finding my own way. I had a lot of resentment against the revolution.

■ **You were on your way to the United States and you stayed with the contras. How did that happen?**

All those who slip over over the border into Honduras are taken prisoner. Everyone. They investigate everyone. First the

Hondurans question you. And immediately you are passed on to the FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force]. I was jailed on the other side as a result of this interrogation. An old family friend with the FDN got me out, and then, right away, I was implicated. When I got to the base, I met people that I knew, people from here, even people who had also been in the guerrillas.

■ **What base were you on?**

I was in the Capire sector, in the department of El Paraiso, in the various bases there. It was July 1985. There were then more or less 8,000 "commandos," all in Honduras. Inside Nicaragua, there were none — at that time, I stress.

On arriving, my impression was that they were old guerrilla camps, but more seriously organized. It was a complete army, with everything. Logistically, it was an excellent army, with well-trained "commandos."

■ **Are the "commandos" soldiers.**

Yes, ordinary soldiers, the picture of your ordinary soldier.

■ **Did you stay with the "commandos"?**

No, I was taken to a place they called the Strategic Command, which was also in Capire. That is where the chiefs are, number 3-80 and the "Invisible One". We discussed why I had come, what my reasons were, what I thought of them. About ten days later, they called me to start work.

■ **And they had no doubts, given that you had been in the Sandinista guerrillas?**

No. People on the other side knew me and vouched for me. But it is true that I was an exceptional case. As soon as I arrived, I was sent directly to the Strategic Command, and I was already given a work plan, in direct liaison with the Strategic Command. Other intelligence officers like me came to this by "bridges." San Marcos asked for approval from Tegucigalpa, Tegucigalpa from the Strategic Command. But not for me, I went directly there. It happened like that because I had been vouched for, I was backed up.

■ **What job did you get?**

Enrique Bermudez, number 3-80, a colonel in Somoza's National Guard, offered me a military intelligence job. Not just anybody can do that.

There were three lines of work. The first was to gather all military information on the area, check every military post, every military movement. Secondly, there was keeping track of the military leaders, the political leaders, and the leaders of the mass fronts. Then there was building a democratic student front in Region 1 to carry out strikes and demonstrations against the government. All this work was in my zone.

In fact, I don't know how many there are, but one thing that is sure is that there is one intelligence officer per zone. As a chief, they gave me two kinds of credentials — the papers of intelligence officer and another grey document that identified me to the Honduran armed forces. You did not need any other paper, any other document to move around. It is a very well-known document, which only officers have. The "commandos," do not have them, obviously. They do not leave their bases, and when they do, they leave with an authorization sent them from the Strategic Command or from the base itself. From there, they go to the Honduran immigration services, and they are given a temporary permit so that they can go out just for the time given them. I had no worries about papers; I always wore civilian clothes.

■ **It is said that Somozista National Guards control the FDN.**

That is certain. All the leadership posts, all the command posts are in the hands of people were in Somoza's National Guard. There is no civilian with a command. The situation is totally controlled by Enrique Bermudez. You can say, Tigrillo is a regional commander, and what about that? The truth is that Tigrillo is a regional commander because of his prestige, because of the number of men he has. But he has no real command. He does not decide anything. And what is more, they showed him that it is the Guard that is giving the orders.

■ **What did they do to Tigrillo?**

Tigrillo is a civilian — not a Guard. He was a fighter, he fought the National Guard. He is from Yali, like Coral and like Douglas. They are three close companions, from the same zone and with an incredible prestige. All three of them were involved in disputes over the way the war was being conducted under the leadership of the Guard, over the way they thought it ought to be run, because of the experience they had when there were fighting the Guard. Conflicts. Conflicts over power. What did they do to Tigrillo? He was one of the men with one of the best regional commando units, the "Rafael Herrera" commando group, with three or four thousand men. What did they do?

They started by buying off his shock-troop commanders with money. They told them, "Listen, brother, we want to take care of you. We are in command. Here is your new salary, take your men, go independent." That is the way, they took his forces away from him.

Seeing that, he continued to conspire. Then they took him into the Strategic Command as a personnel assistant, which is not just any post. But Tigrillo could not do it. He can't read and writes with difficulty. Of course, they knew that he was not capable, then why did they bring him there? To deflate his vanity, his ambition. After two weeks in this job that he did not know how to do, they sent a "commando" to him. He

provoked Tigrillo, and Tigrillo killed him. It was a veteran "commando," who had been fighting in the FDN for five or years years. Tigrillo was automatically jailed and sentenced to a year.

After that, Tigrillo was no longer anything. He was a "historic" figure, but he did not go into the mountains any more. The scrap left him handicapped, and he could not go into the mountains. He is no longer a threat to the power of the Guards.

Coral ended up with one leg missing. Mike Lima's bodyguards, who were National Guards, fired on him. It was a scrap over a truck, and he was left an invalid. Now, he is no longer anything. What can you do in a war with a cripple? Douglas came out OK because he was more often inside Nicaragua with his men than on the bases. The Guards who run things never go inside.

■ **And in these rivalries, do they go as far as killing each other?**

When I arrived, there was a lot of talk about the death of Commander Suicide. They killed him. They accused him of selling arms to the Salvadorean guerrillas, and so on and so on. But the truth is that the guy had prestige, and the "commandos" said a lot of good things about him when they returned after fighting with him. They eliminated him, and practically all of his team.

It is the Guard that dominates in reality. And the Guard never forgives those who managed to play a role in bringing down the dictatorship.

■ **Do the "commandos" know about the Guard's total control? How is that reflected among the troops?**

It is reflected above all in the kind of political education given to certain cadres — not to the "commandos," who are nothing. One day, for example, a journalist, Maria Travieso, arrived at the Strategic Command. She was working for Radio Impact in Costa Rica and for Radio Liberación [one of the contra radio stations]. They organized a meeting in 3-80's office and called in the group chiefs and shock-troop commanders. I was there, they called me. They asked us to sit down and started running a video. When Robelo went to Cuba, when Cruz was in the Group of the 12, when he worked for the Sandinistas — all that. And what did 3-80 say to the soldier boys? "Is that what you want, is it these reformed *piris* [a pejorative name for Sandinistas] that you want?" All that was to create division, to ensure their social base, to maintain their power.

■ **Did you hear people talk about Eden Pastora? What does the FDN think about him?**

From what I saw and heard, it is clear that Pastora was never, and will never be, one of them. Never, because he is a *piri*. For a time, it seemed probable that Pastora would come to control certain FDN positions. What a bombshell! No! no! no! And in Pas-



tora's case it was still worse, because they are jealous of him as a military man.

Pastora coming would have done a lot of harm to the Guard. That is why they rejected it totally. Pastora is not, and has never been, trusted — any more than he is by the gringos.

#### ■ Who is above Bermudez?

The gringos, unquestionably. There is a CIA office at the Strategic Command; the gringos are there. They are the ones who make the decisions. The two chiefs in the Strategic Command — 3-80, Bermudez, who is the military chief; and the Invisible One, Rodolfo Ampié, an ex-Guard lieutenant, who is the chief of the intelligence service — are their subordinates. All the orientations and all the decisions are always adopted in accord with the gringos.

#### ■ Has it always been like that?

Always. The number of gringos on the bases, in the camps, has increased since 1984. But they were always the ones who made the decisions. There are also Vietnam veterans who have been with the "commandos," who have fought inside Nicaragua.

#### ■ Did you have relations with the gringos in your work?

No, my contacts were with 3-80 and the Invisible One. I had few relations with the gringos, but I saw them there. I saw Republican and Democratic senators, political representatives of the gringos. They all go through here, they constantly visit the Strategic Command.

#### ■ What sort of relations do the Americans have with the "commandos"?

They are very interested in them, not so much in training them directly, at least as far as I knew. They are there on another level. They are there to make the decisions. When they want to train people in new special skills, they take them to the United States — directly. In November and December 1986, they took shock-troop commanders and group chiefs for training, but to the United States. They take them for a period of two months. The gringos' approach to the "commandos" is different from that of the Guards.

#### ■ The gringos treat them better than the Guards?

Very much so. And why? Because they know very well who is really fighting the war, who is really waging it. It is not Bermudez, it is not the Invisible One. It is the "commandos," the ones who get the least. The gringos know that very well.

#### ■ And do the "commandos" know that Reagan calls them "freedom fighters"?

Not much of news like that comes in. They only talk about the war; that is all

they know. But sometimes journalists turn up and 30 or 40 commanders are gathered together; they show them Reagan's film. For them, it is a great thing to sit down in front of a TV and watch a video of Mr. Reagan. A very great thing!

#### ■ But the "commandos" at least are aware that Reagan is helping them a lot?

Yes, of course, from the lowest to the highest. "As long as there is Reagan, there will be the Contra," that is the watchword. Now, with the Esquipulas Accords, what they say is: "It doesn't matter much that they are telling us to sit down and conduct



dialogue and all the rest, we are going to go on waging the war." Why? Because there is Reagan.

#### ■ What sort of relations does the Contra have with the Nicaraguan civilian refugees in their area.

In general, refugees are regarded as *piris*, suspected as being Sandinistas. There is little in the way of relations among the "commandos" and these civilians.

#### ■ Doesn't the FDN recruit people among these civilians?

Yes, of course. The FDN intelligence and counter-espionage services constantly visit the refugee camps in order to recruit. There are few volunteers; they twist their arms. More and more of those who are recruited in this way surrender when they go into Nicaragua. That is why they say that all of them are *piris*. The last recruitment of refugees that I know about was in June 1986. The Honduran intelligence services and FDN members carried out a general recruitment operation in the El Paraiso and Danli zone. Of course, the FDN always

does work among the refugees. They have informers among them, people that they control.

#### ■ What kind of life do these civilian refugees lead in Honduras?

A very difficult one. They work at most two or three days a week. They earn three lempiras [2 lempiras = \$1] a day and eat rice and beans. The situation is very difficult, because the economic situation in Honduras is very critical. And Hondurans complain because the Nicaraguans are taking work away from them.

#### ■ Are these Nicaraguans legal in Honduras? What kind of papers do they have?

In fact, most of them move around with an immigration permit, for which they pay 5 lempiras a month. It is very difficult to get residence permits. They cost about 600 lempiras. None of those coming out of Nicaragua are able to pay a sum like that.

#### ■ And now, with Esquipulas, are they going to return to Nicaragua?

A lot of them would like to come back, a lot. People don't want to stay on the other side. And there are a good number of people on the other side! For example, so many young people left Nicaragua to avoid military service, only to fall into the "other" service over the border, that of the FDN.

#### ■ What do these people need to get them to decide to come back?

Well, Esquipulas has helped enormously — the Esquipulas amnesty.

#### ■ But the amnesty has existed since 1985 for those who wanted to come back.

Yes, of course. I knew that it existed, but I did not want to take the chance. With Esquipulas, it is a different matter. I have the impression that there are more guarantees. And it is like that for a lot of people. But what is needed above all is family support. Their families here in Nicaragua have to tell them the truth about the way they see things here. Of course, we are halfway to the poor house here, but at least you can live. There, there is not even milk for the children and they often go hungry. Here, there are problems, but honestly, what you see there is how people are half dead of hunger, have nothing to do. I came here, and I have seen that everybody has enough to eat, that everyone is at ease, I did not think that it was so relaxed. Those on the other side should know that so that they can make up their minds to come, that they will not be a burden to their families, that their families can support them.

#### ■ And how did the refugees find out about the amnesty?

Well, they listen. Radio Segovia in Oco-

tal has played a very important role in passing on messages, in giving information on the amnesty, messages from families here to those over there.

■ **Do they listen to the radio in the contra camps too?**

Well, there it is harder with the "commandos." You can't listen to Radio Segovia. They point you out. The problem is that the "commandos" cannot find a way to cross the frontier as I did, because they cannot leave the camp. Leaving is desertion, and desertion means imprisonment, or else....

■ **They kill them?**

They kill them.

■ **They're shot?**

No, there they don't shoot them, they cut their throats.

■ **To frighten the others?**

Because it is the rule!

■ **Where are the disarmed contras going to go if Azcona applies the Esquipulas agreement and removes the contra camps in Honduras?**

Nobody talks about that there, nobody thinks about it. But there is going to be total disintegration. Will those people remain as bandits? I don't know. Who is going to take their guns from them? What are all these people going to do? In Honduras, they have no future. They could end up in El Salvador, in Duarte's army.

■ **To go back to something else, the Somozista Guard's control over the FDN. Didn't that disillusion you when you hooked up with them?**

Not really. Because when I left Nicaragua, I wanted to do things, my resentment was so great.

■ **You started working with the FDN. What results did you get?**

My job was collecting military information on the Nueva Segovia region especially. Others prepared the operations and made contacts for this student front. In May 1986, the Sandinista state's security forces uncovered the whole network and destroyed it and all my work.

■ **In your opinion, how well do the Sandinista security forces work?**

Well, I knew things that I prefer not to say for my own security, both here and there. But it works rather well.

■ **In your intelligence work, did you detect Sandinista infiltrators in the FDN?**

Yes, there are such people. And many remained up to two years in the ranks of the FDN before being detected.

■ **Did your work with the contras cost the life of anyone?**

As far as I know, not directly. What I did

was to send information on all of Nueva Segovia so that they would mount their operations. But they don't have a great capacity for doing things correctly afterward.

■ **So, you can say "I don't have any deaths on my conscience"?**

Yes, I don't have any weight; I don't feel responsible. The terrorist attack on Yalaguina caused me a great deal of sorrow, and still does. In March 1986, the contras blew up the Yalaguina power station, which supplied electricity for almost all of Region I.

■ **And you were responsible for it?**

For that, yes. I passed on the information some three months before they mounted this operation. In fact, I did not think that they were going to do it. They had made two attempts, but they had not even been able to get close. This time,

they took in 120 men under the command of Samuel from the Nicarao unit. They blew up the station, and got out with only one wounded. It was guys who had been trained in explosives in the United States who carried it off.

■ **When you found out that the station had been blown up, what was your reaction?**

I told you that it made me unhappy, because of what it meant for the country and for my region especially. Moreover, I had worked in the Nicaraguan Energy Institute before leaving for Honduras; I was given responsibility and I know perfectly well what leaving the entire area without electricity means. When they blew it up, I thought about all the people in the villages without light, with spoiled food. Now, I think that I never wanted to do that. For the chiefs, of course, it was good news, a big success. In June, they held a party to celebrate the worst blows that the FDN had dealt to the Sandinistas. And the best one was the attack on the Yalaguina power station!

■ **And the crimes of the contras, the murders of civilians. Didn't that disgust you either?**

I didn't really pay attention. But shortly before leaving the FDN, I saw a couple of old people in the El Cua zone who had had their throats cut. And really... You see these were attitudes we always discussed with other FDN members. That shocked us. There are people who do not go along with such attitudes.

■ **So, why did they permit them?**

The fact is that all this is caused by the lack of political education of the "commandos," of some of the "commandos." For them, everybody is a communist, everybody is a *piri*, that is the way they see things.

When they attack a village, they don't think that there are children there, but that everyone is a communist, period. And bullets don't make any distinctions.

■ **And when they go into peasants' homes and kill them?**

It's the same. Most of these crimes are for reasons of intrigue, revenge. Anyone who does not sympathize is a *piri*, and they kill them on the spot.

■ **Is there no way to control that, to avoid it?**

It's hard. In reality, they cannot be controlled. Presently, at the time of the \$100 million [the appropriation for the contras voted by the US Congress in June 1986], they took a decision to form a human rights section. And in each unit, there is a "human rights man." But they are exactly like the "commandos," they have the same education. And what do these "human rights people" do? They collect all the information on these crimes and present them as the work of the Sandinista army. That's all they do. There is no progress on human rights in the FDN. It's all for show. I did not see anything real, anything positive. And nobody wants to be do this "human rights" work. They give them a few courses, they get some recommendations, but in fact the reality is quite different. There is no control, they cannot be controlled.

■ **Why did you decide to leave the Contra?**

At the end of six months, they started to carry out a campaign against me where I was working. They said that I was an infiltrator from the Sandinista security services. As soon as I came, they said, "Why can it be that this *piri* has just arrived, and he has already got such a high post?" The Guards' campaign got more virulent when Nicaraguan state security destroyed all my networks in May 1986. The campaign became more direct. In September of the same year, I was incautious enough to take advantage of the passing of the Torch of Independence to go see my mother at the border. The FDN let her come in. And everyone said, "What's so special about him that he can see his mother?" In fact, they did not let anyone else in. That reinforced their idea that I was an infiltrator.

■ **From that moment, did you want to get out of the FDN?**

No, not really. I wanted to work. But the pressures started — more exactly, checks. You could move, but at the same time you couldn't. I was being watched personally. And you know that at the first sign of weakness, they'd cut your throat on the spot, without thinking about it. They started by forbidding me from going into the border area. Then, on November 4, 1986, I was jailed.

■ **How were you treated in prison?**

I was tied up for 11 days and blindfolded; I got nothing to eat, was not allowed to sleep and I was left naked. This was in what they call a PM [Military Police] zone. There was nobody there but National



Guards, those who protect the Strategic Command. Nothing but National Guards.

■ **Were you beaten?**

No, not that. They were not very sure of themselves. Before putting me in prison, they put me through a lie detector. That is a little gringo machine. CIA people ran it. They ask you ten questions, and you can only answer "yes" or "no." They put me through it on September 21, and then they let me go, and I went back to El Paraiso. But they never told me the results. In November, they called me, but it was to put me in prison and question me for the investigation.

■ **And what did they interrogate you about?**

Especially about my life before — the usual interrogation — 3-80, the Invisible One, they all suspected me.

■ **Were they good interrogators?**

One of them was very good, yes. The one who investigated me is a Guard who has specialized in the Sandinista Front since its foundation. He did this work for Somoza, investigating the Sandinistas.

■ **How did you get out?**

My wife knew that if I was five days late in getting back to the Strategic Command in El Paraiso, she should warn my family in Nicaragua that I had been jailed. In fact, I was already preparing myself for arrest at any time. Then, my mother informed an uncle working for the Organization of American States who was an officer in Somoza's Guard, although he left in 1954, specifically because he belonged to a group of officers who had risen up against Somoza. For more than 30 years he has been working for the OAS in the United States. He sent a friend to the Strategic Command, and since 3-80 knew my uncle and respected him a lot, my situation automatically changed. I got out at Christmas. It was 3-80 himself who intervened directly.

■ **Were you totally cleared?**

I was free, that is, at liberty. They took away my papers and watched me all the time.

■ **Were you thinking then of returning to Nicaragua?**

No, not yet. Not at all. I made the decision when the Invisible One arrived and give me a mission to be completed in two months. It was necessary to blow up the Quisuca TV station. I was to blow it to restore my reputation, to show that I was not an infiltrator.

They gave me the mission, and I was still being watched; I had no means, no support, no papers to move about. This mission was a trap. It was then I starting thinking. And then Esquipulas came. I thought that the time had come to return to Nicaragua.

■ **You were not afraid of the**

**Sandinistas?**

No, not really. Maybe, because of my past. I even had a chance to talk with the *compas* who were at the source of the problems that made me make up my mind to leave Nicaragua, and they were all relaxed. Maybe, that was because of the times in Nicaragua. I think that everyone has learned a lot.

■ **When you gave yourself up, how were you interrogated by the Sandinista authorities?**

There was no interrogation.

■ **What did you expect?**

I expected an interrogation. I suppose that is normal. But they just told me, "Lester, you are free to talk about what you want to. We don't force anybody here."

■ **Have you asked for protection [in Nicaragua]?**

No, absolutely not. They have told me to watch out, to avoid drinking. I'm not afraid of the people here. I am afraid of the ones on the other side.

■ **What have the FDN in Honduras said about your leaving?**

They said at the start that I had never worked for them, that I was a refugee who had been given a house and food.

■ **How did things go when you were turned over to your family? They say**

that the Segovia Theater was packed on August 23, and that you talked to the people.

I felt like a rare animal facing these people. It was as if I was in front of a jury. You feel very bad in such a situation, very bad. Do you know what it is like to make excuses to people you know? I felt very bad. I made my excuses from the bottom of my heart, because they deserved it.

■ **What was the reaction of the people?**

Well, they offered demonstrations of support. This came from people from whom I would never have expected it. It impressed me.

■ **This is a general people.**

Too generous.

■ **And if you were recalled to military service, you would go?**

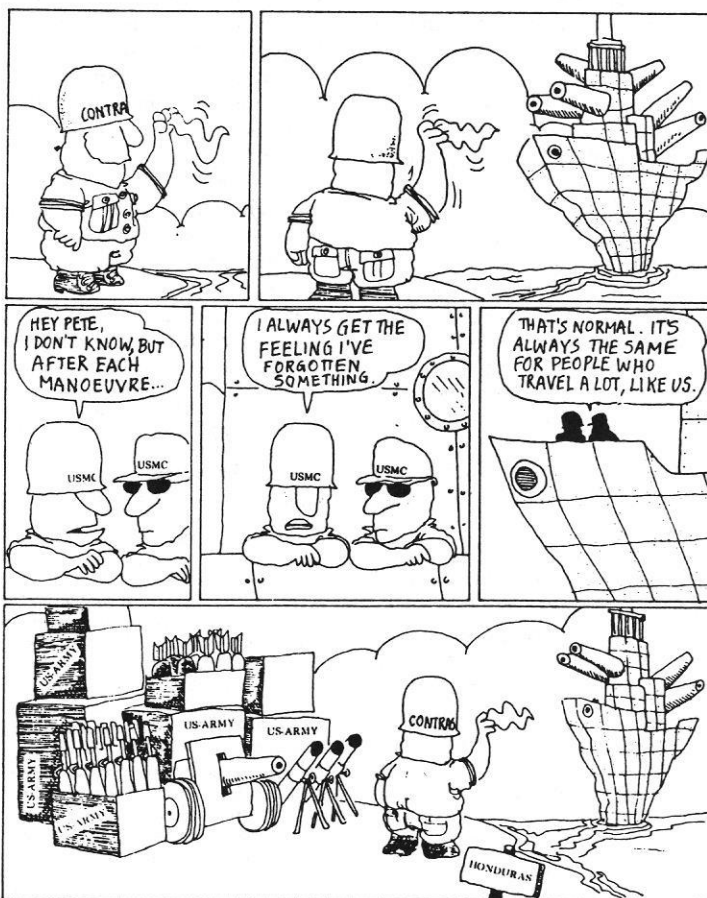
Yes, I would go. Even at the start, when I saw that they were letting me go free, I expected a call. If it comes, I will go, and that won't be hard.

■ **To wash away your sins?**

No. I don't think it would be for that reason. I have always liked military things. And it is my duty as a Nicaraguan.

■ **Do people look at you strangely in Ocotal?**

I think I'm the one who finds things strange. I'm still trying to adjust. ★



# The failure of the agrarian reform

**THE WESTERN media are focusing international attention and scrutiny on the implementation of the Esquipulas accords vis-à-vis Nicaragua. While in El Salvador, for example, President José Napoleon Duarte's idea of complying with the accords' proposal for an amnesty for political prisoners has extended to releasing two former national guards serving 30-year terms for their activities in the notorious death squads!**

**One of the major reasons for the war that has continued to tear El Salvador apart for almost eight years has been the oligarchy's resistance to any agrarian reform — a central demand of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). At a time when the Esquipulas II accord calls for "peace and social justice", there can be no lasting peace without a genuine agrarian reform.**

MICHELE RIVIERE

**I**N THIS TINY and densely populated country<sup>1</sup>, where industry represents only a fifth of the national product and still less in terms of employment<sup>2</sup>, the distribution of the land and excess population in the countryside are obviously crucial problems. Today, also, 300,000 Salvadorans are working in the United States to maintain their families at home.<sup>3</sup>

In 1971, 34% of the land was concentrated in the 0.29% of landholdings over 200 hectares. These are owned by the big oligarchical families that export coffee, cotton and some sugar cane.<sup>4</sup> These three products account for two-thirds of El Salvador's exports (coffee alone represented 56.7% in 1981 and 60.1% in 1985), and are thus one of the state's main fiscal resources. As against this, nearly 600,000 peasant families are either share-croppers (47.7%), or permanent or seasonal agricultural laborers (52.3%), only some of whom also have plots of land.<sup>5</sup>

The problem of the landless peasants worsened abruptly in the 1960s. The onset of industrialization and a slight improvement in the standard of living were quickly outweighed by population growth. The "football war" with Honduras (in fact, the expulsion of more than 50,000 Salvadoran peasants who had gone to Honduras in an attempt to better their lot) only aggravated the situation. From 1961 to 1971, the number of landless seasonal agricultural laborers grew from 23,800 to 102,900.

During the 1970s, however, while no agrarian reform was carried out, the gov-

ernment of the Salvadoran oligarchy, with the help of the Agency for International Development (AID) stimulated projects for improving food crops (maize, beans, chemical fertilizers). It was of course necessary to feed the cities, and the program did not fail to make an impact.<sup>6</sup> But this "development aid" did not solve the basic problem — the distribution of the land.

The combination of the large-scale export agriculture of the big *haciendas* and a mass of dispersed and inadequate smallholdings (individual plots or rented land) has in fact suited the oligarchy. It assures abundant and cheap labor during the harvests of coffee, sugar cane and cotton, while at other times leaving a minimum for

supporting the peasants and feeding the towns.

However, this system could not last. The good lands, the fertile ones with deep top soil, have been grabbed by the *haciendas*. For the individual plots, this leaves only shallow soils, which are quickly exhausted by intensive farming. At the same time, the share-croppers (to whom the big landowners are accustomed to renting land between the cycles of cane cultivation or before replanting coffee trees, which forces them to move on every two or three years) have no interest in improving the fertility of lands that they will soon have to vacate and leave to the landlords. This system of exploiting the peasants, moreover, blocks any takeoff of industrialization. In what is already a geographically very limited territory, hundreds of thousands of poor peasants provide no domestic market for the textile or food processing industries that developed in the 1960s.

## Backdrop to the 1979 crisis

This is the backdrop to the crisis that broke out in October 1979, which was opened by the young officers' coup d'état against the oligarchical regime. In 1976, the regime had opposed a timid agrarian reform. It called for distributing 48,000 hectares (which only 14,000 were finally distributed), forming what is today called the traditional cooperative sector.

The revolutionary junta that took power in 1979 and which quickly found itself bypassed by working-class and peasant mobilizations, promised an agrarian reform.<sup>7</sup> This project was given concrete form in March 1980 in a series of decrees — which looked impressive on paper. But we will see what their actual results were.

It is important to point out here that the US intervention in El Salvador<sup>8</sup> — which was stepped up at the end of 1979, a few months after the victory of the Sandinistas in neighbouring Nicaragua — accorded a strategic function to this agrarian reform, as important in the beginning as military aid.

1. With about half the land area of Switzerland (24,000 square kilometers), El Salvador has almost the same number of people — 5.5 million. The agricultural area is about 1,600 hectares.

2. In 1975, agriculture represented 25% of GNP; industry and construction, 25%; commerce, 23%; and the state sector, 8%. Ten years later, agriculture still represented 25%, while industry and construction represented 20%; commerce, 17% and the public sector, 13%. (This is an estimated comparison. Source: Dunkerley, *Der lange Krieg*, ISP-Verlag, 1986, p.61. [The English version is also called *The Long War*, and was published in Britain by Verso, 1982]; and in the Bulletin of the Institute for Economic Research of San Salvador University, *Coyuntura Económica* 4/5, February-March 1986, p.27) The trend is clear. Eight years of crisis and war have set back the precarious industrialization El Salvador experienced in the 1960s.

3. This summer, Reagan wanted to drive them out, which aroused a panic among the Salvadoran authorities. The measure has currently been postponed.

4. The first study dated from 1971. Sources: Dunkerley, op. cit., which is based on the work of JT Downing, *Agricultural Modernization in El Salvador*,

Cambridge 1978; a recent study by Documentation française, M. Dufumier: *La question agraire au Salvador. Problemes d'Amérique latine*, No. 83, first quarter of 1987, indicates similar proportions.

5. Source: Dunkerley and Downing, op. cit., 1971 figures. With the war and population displacements, the proportion of landless peasants must have increased further. The agricultural population is estimated at a total of 2.5 million, about half the population of the country.

6. Dufumier, op. cit. The yield of maize per hectare increased by 50%, and El Salvador was self-sufficient in maize and beans.

7. A heterogeneous group of reformist officers, pro-American officers (who were quickly to gain control), Christian Democrats (who were to divide in March 1980 over whether or not to stay in the government) and social democrats (who were to leave the government and join the FDR, along with the Christian Democrat minority).

8. Today, this is the fifth largest US intervention in the world, costing \$2 million a day! That indicates the priority that US imperialism accords to this small country.





US imperialism understood that it could not “stabilize” its domination in Central America, any more than elsewhere, without carrying out some sort of agrarian reform on a national scale that would win the support of at least a part of the peasantry for the US presence, and thereby limit the influence of the left opposition and the guerrillas. AID devoted “more than \$200 million to this effort.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1985, more than a quarter of American aid was destined for reforms and developmental or food aid.<sup>10</sup> For its part, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) financially supported the Union Popular Democrática (UPD), the main peasant union. The latter organization, founded in September 1980 and controlled by the Christian Democrats (PDC), was intended to oversee the agrarian reform and, of course, the peasants.

The recall from exile of José Napoleon Duarte, the leading figure of the PDC, and his inclusion in the revolutionary junta in March 1980, was also designed to promote reforms, notably the agrarian reform that was adopted in the same month. These reforms were to constitute the second aspect of US intervention — along with counter-insurgency warfare. Repression coupled with reforms was the cornerstone of imperialist policy in El Salvador.

This is to say that if, today, the reforms have not been carried through, it is not for any lack of will on the part of the United States and a part of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie. It is rather because they did not succeed in solving the problem of the structural obstacles in Salvadoran society, above all the resistance of the oligarchy to any reform project, even though the whole reform scheme sought to placate it. From this standpoint, the failure of the agrarian reform is a crucial setback for US intervention in general, threatening to leave only the military aspect!

The general principle of the 1980 agrari-

an reform was to distribute all landholdings over 100-150 hectares to cooperatives or individuals for repayment over 20 years. Overall, it promised to redistribute 47% of the country’s agricultural land — no small operation! Buoyed up, no doubt, by this grandiose project (on paper), former US ambassador to El Salvador, RE White, hailed it as “the most revolutionary agrarian reform in the history of Latin America.”<sup>11</sup>

### Peasant organizations violently repressed

As a “revolution,” it was immediately put under tight control. A state of siege was decreed at the same time as the reform, less against the big landowners (who were to back paramilitary organizations and death squads that acted with impunity) than against the peasants, and especially the landless seasonal workers, to keep them from taking the land. The left peasant organizations were from the outset excluded from participating in the division of the land and violently repressed.<sup>12</sup> The Salvadoran Community Union, close to the Christian Democratic Party, and then the UPD, also under the thumb of the Christian Democrats, were assigned to overseeing the process. In return, they got the key posts in the agrarian reform institutions, in particular in the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Transformation (ISTA).<sup>13</sup>

These political choices were in keeping with the social objectives of this reform, which were far from being “revolutionary.” The lands were not intended for all the peasants but for permanent agricultural workers and share croppers. The seasonal agricultural laborers were excluded. Brutal repression, both governmental and paramilitary, came down on the independent peasant movement and the unions. (This was the period of massive “disappearances” and murders.) So, the objective was not

to distribute the land — as in Nicaragua — but to help the small peasants gain ownership in return for long-term quit rents to the oligarchy.

Despite this safeguard, however, the oligarchy reacted violently. Excluded from the government that it had controlled for a half century, it created, for the first time, its own party — ARENA, the Alliance for National Renewal — led by the sinister Major d’Aubuisson. It resorted first to terror, and then to using the parliamentary majority that it held from 1982 to 1984 to block the agrarian reform.<sup>14</sup>

Without entering here too much into detail<sup>15</sup>, it should be said that of the 700,000 hectares that were supposed to be parcelled out, less than half (311,300 at the end of 1985) were actually distributed. And for these lands only a fourth of the peasants had gotten definitive titles by the end of 1985.<sup>16</sup> Over five years, therefore, less than a tenth of the country’s agricultural land was actually distributed, although the reform had promised that nearly half of it

9. *International Herald Tribune*, September 29, 1987.  
 10. According to *Coyuntura Económica*, op. cit., US aid for 1985 was divided as follows: 43% indirect aid for the war; 28.3% direct aid for the war; 19% for reform and development; 9.7% food aid (covering the biggest shortages created by the agricultural crisis).  
 11. *International Herald Tribune*, September 29, 1987.  
 12. Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS), linked to the Bloque Popular Revolucionario; and the Union de los Trabajadores del Campo (UTC). Both entered the FDR in 1980.  
 13. ISTA was founded back in 1976 at the time of the first reform project. Led at first by the far right, it was presided over after 1984 by a member of the UCS/UPD, as a result of the latter’s “social pact” with Duarte for his election to the presidency in 1984.  
 14. Not only against the left but also against government functionaries and members of the Christian Democratic Party. For example, on January 2, 1981, the chair of ISTA and two US experts were assassinated.  
 15. Marc Dufumier’s article, op. cit., offers an exhaustive balance sheet of the 1980 reform. Here, I have summed up the essential data.  
 16. Exactly 85 of the 314 cooperatives of Phase I of the agrarian reform (or 26% of the 214 hectares distributed) and 13,774 of Phase III peasants (or 22% of the 63,668 beneficiaries).

would be. And about 20,000 peasants had titles, out of the 600,000 who needed land!

The oligarchy's obstructiveness was such that out of the three "phases" provided for by the March 1980 agrarian reform, only the first has been started. The second never saw the light of day, and the third was emptied of its substance. Phase I called for dividing up holdings of more than 500 hectares (469 estates) into 314 cooperatives. Out of 31,359 beneficiaries of this division, at the end of 1985 (for reasons that will be explained later on), only 26,163 remained at the end of 1985.

## Duarte suspends agrarian reform plans

ISTA took charge of this division and advanced compensation to the landowners (who got 15% of the value of their lands outright and the rest in the form of "bonds" paying a maximum of 7%). Phase II was to divide up estates between 100-150 and 500 hectares, which includes the big coffee plantations. In all, 1,739 holdings totalling 340,000 hectares (23% of agricultural land) were to be distributed.

However, barely a month after the March 1980 decree, in view of the reaction of the oligarchy, Duarte suspended the project. And when ARENA got the majority in parliament, it passed a law that fixed the maximum for landholdings at 245 hectares (instead of 100-150 hectares). Moreover, this made it possible to keep several estates within families, thus enabling them to hold onto their lands. With the "reserves rights" that, in any case, were granted to landowners, the lands left to be distributed amount today to 35,000 hectares, or a tenth of what was intended.

Phase III, conceived by the American expert Roy Prosterman, who did the same in Vietnam, encouraged the share-croppers to become owners. Some 150,000 hectares were to be allotted to 117,000 peasants. But, in 1982, ARENA got Phase II suspended for cotton and sugar cane plantations, as well as grain and livestock ranches. Thus, at the end of 1985, only 97,300 hectares had been granted to 63,668 families. In total, 311,300 hectares (19.7% of agricultural land) have been distributed to 89,831 peasant families, of whom, as we saw before, only a quarter have received definitive titles.

However, the oligarchy's resistance does not explain everything. After all Duarte did not fail to get the upper hand. Even if the land titles are not definitive, a fifth of the land has been distributed, and tens of thousands of peasants have benefitted.

"Benefitted," however, and rightly so, is far from the term used today by the majority of the peasants in the reformed sector! One should rather say that they are heavily in debt. Because a quit-rent has its logic. The payment advanced by ISTA for Phase I and by a special AID-assisted institute (FINATA) for Phase III has put a burden of

debt on every hectare of land distributed. It amounted to an average of 3,000 colons a hectare in the first case, and 1,644 in the second (which indicates poorer land). The peasants or the cooperatives, who were exempted from payment for the first four years, have to pay 9.5% interest on the advances given by ISTA and FINATA, which is more than the interest on the agrarian reform "bonds". These conditions explain why part of the beneficiaries of Phase I have abandoned their cooperatives. Many others would prefer individual plots outside the bureaucratic control of ISTA.

Summing up the state of agrarian debt, the Economic Research Institute of San Salvador University noted at the end of 1985 that for Phase I cooperatives, "debt has nearly doubled as a result of the interest, amounting to a debt of 49,493 colons. The debt by land area is 2,904.3 colons per manzana and 4.3 million on the average per cooperative....According to a study carried out by Robert R Nathan Associates Inc. (1985), 'most cooperatives show serious financial problems. Out of 14 case studies, only 5 have a liquidity rate (current assets and debts) of more than 1.0 and none is as high as 2.0. In six out of 14 cases, debts exceed total assets, which in normal commercial terms would indicate bankruptcy'."<sup>17</sup>

The situation revealed by this study in 1985 has only got worse since. Even AID recognizes today, in accordance with San Salvador University, that "75% of cooperatives are unable to pay the interest on their debt, which is estimated at \$800 million."<sup>18</sup> According to the same source, minister of agriculture Carlos Aquilino Duarte is unwilling to recognize that more than 40% of the cooperatives are in that situation.

## Agricultural debt reached staggering proportions

This figure of \$800 million (4,000 million colons) is a staggering one for El Salvador. It includes the whole agricultural debt, both that of phases I and II and of the 1976 "traditional sector." The cooperative organizations belonging to COACES, which demonstrated on July 4, 1987, in San Salvador, have arrived at similar figures<sup>19</sup>: "The debt has reached 3,500 million colons. The value of this debt equals the national budget for 1987. In other terms, the agricultural debt amounts to a sum almost identical to that of US aid for a year."<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, since the dramatic reckoning that was made at the end of 1985, the Duarte government has tried to alleviate this debt by devaluing the colon by half. The landowners groaned, since the value of indemnities not paid in cash shrank.

The major result of this debt for the peasants in the cooperatives has been that they have exchanged the old domination of the landowners for that of the banks and ISTA. Since they do not have sufficient liquidity, the cooperatives (in this case those of

Phase 1), "are going into debt to the banks to meet expenses necessary for the proper running of the farms....The bulk of these loans serve to cover ordinary expenses of the farming cycle — purchases of seed and fertilizer, repairs of equipment, maintenance of buildings, animal care, wages, etc. The cooperative members themselves get 'advances on income' on the basis of the work done by each of them. These advances are supposed to be paid back at the end of the cycle from the sale of harvests....But deficits are much more frequent [than profits], and any profits go essentially to paying the 'agricultural' debt. Cooperative members thus consider themselves rather to be agricultural workers. They stop working whenever the bank is unable to pay them their 'advances on incomes,' which for them take the place of wages."<sup>21</sup>

## Peasants under thumb of agrarian bureaucracy

This is the measure of the failure of a reform that sought to placate the oligarchy by paying it compensation. The peasants have not become the independent producers promised and so highly touted by the whole free-enterprise ideology. Those who advocated "less state" have in fact in El Salvador, through the agrarian reform, transferred the peasants from subordination to the big landowners to that of the — often corrupt — agrarian reform bureaucrats.

The banks and ISTA in fact exercise direct control over production decisions. For example, they refuse credits to projects such as growing vegetables for the domestic market or melons for export, which are not considered to offer a high enough return. Thus, ISTA exerts direct tutelage over the management of cooperatives. This is a source of constant conflicts with the peasants, who demand their autonomy.

Miguel Aleman, president of the federation of cooperatives FECORAO said, for example, on the day when his association joined UNTS last April: "Life has not changed for cooperative members, despite all the propaganda poured out by the government telling the Salvadoran people that the agrarian reform sector offers advantages to cooperative members. The only thing that has changed is the form of exploitation."<sup>22</sup>

17. *Coyuntura economica* 2, November 1985, p.6.

18. *International Herald Tribune*, September 29, 1987.

19. Confederación de Asociaciones Cooperativas del Salvador, which embraces four federations of cooperatives — FECORAO in the eastern zone; FECORAP-CEN in the central zone; FEDECOOPADES and FENACOA — as well as a federation of savings and credit cooperatives (FEDECACES) and a transportation cooperative (FENACITES, city buses for example). In all it includes 236 cooperatives and 16,000 members. (from *Pueblo Unido*, a workers' and people's news bulletin backed by the UNTS, No. 6, July, 1987.)

20. *Idem*. El Salvador's gross national product in 1986 has been estimated at 3,036.7 million colons by *Coyuntura economica*, No. 11, February 1987.

21. Dufumier, op. cit., p.73-74.

22. UNTS journal, April 1987, p.2



In the spring of 1984, when the UPD signed a "social pact" with Duarte in order to get him elected (and thereby end ARENA's blocking of the agrarian reform), all these problems were already present, but they had not assumed the same sharpness as today. A large part of the payments on the debt only started in 1985, after four years of grace. But the crisis accelerated with the 1986 "economic package".

## Partial victory for cooperatives

Two problems cropped up to aggravate the conflict, and in less than two years led to the breaking of the 1984 "social pact." First of all there was the status of the cooperatives. In February 1985, a majority in the National Assembly (including 33 PDC Assembly members) voted through a new law on the cooperatives, granting them considerable autonomy of management.

Duarte vetoed the bill. The government-linked UPD left the ground to the opposition cooperative federations, which grouped themselves in COACES. Besides autonomy in management, they called for recognition of cooperatives with 18 members rather than the present 30 and a lowering of the age of responsibility from 21 to 16. They demanded credits from the banks without strings attached (in particular abolition of "political" credit, given only to cooperatives that accept the "social pact" and link themselves to the Christian Democrats), as well as better prices for their products.

On the initiative of COACES, a big demonstration was held in San Salvador on July 6, 1985, to support these demands. The peasants won a partial victory. The essentials of the cooperatives' law were finally adopted in May 1986, after a year of struggles and pressures. The price for beans was raised from 70 to 100 colons a quintal. However, the accord was only signed in March 1986, that is, after the harvest. That left the benefits "to the coyotes," as the peasants say, that is to the middlemen.<sup>23</sup>

These results, for which the COACES federations got the political credit, sharpened the crisis in the government's relations with its own "transmission belts" — the UPD and the Christian Democrat-linked associations that emerged in the framework of the agrarian reform.<sup>24</sup> A part of the UPD even participated in the founding of the UNTS in February 1986.

A second element, however, was to precipitate this conflict — the accelerated economic crisis that El Salvador has been experiencing since the devaluation and the early 1986 "economic package." These measures were supposed to stimulate exports, improve agriculture prices and stabilize the economy. On the contrary they raised the prices of imports, aggravated inflation and unemployment and swelled the government deficit, which they were supposed to relieve.



Even the business circles of FUSADES throw cold water on the optimism that the government is still displaying about economic perspectives. "Since 1977, in many aspects, we have been seeing an aggravation of the general situation, because the process of recession has been coupled with financial disequilibrium," explained Rafael Rodríguez Loucel, FUSADES' economist.<sup>25</sup> One index more than any other points up the extent of this crisis: Between 1981 and 1986, per capital gross national product fell by 16.7%, and after a brief period of stability in 1984-85, the fall resumed over the last year.<sup>26</sup>

## Agricultural workers losing jobs

The new boost to exports was supposed especially to favor those of coffee. The "economic package" hoped to collect a special surtax of 15% from them to relieve the deficit caused by the war.<sup>27</sup> But the results were the opposite. To be sure, in value, coffee exports increased in 1985 and 1986, benefitting from the higher prices (+48% in 1986) caused by the bad harvest in Brazil.<sup>28</sup> But this market windfall did not last, and already doubts are being expressed about the fiscal receipts forecast for 1987.

"Out of the total fiscal receipts planned for, it is expected that the tax on coffee exports will bring in 900 million colons (32.1% of taxes). This is an optimistic calculation based on a price of 190 dollars a quintal. Since the basis of calculation has changed for current prices and the price will be under \$135 (FOB), the surtax will not be collected, and the ordinary tax will fall."<sup>29</sup> Above all, the temporary increase in the value of exports has not braked the fall in coffee production that has been going on for several years. "Coffee production dropped from 4.5 million quintals in 1979 to 2.7 million in 1984."<sup>30</sup> El Salvador's Asociación Cafetelera estimates it today at 2.2 million quintals. This represents a decline of one half of total production in seven years. Between 1985 and 1986, the coffee yield also dropped from 13.6 to 12.5 quintals a manzana.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of jobs (seasonal ones at harvest), as well as for the agrarian revolution, this evolution has been catastrophic. In a small overpopulated country where the oligarchy has rejected agrarian reform in order to hold onto their estates, the land under coffee cultivation is declining, but it is not being redistributed and the agricultural workers are losing their jobs.

The cotton crisis is no less grave. The area under cultivation in 1980-81 was 58,100 hectares. In 1983-84, it fell to 36,700 hectares, and no figures have been available on this since then. In 1980-81, the harvest reached 129,000 metric tons, and in 1983-84, it fell to 88,500 metric tons. The value of cotton exports, however, indicates the decline: in 1980-81, the value of cotton exports was \$53 million; in 1984-85, it was \$10 million; in 1985-86 it was \$38 million; and in 1986-87 it is expected to be \$16 million.

Hoping for a slight upturn in international prices, the government decided last summer to increase the area under cultivation. The target is to regain the 1983 level, or 42,000 hectares, in particular with technical aid from Israel and with AID financing in the eastern zone. But the results are very uncertain. This is for two reasons. In the first place, it was the cotton producers who in 1982 applied pressure to get their lands excluded from Phase II of the agrarian reform and also got guarantees for their prices and for the purchase of their entire crop. Then, using the pretext of FMLN sabotage, the big producers demanded government aid, with the result that the central bank "fi-

23. Interview with FENACOA, summer 1987.

24. There are many of them — ACOPAI, FESACORA (first agrarian reform), UCS, ANIS (Indians), ASTA, UPD. ANIS is divided into a governmental organization and another non-governmental one (which is working today with the UNTS).

25. *Infopress centroamerica* 751, August 13, 1987, p.11.

26. *Coyuntura economica* 14/15, June 1987, p.15. CEPAL figures.

30. *La deuda externa salvadoreña*, pamphlet published by San Salvador University, January 1987, article by Mario Lungo, p.78.

31. Official figures, in *Coyuntura economica* 11, February 1987, p.8. One manzana equals 1.4 hectares.

32. *Infopress centroamerica* 744, June 25, 1987, p.8. For all the data on the cotton crisis, see issues 734 and 758, 1987.

nanced the deliberate failure to repay debts and capital flight."<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, by giving priority to exports, the producers are going to aggravate the crisis of the domestic market. In 1984, textile producers were already complaining about the adequacy of the harvest (they needed 300,000 quintals more). Moreover, cotton seed is a major source of edible oils. The impact of the cotton crisis is therefore predictable. It is going to aggravate the crisis of the textile industry and price rises, especially of oils.

Food production, which the agrarian reform was supposed precisely to bolster, was hit by a growing crisis as a result of the "economic package." Already, as we have seen, the burden of the agricultural debt falls on the small producers. But the rise in the prices of imports has given them the coup de grace, making fertilizer unaffordable. A peasant questioned recently summed up the whole failure of the agrarian reform in these words: "The land is bad. Every year it produces less. I don't have enough money to buy fertilizer or enough to pay the mortgages."<sup>33</sup>

### Wages fall as inflation soars

In other words, despite a slight increase in the area under cultivation (even for rice between 1984 and 1985), or despite the timid agrarian reform, production of the main staples (in which El Salvador was self-sufficient at the end of the 1970s) is stagnating or falling. Maize fell from 11,000 to 9,000 quintals; beans went up only slightly from 1,060 to 1,079; and rice fell from 1,376 to 1,150. "The production of staple cereals shows a deficit of about 3 million quintals owing to drought and especially to the higher fertilizer prices brought on by devaluation," the same source notes. US food aid is Duarte's only recourse.

The consequences of this for the Salvadoran people were not long in coming. The prices that the so-called Institute for Regulating Supply (IRA) was supposed to stabilize are soaring. In April 1986 already, the gap between official and real prices was 34% for maize, 67% for rice, 98% for red beans, 70% for black beans, 18% for sugar and 8% for oils.<sup>34</sup> A year later, the increase in prices is officially estimated at 35% to 40%. The prices offered by the IRA are notoriously inadequate for meeting the needs of the producers, and the IRA is taking only 6.6% of the production of the Phase III agrarian reform farms.<sup>35</sup>

A large part of production, moreover, is not destined for the market but for the consumption of the farmers themselves. American aid, which is supposed to make up for the food deficit, does not help matters any. AID's supplies of powdered milk have, for example, provoked a reaction from milk producers, who note that "the total imports of powdered milk continually exceed na-

tional demand, and have completely altered the market (the IRA alone and the AID program in 1983 imported the equivalent of 46% of national consumption).<sup>36</sup>

Pastry makers, bakers and ice-cream manufacturers cover 60% to 90% of their needs with powdered milk, and government inspections to limit this practice remain ineffectual. There is a good reason for this. In the IRA, corruption is rampant. Last summer, the unions denounced highly-placed Christian Democratic functionaries in the institute who held back the milk in order to sell it at higher prices in the provinces!

Alongside this surge of inflation, agricultural incomes remain mired in poverty. Between 1978 and 1985, real wages for agricultural laborers cultivating the coffee trees fell from 7 colons to 5.57; for those cultivating cotton from 6.25 to 3.18; for cane cutters from 5.50 to 4.48; and for coffee harvesters from 9.75 to 5.67. The situation of agricultural laborers worsened further in 1986, since the index of real agricultural wages dropped from 2.65 in February to 2.14 in December.<sup>37</sup>

In March last year, the Ministry of Economic Planning (MIPLAN) estimated that the income necessary to feed a family was 2,607 colons a month and that agricultural laborers were getting 500 colons! As for the incomes of peasants in the agrarian reform sector, they are hardly better. We have seen that in the Phase I cooperatives, the producers regard themselves as agricultural wage workers, living on bank advances. For Phase II producers, according to Dufumier's study at the end of 1985, net incomes did not exceed 1,250 colons per family, with 535 colons representing consumption of their own products and 715 colons representing money income. "This does not cover all expenses for necessities (clothing, soap and food not produced on the holding), and the peasants continue to sell their labor power on the big plantations during the harvest. Agricultural wages make up on average 66% of the total income of families that have benefitted from the third phase."<sup>38</sup>

All along the line, the balance sheet is clear: The 1980 agrarian reform has run aground, and the American scheme for favoring small owners in order to "prevent a new Nicaragua" has thrown the peasants, even in the agrarian reform sector, definitively into the opposition. We should not forget here that alongside the tens of thousands of peasants who have "benefitted" from the reform, there are still hundreds of thousands without land. The massive population displacements brought on by the war (1.2 million exiled or forced to move to other parts of the country) have only served to magnify the disaster. And Reagan and Duarte are still talking about a war "imported" from Cuba or from the USSR!

The failure of the agrarian reform has deeply divided the peasants. The already evident tensions between agricultural wage workers (a part of whom work for the

cooperatives) and producers in the agrarian reform sector has not been overcome. They have been compounded, since 1986, by a new division within the cooperative sector. The Christian Democrat-dominated organizations strongly linked to the agrarian reform institutions have all experienced either splits (between governmental and non-governmental organizations) or outflows to other organizations. The newest of such processes, one that has been going on for two years, is a part of the cooperative sector moving toward the UNTS.<sup>39</sup>

### Murders and "disappearances" resuming

The mobilizations conducted by COACES in recent years, especially its success in 1985, have contributed considerably to this evolution, and, by the same token, to the loss of credibility of the UPD and its affiliated organizations. But this reorganization of the cooperative sector is only in its beginnings, and the government is subjecting the organizations it does not control — like all independent organizations (trade unions, cooperatives or humanitarian groups) — to systematic repression. The murders and disappearances are starting again. Between September 1986 and June 1987, 130 such cases involving trade-unionists and cooperative members were registered. While Duarte is negotiating with the FMLN/FDR, he rejects any negotiations with the independent people's organizations.<sup>40</sup> And he has recently been responsible for the death of the chair of the non-governmental Human Rights Commission (CDHES), Herbert Anaya Sanabria, who was gunned down on the streets of the capital on October 26.

The agrarian reform has failed; the "democratic opening" announced with great fanfare at the time of Duarte's election in 1984 has also failed. In two to three years, the scheme of repression coupled with reforms has failed. All that remains is the war and the terrorist practice of murders and "disappearances." But, regardless, from one end of the planet to the other, all "independent" observers are focusing their binoculars on the application of the Esquipulas II accord in Nicaragua. ★

33. *International Herald Tribune*, September 29, 1987.

34. Study by San Salvador University, *Coyuntura economica* 6/7, April 1986, p.5.

35. Dufumier, *op. cit.*, p.81.

36. *Infopress centroamerica* 757, September 24, 1987, p.6.

37. *Coyuntura economica* 4/5, March 1986 and 11, February 1987.

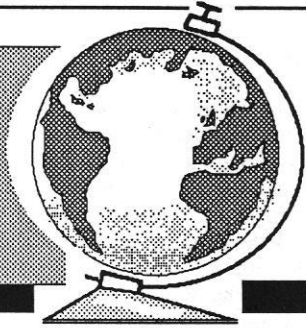
38. Dufumier, *op. cit.*, p.82.

39. UNTS includes the unions (private and public sector) cooperative, student and humanitarian associations (such as CRIBDES, Comité Cristiano para las "re poblaciones," which is for the return of the persons displaced by the war to their lands).

40. Duarte's objective is not peace but to defuse the national situation on the eve of the March elections and later scuttle the negotiations (while putting the blame on the FMLN) At the same time he wants to put pressure on the Sandinistas to negotiate directly with the contras.



# AROUND THE WORLD



## SOUTH AFRICA

### Save the lives of the Sharpesville Six!

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to stop the execution of six Blacks sentenced to death on the charge that they had "a common purpose" with those who killed a Le-koia Black town councillor, Jacob Dlamini.

The latter lost his life on September 3, 1984, the first day of the rent protests in the Vaal Triangle that sparked the wave of Black rebellion that has continued since. Their appeal was rejected in early December. Lawyers for the six announced in mid-January that they were launching an international petition campaign for clemency for their clients. They said that calls for clemency had already come from the governments of the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and the countries of the EEC. In South Africa itself pleas for clemency have come from the South African Council of Churches, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the National Council of Trade Unions.

The six condemned to death are Majalefa Reginald Sefatsa, 30 years of age; Reid Malebo Mokoena, 22; Oupa Moses Diniso, 30; Theresa Ramashamola, 24; Duma Joshua Khumalo, 29; and Francis Don Mokgesi, 29. The lawyers quoted portions of the appeal judge's verdict to the South African *Weekly Mail* which show, albeit in tangled legal jargon, that they were sentenced to capital punishment on the basis of a nebulous charge confirmed essentially only by the testimony of one person.

"In the case of these accused it is perhaps debatable whether a causal connection be-

tween the conduct of each, individually, and the death of the deceased had indeed not been proved, but in the case of others it must be accepted without doubt, in my opinion, that no causal connection can be found to have been proved. This is particularly obvious in the case of Mokoena and Ramashamola.

"I shall therefore assume for the purposes of my judgement that it has not been proved in the case of any of the six accused/convicted of murder that their conduct had contributed (as a cause) to the death of the deceased."

The judge went on to say: "In the present case I am dealing with the position of the six accused who have been convicted of murder solely on the basis of common purpose."

The ruling also stated that the defendants were implicated mainly by the evidence of a single witness: "For that reason alone his evidence should have been treated with great caution." In general "conspiracy" laws are among the most iniquitous instruments of repression in capitalist countries. In South Africa, this legal "principle" seems to have been drawn out to the ultimate, deadly absurdity. ★

## MIDDLE EAST

### Appeal to the Socialist International

IN AN OPEN LETTER, Mattityahu Peled, a member of the Israeli parliament for the Progressive List, called on January 3 on the social democratic world organization to try to persuade its adherents in Israel to oppose the deportation of Palestinians from their homeland. Peled wrote:

"I find it necessary to write to you urgently, concerning the plans of Defence Minister Yitzchak Rabin to carry out a deportation of Palestinians from the occupied territories.

"Mr. Rabin seems fond of this method of deporting Palestinians without any form of trial. During Menachem Begin's term in office, the use of deportations was stopped; but Rabin reintroduced it in 1985. Recently, he declared himself, on the Knesset [parliament] floor, to be 'proud' that he had deported more Palestinians in three years than the Likud [right-wing] did in seven.

"On this very day, the army authorities, under Rabin's guidance, have issued deportation orders against nine more Palestinians.

"I urge you to exert any influence you may have upon Rabin, who — as a leader of the Israeli Labor Party — is your fellow member of the Socialist International. He should be stopped from carrying out this plan, which is inhuman, which is contrary to the Geneva Convention of 1949 (of which Israel is a signatory) and which will sharpen the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Should these deportations take place, still more hatred and bloodshed might follow. I hope that you will make all possible efforts to help prevent this from happening." ★

## IRELAND

### Protest against mass raids

FIFTY THOUSAND homes in the formerly independent part of Ireland were raided in November, allegedly in search of IRA arms dumps. At a conservative estimate of five people per household, 250,000 people, one eighth of the population of the state, were affected, almost one person in ten. No arms were found, other than a tiny number of pistols and shotguns. The homes of many trade-union and community organization leaders were hit. When challenged, the police said that they were using lists of persons active in the protests against the treatment of republican prisoners in the Northern Ireland in 1980-81.

At the time, there was little response to the raids. But on January 21 in Dublin, a united front meeting was held in the hall of the Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union (IDATU) in Dublin to try to begin a fight a fightback against the escalation of repression. It was chaired by Ann Conway of People's Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International, whose home was hit in the November raids.

The platform included John Mitchell, chair of IDATU; Michael Farrell, author of books on the history of the Northern Ireland state and one of the original leaders of the Northern Ireland civil rights movement; as well as a representative of the republican political organization, Sinn Fein, and of the campaign against extraditing political refugees to the North.

Mitchell stressed the treacherousness of the Fianna Fail party now in power, which has a more nationalist and populist image than the other main bourgeois party, Fine Gael. Farrell pointed out that the raids were an all-Ireland operation coordinated between the Dublin and London governments, and were part of rapidly growing collaboration. It was in this context, he said, that a British surveillance plane had flown deep into the formally independent area.

There was already evidence that British forces were being allowed to cross over the border. Proposals were raised from the floor for organizing protests against the expected rejection of the appeal of the people railroaded to prison in the witch-hunt that

## International VIEWPOINT

SPECIAL  
INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY ISSUE

Issue number 135,  
February 22

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soon as possible

followed the Birmingham bombing in England in the mid-1970s.

The hall was filled with activists, a great many of whom had not come together since the end of H-Block campaign. ★

BRITAIN

**Abortion rights campaign takes off**

OVER 25,000 people took part in demonstrations in Britain on January 16 and 21 against MP David Alton's attempt to restrict the time-limit for abortion to eighteen weeks (see IV 131). On January 16, nearly 15,000 people participated in demonstrations, pickets, meetings and lobbies of members of parliament's offices held in every major town and city in a local day of action against the Alton Bill.

Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) has been set up to defend the 1967 Abortion Act against this latest attack. This Act allows a woman access to abortion up to 28 weeks if two doctors agree that there is a danger to her physical or mental health if she continues with the pregnancy. Six thousand women a year have abortions in Britain after eighteen weeks. About 20 per cent of these come from abroad — mainly Ireland and the Spanish state.

Alton's bill is the fifteenth attempt since the 1967 Act came into effect to amend it restrictively. In many ways it is the most dangerous: the anti-abortionists are more united than previously. It attacks the issue of time-limits, perceived as a weak spot of the pro-choice movement. And it also comes at a time when the labour movement is dominated by "new realism" — the idea that it is not possible to win through mass mobilizations of the working class and oppressed.

On Thursday, January 21 FAB called a national day of action in London, and four thousand students marched against the bill. Young women will be particularly affected by any restriction on the time-limit because, through poor sex education or irregular menstruation, they may not realize until late in the day that they are pregnant.

Thousands lobbied their MPs on the day of action, while a packed rally listened to Labour MPs, trade unionists and feminists explaining why they are opposed to the bill. Speakers from the Spanish state and Ireland explained how women are forced to come to Britain for abortions because of the more restrictive laws in force in some other parts of Europe. Militants in the health unions, currently involved in action against Thatcher's cuts, sent greetings to the rally. One fifth of all late abortions are carried out on women who approached their doctors before their twelfth week of pregnancy. Cuts in the health services, and the legal requirement to have the agreement of two doctors, cause many delays in abortion operations and lead women to resort to the private sector: half of all abortions are carried out by charities and

private clinics.

Over 5,000 women joined in a torch-lit demonstration on the evening of January 21. Chanting slogans in support of a woman's right to choose, they marched through central London to show their determination that the right-wing will not succeed in pushing back the gains women made in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Alton Bill has now passed its second reading parliament, with some Labour MPs voting for the bill and against party policy in support of a woman's right to choose. These MPs must be forced into line on party policy before the third reading of the bill. The fight is now on in the Labour Party, the trade unions and in the streets to build for the national demonstration on March 19 — called jointly by FAB and the national trade-union federation, the TUC — to defeat the Alton Bill. ★

INTERNATIONAL

**Moscow Trials Campaign**

THE CAMPAIGN to clear the names of the accused in the Moscow Trials has been collecting signatories from all over the world (see IV 129 for full appeal and list of signatories). In this latest list of further supporters, a notable new signatory is that of Bruno Kreitsky, ex-chancellor of Austria and vice-president of the Socialist International. You can contact the campaign c/o Michael Löwy, 34 rue des Lyonnais, 75005, Paris, France.

**Latest signatories:**

**Argentine:** José Aricó.

**Australia:** Joyce Stevens, exec. cttee CP; Peter Murphy, CP nat. cttee.; Navis Robertson, Coalition for Disarmament and Peace; Bob Brown, MP; Chris White, dep. gen. sec. union federation South Australia; Peter Davidson, unionist; Denis Day, unionist; Chris Ray, unionist; Jo Vallentine, senator; Laurie Aarons, CP leader.

**Austria:** Joseph Cap, sec. Young Socialists (JS); Bruno Kreitsky, vice-pres. Socialist International, ex-chancellor; Leopold Spira, ex-CP leader; Peter Pilz; Andreas Wabl.

**Canada:** Bruce Allen; Bruce Kidd, Toronto Univ.; Rilt Prinsep; David Jaffe; Domenico Binetti.

**Chile:** Belarmino Elgueta Becker, ex-MP; Sergio Grez, Centre for Political Studies on Chile.

**Egypt:** Bachir El Sibaï, author.

**France:** Denis Berger, Université Paris VIII; Michel Riot-Sarcey, historian.

**Guatemala:** José Manuel Fortuny, ex-leader Workers' Party.

**Hong Kong:** Chan Cheong, Kwun Tong District Board; Editorial Board of *October Review*; Lee See, sec. RCP.

**Italy:** Patrizia Arnaboldi, MP Democrazia proletaria (DP); Giovanni Russo Spina, nat. sec. DP; Luigi Vinci, DP leader; Antonio Lombardi, circolo Mondo Nuovo Co-

seuza; Nicola Avruscio; Gino Dieni; Raffaele Ferrelli; Antonio Ferri; Giovanni Peta; Vito Benigno; Rocco Morano; Vittorio Lombardi; Francesca Longo; Paolo Goffo; Derek Boothman, Perugia Univ.; Walter Pittoni; Manuela Caposciutti; Stefano Tanci; Giangabriele Vertova; Grazia Paoletti; Franco Toscani; Ivana Vidotto; Massimo Vitti; Augusto Illuminati, Univ. of Urbino; Peter Kammerer, Univ. of Urbino; Angelo Trento, Univ. of Marerata; Antonio Melis, Univ. of Siena; Saverio Tutino; Prof. Luciano Canfora.

**Mexico:** Gilberto Rincon Gallardo, gen. sec. PMS; Valentín Campa, ex-president SP; Arnaldo Martínez Verdugo, ex-gen. sec. CP; Heriberto Castillo, pres. cand. PMS; Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, pres. cand.; René Aviles, ed. *El Burro-Excelsior*; Humberto Bas, asst. ed. *Uno mas Uno*; Efraim Calvo, MP; J Cota, MP; Alejandro Galvez, ed. *Criticas de la Economia politica*; Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, ed. *Jornada*; Jaciel Montaya, MP; Pablo Pascua Moncayo, MP; Camillo Valenzuela, MP.

**Spanish state:** Wilebaldo Solano, ex-leader POU.

**Turkey:** Mehmet Ali Aybar, ex-leader Workers' Party and Party of Socialist Revolution, member of Russell Tribunal; Alev Ates, leader ASIS union (DISK); Murat Belge, ex-prof.; Ismail Besikçi, sociologist; Cenani Bisakçi, unionist; Uğur Cankoçak, unionist; Yasar Kemal, author; Rifat Kendirilgil, leader ASIS (DISK); Ertugrul Kürkçü, leader Party/Liberation Front; Kerem Nebioglu, leader GIDA-IS (DISK); Aziz Nesin, author; Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu; Metin Özek, Istanbul Univ.; Emil Galip Sandalci, author; Ali Sirmen, collaborator Cumhuriyet; Muteber Yildirim; Mustafa Sönmez, author; Prof. Bülent Tanör; Sirin Tekeli, women's movement leader; Mine Urgan; Gündüz Vassaf; Ragıp Zaralı, author; Ebran Bener, author.

**USA:** Isak Arbus, pres. Holocaust Survivors Assn.; Prof. Jeffrey Brotz, Univ. of California; Prof. Paul Breines, Boston College; Robert Brenner, ed. board *Against the Current*; Prof. Howard Brick, Univ. of Arizona; Sheila Delany, Simon Fraser Univ.; Joseph Dorinson, Long Island Univ.; Gloria Esenwein, Cincinnati Nuclear Freeze; Leslie Evans, Centre for Pacific Run Studies; Prof. Richard Greeman, Univ. of Hartford; Ronnie Gilbert, singer; Janice Jackson, sec. Cincinnati NOW; Deborah Jordon, Cincinnati Nuclear Freeze; Allan Hunter, American Institute; Asst. Prof. Henry Lesnick, CUNY; Prof. Frank Leutrich, Duke Univ.; Norman Mailer, author; William Mandel, broadcaster; Asst. Prof. Kathleen MacCormick, Carnegie Mellon Univ.; Prof. Bertell Ollman, New York Univ.; Grace Paley, author; John Ranz, exec. sec. Holocaust Survivors Assn.; Max Rosenfeld, ed. board *Jewish Currents*; Pete Seeger, singer; Mark Sharron, Ed. D.; Rowland Watts, pres. Workers' Defense League; Laurie Weir & Jacek Lisiewicz, architects; Prof. Howard Zinn, Boston Univ. ★




  
**BOOKS**

## **Perestroika and the new thinking**

**Mikhail Gorbachev**  
**Collins (GB), £15; Harper & Row**  
**(USA), \$19.45. 1987.**

**L**AUNCHED in several languages at once, Gorbachev's book contains many pages of propaganda rehashing the current themes of the Soviet leaders. It does not, nor could it, offer innovations with respect to what the author has said on other occasions, especially over the past year. This does not detract from the fact that the book holds a definite interest, inasmuch as it represents a rather systematic exposition of the present political and economic choices of the Soviet bureaucracy. In this sense, it makes it possible to get a clear idea of which elements are new, and on the other hand, what are the substantial elements of continuity. The new elements, especially with respect to the Brezhnev era, can be summed up as follows:

1) Recognition that the USSR has come to the brink of a crisis and that without a drastic change is condemned, at best, to prolonged stagnation;

2) denunciation of the paralysis generated by the absence of active participation by the masses, by the waste of acquired technical and cultural potential owing to excessive centralization, and of governmental and management procedures in general that make it impossible to oversee or criticize the leaders.

3) recognition of the reduction of the role of the soviets to an essentially formal one and, more generally, of the fact that "the workers were dispossessed of their constitutional right to direct involvement in the affairs of the state."

4) criticism of the bureaucratization of culture and the "ossification of social thought".

5) criticism of the fusion of the party with the state apparatuses.

The objective of perestroika, Gorbachev explains, is overcoming this state of affairs. It represents, in his own words, a real revolution, or more precisely, a revolution at once "from above" and "from below." It is not necessary here to recall what the lines are of the "revolution," which Gorbachev

summarizes and clarifies repeatedly in his book. In so doing, he rehashes his previous statements and the decisions of the Central Committee of the CPSU, in particular the one adopted at the plenum in June. It is enough to point out that even in the book Gorbachev stresses a combination of reform of the economic mechanisms and of the political ones, that is, "democratization of all aspects of society": "Democratization is the key to the restructuring."

It might be correctly noted that criticisms no less radical than Gorbachev's and no less significant reform projects have been put forward on several occasions and in some cases more vigorously and systematically in other bureaucratized transitional societies (in Yugoslavia, in Poland, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in China in the first phase of the so-called cultural revolution). To some extent, this is true even for the USSR in Khrushchev's time.

However, the essential point is that all this is happening in the USSR in a particularly concentrated form after a 20-year impasse, and that what has been set in motion, independently of the projects of Gorbachev and of the leading group around him, is an unparalleled dynamic of political, social



and cultural radicalization. For all these reasons, it would be a grave error to underestimate what is taking place in the USSR.

However, Gorbachev's book is also significant because it highlights the essential elements of continuity. First all in his criticism of the existing situation and the counterproductive mechanisms, he misses the fundamental thing. He does not expose the basic fact that the brake on economic development is constituted by a privileged social layer, which precisely in order to defend its privileges — and the political power that guarantees them — has imposed an authoritarian regime. Even he, it is true, is forced to denounce certain privileges. But they are, you might say, illicit privileges,

acquired on the fringes of the system and in contradiction to the norms of the bureaucratized society itself.

"Privileges established by the state, on quantitative and qualitative bases of socially useful work" are defended by Gorbachev, as they were by his predecessors. And it is no accident that the theme of a struggle against "leveling" (Stalin attacked so-called petty-bourgeois egalitarianism) reappears in the book and in other statements.

There is more. Even in his book, in which innovation is ostentatiously played up, Gorbachev justifies and substantially approves of decisions made by the bureaucracy over the last 60 years. He makes only very partial criticisms of forced collectivization and the methods of industrialization in Stalin's time. He reaffirms the correctness of the Yalta and Potsdam accords (that is, compromising with the imperialists in order to divide up the world in spheres of influence). In the last analysis, he presents the bureaucratization imposed on the East European states in the 1940s and 1950s as an "objective necessity." He expresses, overall, a positive assessment of the fall 1964 plenum that ousted Khrushchev and inaugurated Brezhnevite "normalization." He reaffirms, without any innovations, the bureaucracy's traditional policy on the national question.

The second part of the book, which deals with international politics, starts off from two observations that no one could seriously challenge. One is the historical change represented by the existence of nuclear arms, which can destroy life on earth. The other is the growing global "interdependence." The hitch is that from this premise he does not draw the conclusion that the fight against imperialism and capitalism is more necessary than ever. To the contrary, he further develops the traditional bureaucratic conception of coexistence. Now, even the Khrushchevite idea of a peaceful competition between the two world systems that would ultimately lead to the victory of socialism has been abandoned. Peaceful coexistence, that is, survival of capitalism, is projected for an indefinitely long historical period.

For example, for the Middle East, Gorbachev looks to a solution that would respect the interests of everyone — the Arabs, the State of Israel, the United States and so on. For Latin America, he pledges "not to exploit and still less to foment anti-American attitudes." More generally, he says that he in no way wants to break the ties between the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the third world to the "economies of America and Western Europe." Nicaragua is alluded to only indirectly, and Cuba is passed over completely.

On the international level, therefore, perestroika promises very little good! ★

Livio Maitan **27**

# No progress in peace negotiations

**ALL REVOLUTIONARY movements in Central America are affected by the Esquipulas peace accords signed in August 1987, which were supposed to bring about a peaceful settlement of the armed struggles in the region. Washington, however, has not allowed the accords to be implemented. They have become stalled, and the meeting of the five Central American presidents on January 16-17 failed to relaunch them.**

**In November, our correspondent Arnold Berthu asked Belisario and Gerardo Escalana, European representatives of the Guatemalan Revolutionary National Unity (URNG), about their view of the agreements and the effect peace proposals had had in their country. The following is the text of this exclusive interview.**

## **W**HAT IS YOUR evaluation of the Esquipulas II accords?

The URNG General Command issued a statement back on August 7 pointing to the positive character of this agreement. It was positive because it rejected the Reagan administration's ultimatum. This is particularly important for Guatemalan revolutionaries, because, you have to remember, in 1954 the US intervention to overthrow the Arbenz regime was given cover by the Organization of American States (OAS). The Esquipulas agreement makes illegitimate any US intervention in the region.

### **■ When did the URNG begin proposing dialogue?**

When Vinicio Cerezo, the first civilian president after 32 years of military dictatorship, took office. That was at the start of 1986. Our proposal for dialogue dates from the trip that Cerezo made to Spain after his election. On that occasion, under pressure from journalists and political forces, he said that he was favorable to opening up a dialogue. On the other hand, the minister of defence, General Gramajo, immediately came out publicly in opposition to this. On his return to Guatemala, Cerezo went back on his statement, and said that dialogue could take place only when the guerrillas laid down their arms.

On February 7, 1987, the fifth anniversary of the founding of the URNG, we reaffirmed our desire for dialogue. We had to wait until July 1987 for the first secret meetings to take place. On July 18, the URNG again proposed a public dialogue, not just limited to the URNG and the government. These contacts were continued after the signing of the Esquipulas agreement, and led to an initial official meeting between delegations from the URNG and the government at the beginning of October 1987 in Madrid. The URNG came to Madrid with an overall proposal aimed at assuring a political space for the people's movement and for more humane rules for the war. At the beginning of the meeting, the URNG noted that the government had not held to its commitments.

It failed to publish the previous communique signed by both parties. Secondly, although the URNG declared a cease-fire from October 2 to 11, the army launched a military offensive in Quiche and Solola. Thirdly, through its press and before the meeting, the government declared its determination to see the guerrillas lay down their arms before undertaking real discussions.

Finally, the government delegation was not sufficiently representative. It included, of course, the vice president of the National Assembly, but no ministers. Moreover, four Guatemalan officers attended the talks without revealing their identities or exact ranks. The government delegation

had no mandate to take decisions. Despite this the URNG decided not to slam the door.

It preferred flexibility, because it is determined not to let itself be portrayed in Guatemala and internationally as responsible for the failure to open up a dialogue.

### **■ How do you explain the fact that the government and the army sabotaged the negotiations?**

It is the army that has retained the real power, and it is divided into two tendencies. The first is represented by the majority of field officers. They are favorable to dialogue as a weapon in the counter-insurgency struggle. The second tendency opposes dialogue because it thinks that it would be favorable to the guerrillas by granting them political recognition.

### **■ What is the prevailing political project in the army?**

To understand the appearance of these two tendencies after the signing of the Esquipulas II accords, you have to analyze the reports given by the army on August 12 and 15, 1987. That is when the army faced the need for a new national consensus.

For the first time, in the report entitled "27 years of struggle against subversion," the army recognized that the military aspect of the counter-revolutionary struggle was only one element in its strategy, and that it had reached certain limits. It called on Guatemalan businessmen, the parties and the unions, but especially the businessmen, to form a great alliance with it to create the political conditions for a military victory over the revolutionaries.

So, the military themselves think that it is impossible to deprive the revolutionaries of their social base so long as the socio-economic situation in the country remains in crisis. Therefore, the army called on Guatemalan businessmen to invest more, to pay better wages, to develop the country's economic infrastructure.

The Guatemalan army would like to set up a system on the model of the one in Taiwan, that is a very strong army combined with a system of collaboration with the owning class and the political parties. What is new in this situation is that the army recognizes its inability to defeat the URNG militarily.

On the other hand, this position is not designed to seek a political solution to the conflict. The objective is to maintain the military status quo without carrying out reforms.

In fact, conflicts appeared between the Christian Democratic government and the bosses organized in the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Trading, Industrial and Financial Associations (CAC-IF) over the tax reform. This led to the latter getting the assurance that there would be no reform of banking, production, of the sugar business or of agriculture. ★