

International VIEWPOINT

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International VIEWPOINT

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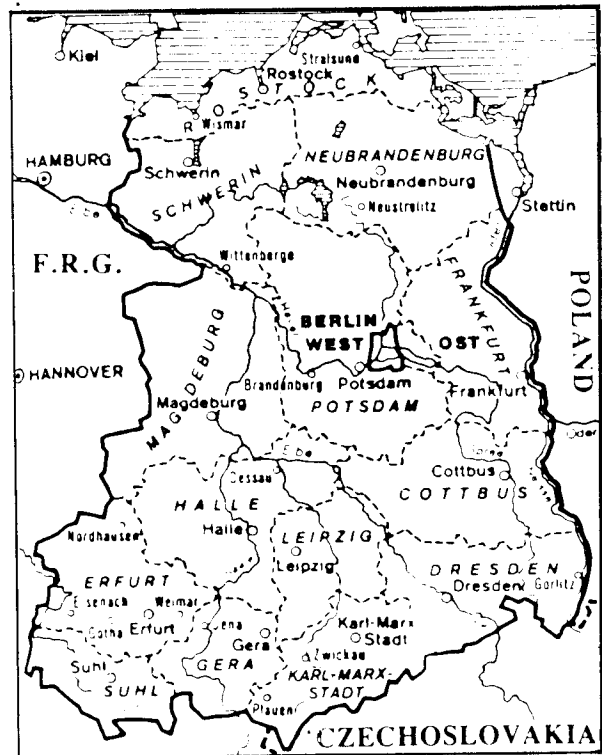
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The ice begins to break

INDEPENDENT organizations are banned, demonstrations, leaflets and publications are forbidden. All political activity that is not under the control of the Stalinist ruling party, the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands — Socialist Unity Party of Germany) is forbidden in the German Democratic Republic. Even so, between October 7 and 9 some 150,000 people demonstrated in at least ten cities for freedom and reform. On Monday October 16 a march estimated at 120,000 people took place in Leipzig, the largest single protest demonstration in the history of the state. The peaceful demonstrations called on the government to finally undertake long overdue reforms. They showed that they were no longer ready to be treated like children.

HANS-JÜRGEN SCHULZ



terror that has instilled an anxiety ridden conformism, with people justifying themselves by thinking that, in any case, nothing can be changed.

In the background stands a powerful repressive apparatus. There is the National People's Army with 170,000 personnel, half of them professional soldiers, more than 80,000 border, special and stand by police, the regular police and some 17,000 secret police (according to their Minister Mielke, they are to contribute by "Chekist means...to aggressively implementing the strategic line of the party"). Behind them come the 400,000 strong workers' militia, controlled by the party. They have been undergoing training in the last six months in dispersing demonstrations and arresting ringleaders. This is a clear sign that the leaders are aware of the mounting dangers.

The political system allows a certain amount of leeway. Simply expressing an opinion is not a crime, so long as no kind of organized activity results. The state rules over a demoralized population, and can confine itself to selective repression against real opponents. Any opposition is immediately equated with counter-revolution. "Since the socialist state power embodies the interests of the people...any opposition is directed against the socialist economic system" explains the official "Concise political dictionary of the GDR" without the slightest embarrassment.

Obviously, many cannot reconcile themselves to this system. Millions escape into alcoholism. The DDR comes out top

THE COMPLACENCY of the bureaucracy had led it to believe that everything could go on as before. Just because the people next door are changing the wallpaper does not mean that you have to do up your own house, was how SED Politburo member Kurt Hager put it, talking about the reforms in the Soviet Union. He must be well aware that the majority of the DDR's 17 million inhabitants reject the bureaucratic system. But the authorities showed no sign of concern. There were many reasons for this.

Unlike in the Soviet Union, the absurd economic over-centralization was cut back many years ago. For many years the National Income rose annually by 4% to 5%. East German living standards are the highest in the countries of "actually-existing socialism". The social support system is at a level unknown in the capitalist world. Basic foodstuffs are heavily subsidized, as are public transport and housing. There is a developed system of care for pregnant women and mothers, job security, an exemplary education system and a social security safety net.

However, the citizens of the DDR do not measure progress by Poland or the Soviet Union but by capitalist West Germany, where living standards are almost twice as high and labour productivity at least 50% higher than in the DDR. After almost half a century it is no longer possi-

ble to explain these facts away by referring to the unfavourable situation the DDR faced after the war. If the bureaucratic "actually existing socialism" were genuinely superior to capitalism, the historic handicaps would have been overcome a long time ago.

Because the DDR wants to build socialism as far as possible within its own borders, excessive investments are necessary in energy (brown coal and nuclear power) and the development of microchip electronics.

Interruptions in production and waste

Much more damaging, however, are the arbitrary and often ignorant decisions of the economic apparatchiks. The consequences are disorganization, interruptions in production and waste, observed helplessly and indignantly by the workforce. It is these experiences rather than insufficient wage differentials that kill motivation.

Despite such deficiencies, those who protest find themselves in big trouble. They will be transferred, demoted, in serious cases sacked and will lose all prospect of a decent job. Every new hire requires approval from the authorities. This can often be got around. But it is not possible in political cases. It is this kind of persistent social repression rather than brutal

1. This refers to the Cheka, the Soviet political police of the civil war period.

in this field. Each inhabitant consumes on average 145 litres of beer and 15.4 litres of spirits per annum compared to 6.3 litres in West Germany. Thousands drop out and have built a youth sub-culture. Sometimes there are spontaneous violent outbreaks amongst the youth. After a concert in Leipzig in 1968 there was a "rock rebellion". In 1977 a cancellation of a rock concert in Berlin led to massive clashes in the course of which four police are supposed to have been killed.

In the absence of hopes for change many decide to leave the country illegally.

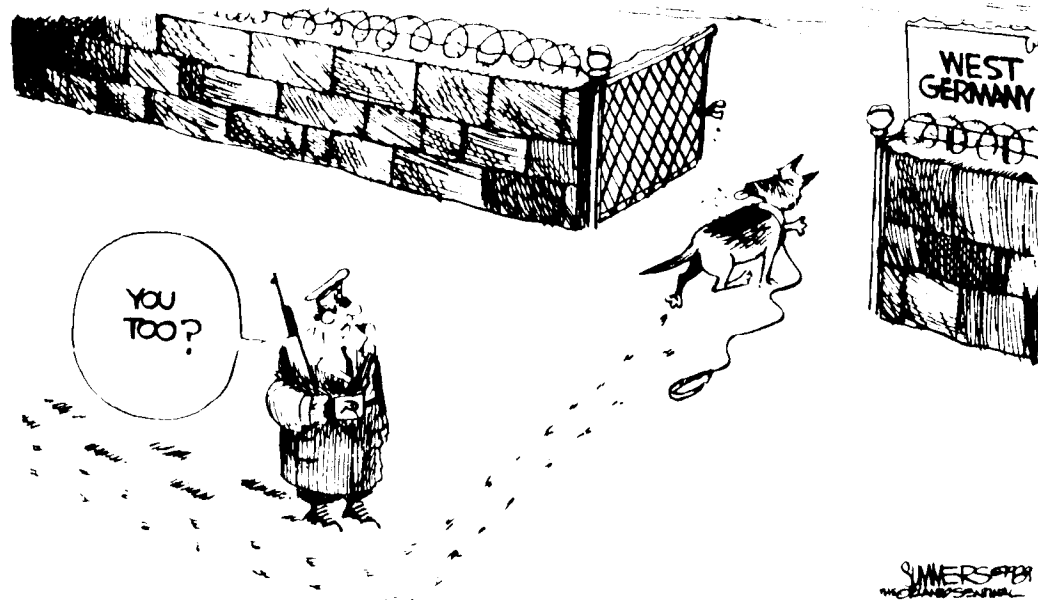
The borders are hermetically sealed and even preparing to commit the crime of "fleeing the Republic" carries a heavy prison sentence. After serving a part of their sentence, however, most are sent to the West along with genuine political prisoners and others who do not fit in. Since the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, every year between 10,000 and 40,000 people have left, including legal emigrants. In this way the basis for building an opposition has constantly melted away.

The pressure to leave has become a mass phenomenon in recent years and is threatening to destabilize the system. In summer 1988 church circles estimated that a tenth of the population, some one and a half million people, had lodged requests to leave with the authorities. This is a remarkable figure, especially when we remember that strong pressure is put on applicants to withdraw their requests.

Authorities blame imperialist secret services

The authorities have, furthermore, claimed that all opposition is organized and financed from other countries. There is "convincing evidence....that the imperialist secret services and others....are making efforts....to organize a so-called internal opposition in the DDR," wrote *Neues Deutschland*, the SED daily on February 2, 1988. Not idle remarks. Whoever demonstrated or wrote slogans on walls risked up to three years in prison. The gaols filled up. Including people who had tried to leave illegally, there were some 5,000 political prisoners.

4 Before the end of the 1970s, there was no organized opposition. There were only some isolated figures such as Wolf Bier-



mann or Robert Havemann with informal circles of sympathizers. Under the influence of movements in the West, however, numerous ecological and peace groups came into being, mostly under the wing of the church. This was a double-edged sword. Clearly the church offered possibilities for legal action, but the church also ensured that the groups remained issue-specific and unpolitical. "We are not any kind of opposition centre" insisted one of its representatives.

Even so, by the beginning of the 1980s these networks were able to hold country-wide working meetings with hundreds of activists and up to 5,000 sympathizers. Despite countless arrests and expulsions to the West, the movement kept going. Its overall orientation was socialist and internationalist; it declared itself in solidarity with the peace movement in the West and issued, along with oppositionists from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland joint declarations against the stationing of nuclear missiles and repression in their own country.

When this movement ebbed, along with its Western counterpart, the opposition had politically and organizationally consolidated itself, thanks to many self-sacrificing peaceful revolutionaries. Some 2,000 people remained active in small groups — not a bad figure in the circumstances.

There came into being meanwhile an alternative political culture, which communicated by means of cassettes, self-published books and journals with tiny print runs (at most 100 copies), which, even so, reached thousands of people, since each copy passed through many hands.

In some local churches hectographed magazines could be obtained such as the Berlin monthly *Grenzfall* ("Borderline case") which had a print run of 900 copies. Since there was little in the way of spectacular actions, most outsiders believed that the opposition had fallen apart. Facts proved otherwise.

Thus in March 1987, representatives of some 200 local groups demanded an end to the use of nuclear power in the DDR. Solidarity actions with the 80,000 strong demonstrations in West Berlin against the meeting of the International Monetary Fund in September 1988 were nipped in the bud by a massive deployment of police and the preventative arrest of suspects.

Shortly thereafter a cartoon appeared in *Grenzfall*. A man speaks to a parrot in a cage "repeat after me: I am free, I am happy." This exactly expressed the feelings of millions, who remained silent but who were still required to give constant professions of support to the regime.

Highly qualified and skilled workforce

The leaders of the DDR have to deal with a very highly skilled working class. Ten years at school has long been the norm. Some 82% of the workforce have some kind of academic or vocational training qualifications.

The masses have been ready to behave like the parrot insofar as the situation seems unchangeable. Many expected the DDR to follow the example of the Soviet Union, where reforms have been introduced, accompanied by much democratic and anti-bureaucratic rhetoric. But years

have passed and nothing has happened; patience is beginning to wear thin. Since spring this year, an increasingly aggressive mood has been developing, and defiance is on the rise.

The "Flight from the Republic" has become massive. So far this year, over 130,000 have turned their back on the "workers and farmers state". The overwhelming majority of them were young people who had been brought up in this same state.

This new mood helped the seemingly fragmented opposition to re-organize. This brought to the fore political differences that had previously been kept in the background by the enormous outside pressures.

On September 10 some 100 people from throughout the Republic met to form the "New Forum". They spoke out for a socialist economy and put to the fore demands for democratic freedoms, disarmament and ecological issues. Although the authorities at once refused to give official permission for this "anti-state organization", there were no arrests. By the start of October, the petition had already attracted 15,000 signatures. This is in itself a sign of the change in consciousness.

On the same day, the "Democratic Breakthrough" was founded as a "political association", stating its wish to put up candidates in the 1991 elections and raising socialist demands such as free trade unions, workers' self-management, socialist democracy and the separation of party and state.

Appeal proposes socialism with freedom

Even clearer is the platform of the "Böhlen Appeal" which was issued on September 19 by a meeting of between 300 and 500 people. It proposed a "socialism with freedom" and criticized the "galloping social democratization" and lack of internationalism of the West European Communist parties.

It expressed doubt whether the reform policies in the Soviet Union would lead to a socialist development. The economic and political interference of the capitalist states was rejected along with "fraternal aid" from the states of "actually existing socialism". Ecological rebuilding, political democracy and self-determination were demanded: "Socialist democracy...means...the power of the working people."

These three groups have, since October 4, been meeting with the reconstituted Social Democratic Party, the "Green Network" and the "Peace and Human Rights Initiative". Together they have demanded the release of political prisoners, a democratic re-organization and issued a general call for people to work in their groups. Presumably some kind of coordination has been agreed. The official press talked of anti-state activities. But so far matters have rested at the level of these polemics.

Mass demonstrations in several cities

The state media have other things to worry about. Since the end of September demonstrations, as yet small, had taken place in several places. In Leipzig there were 8,000 on the streets. This is an act of self emancipation that could become the norm. Between October 7 and 9, mass demonstrations took place of 70,000 in Leipzig and 10,000 in each of several other towns.

The political demands remain unclear and often expressed hopes in well-meaning reformers in the party. There were calls for freedom, but also chants such as "Gorby, help us" or even "Gorby, save us". But when the police and militia were deployed the crowds shouted at them "We are the people" and "we are staying here, we want reforms". That almost sounded like a threat.

Until now, the authorities have reacted in their customary way. "Hooligans formed gangs...and shouted anti-state slogans", *Neues Deutschland* wrote.

Deeds matched words. The demonstrations were dispersed, sometimes brutally and there were many arrests. A thousand of the 10,000 demonstrators in Berlin were arrested. But when 70,000 marched in Leipzig, the police kept to controlling the traffic.

These events mark a turning point that should be neither under- nor over-estimated. The power of the bureaucracy remains unshaken. It has not once been seriously challenged. The spontaneous demonstrations have expressed the protest of the silenced, but they have not yet taken their fate in their own hands, continuing to demand reforms from those in power. The opposition has neither organized nor led nor even exercised much political influence on these demonstrations.

It is as yet unable to establish a connection with the movement because there are as yet no firm structures and there are no clear ideas as to how the hopes can be brought to reality — apart from the idea of a German Gorbachev. Above all, the movement has as yet had no impact in the workplaces. It appears as if no social demands were raised at all.

The rulers have been taken by surprise and do not know how to react. Then, the police were sent in and the press openly called for the military suppression of the opposition. At least for the moment, the latter is not possible, since it would damage the credibility of the reform policies in the Soviet Union. The DDR leadership would cut itself off from its own allies, and this it could not survive.

Bureaucracy seeks to gain time

The authorities showed that they understood this. With the willing help of moderate church leaders, they entered into negotiations. Promises and concessions will follow. But it is doubtful that these will lead to a real liberalization.

Nonetheless the bureaucracy has gained time through its flexibility, time in which to adapt its policies to the new conditions. But the demonstrations have also changed the consciousness of the masses. Passive resignation is vanishing and the experience of independent activity will leave permanent marks. People are no longer going to be used like parrots. If it becomes clear that all that is on offer is some reforms rather than a real democratization, some of them at least will become more radical.

The opposition has now organized openly and gained courage and tactical skill in the process. It has been strengthened by these actions and enjoys the spontaneous confidence of the population. These are good conditions for its future development. As yet, no mass movement in the workplaces has appeared. But the ice has been broken. The atmosphere is becoming more relaxed; perhaps the dancing will soon begin. ★



PANCHO

WHAT is happening in Hungary today cannot be understood without a review of the period of Kadarism (from János Kádár, the party's general secretary from 1956 to 1988). This involved a specific method of controlling society without wholly stifling it.

Kadarism was a method rather than a coherent neo-Stalinist policy. It took form after the bloody suppression of 1956-58, which put an end to the hopes raised by the Republic of Workers' Councils (see following interview). The repression, backed up by Soviet tanks, continued long after November 1956 with more than 20,000 arrests and executions, including that of Imre Nagy in 1958. Kádár, as the party's general secretary was involved in all this. In fact, he was the author of the appeal made at the beginning of November 1956 calling on the Soviet Union to step in.

However, starting from the 1959 Congress of the HSWP, the Kádár leadership moved to a more liberal position. In the 1960s, it searched for a compromise between the popular aspirations and the exigencies of its links with Moscow.

Kadarism supported by Khrushchev

Its room for manoeuvre was increased by, on the one hand, the suppression of the workers' councils, and on the other by the ousting of the most conservative wing of the Stalinist regime. This compromise, which seems to have been supported by Khrushchev, who was in power until 1964, developed via the amnesties of 1960 and 1963, improvements in relations with the Catholic Church (1964) and the economic reform of 1966.

The regime's concessions in this period can be summarized thus: restrictions on the political demands made on the population, avoiding interference in people's private lives; emphasis on the possibilities for consumption, above all in the 1970s, in sharp contrast with the other East European countries; respect for limited private property in agriculture, and, more importantly, a transformation in the functioning of the kolkhozes [collective farms], which were given increased responsibility for defining their production plans; an opening to Western Europe, particularly in the easing of visa regulations; a relative creative freedom for the intellectuals, even in sensitive areas such as sociology and history.

Kadarism thus expressed a desire to avoid conflicts with popular aspirations as far as possible, and reduce repression, while maintaining the control of the HSWP — legally the only party since 1956, and in fact since 1948 — over society. At the same time the leadership kept a firm grip on the HSWP. Refounded after its collapse in 1956 (from 900,000 members in October 1956 to 190,000 in February 1957), it had 600,000 members at the

6

Bureaucracy reorganizes in face of crisis

THE expected occurred. At a Special Congress held on October 6-9 in Budapest, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) became the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), with some 85% of the 1,274 delegates to the Special Congress voting in favour of the change.

Apart from its symbolic significance — all mention of "workers of the world" has disappeared, while the delegates sang the Hungarian national anthem "God bless the Hungarians" to mark the occasion — the decision is a historic one that will have repercussions on developments in the other Soviet bloc countries.

ROBERT NOIREL

start of the 1960s, and, it seems certain, more than 800,000 in the 1980s.

The 1980s saw the end of the period where, in exchange for concessions, the party could feel free from pressure from the workers, who had been smashed in 1956. The shadow of the Soviet "big brother" was obviously an important factor in this situation.

Reformers draw inspiration from Moscow

What led to collapse of Kadarism? The changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union since the arrival of Gorbachev, have clearly been important. Hungarian special correspondents in Moscow have reported the ideas appearing in those Soviet journals most favourable to *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and the party reformers have drawn inspiration from this. The fear of the population of the Soviet "policeman" and belief that it will step in to prevent really profound reforms have considerably diminished.

But most important are the internal changes in Hungary itself. The new generation are no longer satisfied by the limited concessions of the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, the economic situation has deteriorated in the 1980s, further weakening the authorities. One of the first signs of the crisis of Hungarian society came in 1985 with the drafting and then publication the

following year of a report of 68 experts that was discussed by the Central Committee. Entitled "Changing Course and Reform", it criticized the errors of the government and the economic policy and proposed nothing less than its resignation. Something rather unusual in the Soviet bloc, even in samizdat [underground] publications.

The report's authors could count on the backing of one of the HSWP's leaders, Imre Poszgay, the President of the Popular Patriotic Front, a mass organization traditionally under the thumb of the Communist Party. The leader of the reformers was to make it an instrument of his desire to change Hungarian society. He had decided that the status quo of the previous period could no longer be maintained.

Kadar leadership fails to grasp situation

Things speeded up in 1988, with the preparation of the party congress for May. The leadership, unable to grasp what was going on, pretended that nothing was happening. Kádár increased his output of soporific speeches.

Meanwhile, new organizations were coming into being on the fringes of the official institutions. Examples were the Hungarian Democratic Forum or the Democratic Union of Scientific Workers. The party reformers spoke out publicly. They

set in motion the formation of the March Front with non-Communist figures. Signs of ferment were evident in the country. On March 15 thousands of Budapest people demonstrated on the anniversary of the uprising in 1848 against Austrian domination. This demonstration took place without any authorization.

This was the background to the HSWP conference of May 1988. It marks a decisive turning point in the history of the party, with the removal of most of the members of the Politburo. After thirty years at the head of the country, János Kádár found himself "promoted" to the figurehead post of party president. A new leadership team took over, whose members were, to one extent or another, reformers. The most determined of them was Poszgay who had links with the Democratic Forum oppositionists. He enjoyed real prestige with the public.

After 1988 everything changed. The HSWP still controls three quarters of the National Assembly and dominates the country. But other currents are tolerated and the reformist leaders of the HSWP openly accept the idea of a multi-party system. In September 1988, the CC agreed to enter into discussions with various groups, including the Democratic Forum.

Re-emergence of political parties

The end of 1988 and the start of 1989 saw a remarkable flowering of new political movements as well as the rebirth of pre-1948 parties such as the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders' Party. At the same time critical left currents emerged in the HSWP.

This led to a reaction from the Kadarists in the CP, who formed associations such as the Ferenc Münnich society. Founded in November 1988, this brings together elements of the party's "old guard" as well as pensioners from the army and the police, opposed to the liberalization.

A new turning point was reached in February 1989. The HSWP CC officially accepted the perspective of a multi-party system. In March the opposition groups came together in the Opposition Round Table. Discussions took place with the CP to establish a means for the transition to democracy.

On March 15 a huge unofficial demonstration took place in Budapest organized by the opposition to mark the anniversary of 1948. On June 16, the official funeral of Imre Nagy — rehabilitated at last — provided another symbolic occasion. The ceremony was broadcast on the TV, but between 100 and 200,000 people still came out to take part.

In autumn 1989, as developments in other Eastern European countries speeded up, the party took stock before of its Special Congress. Although weakened (the HSWP has lost 15 to 20% of its members in two years) it retained some 750,000

members — 17% of the total population. It was more divided than ever between currents ranging from the most audacious reformers to Kadarist conservatives.

Inside the HSWP, debates raged over the acceptable degree of economic liberalization as well as on how to relate to other political currents. This last question had become urgent. In the spring or summer of next year, free elections — the first in the Soviet bloc — are scheduled. If the HSWP were to find itself in a minority, would it give up or share power?

This has ceased to be an abstract question, as is shown by a poll by the Hungarian Institute for Research into Public Opinion in March and April last year. The poll recorded 50% support for the HSWP in the countryside, but only 24% in Budapest. Since more than 20% of the Hungarian population live in Budapest and trends there tend to reflect what will happen in the rest of the country where the opposition groups are as yet largely unknown, these results are worrying for the party leadership. All the more in that a new poll on the eve of the Congress gives the party only 9% against 52% support for the Democratic Union. Even if these figures need to be taken with a pinch of salt, they are still striking.

This summer a number of by-elections were won by candidates of the Democratic Forum. This has fostered the debates in the Hungarian CP: Will they have to accept a coalition with an opposition party? This is the path preached by Poszgay, who with 34% support in the polls is the frontrunner for the presidential election set for November 25.

Seven platforms put to vote at congress

This was the atmosphere in which the last congress of the HSWP met. Seven platforms were put to the vote by delegates unused to this kind of choice. There are three main currents, each with their nuances.

Firstly, there are what are now known as the "reform socialists", led by Imre Poszgay. Advocates of democratization, but also of an explicit reference to social democracy, they are enthusiastic supporters of the development of a market economy. In foreign policy they advocate "finlandization" which would take their country out of the Warsaw Pact, while continuing to recognize the special relation with the USSR and the "influence" of the latter. In spite of their weight in the party, the reformers need allies if they are to lead it.

Their chosen ally is a current that identifies itself with the Communist heritage, the People's Democratic Platform. The president of the new party (as of the old), Rezső Nyers, has worked for this rapprochement.

Finally, there are the "traditional-

ists". Here the leaders are Berecz and Kádár's short-term successor in 1988, Károly Grosz. There are nuances here as well, between those who want a return to the old system and those who merely think that the reforms have gone too far too fast.

Here there may be a base for a continuation of the Communist Party, although a minority in the new party. But nothing is decided yet. Things will become clearer when the 700,000 to 750,000 members of the ex-HSWP decide whether or not to enrol in the new HSP. Observers estimate that about 500,000 will do so.

Established facts thrown into question

The last two years have thrown all the established facts of Hungarian political life into question. Multi-partyism and the holding of free elections are now certain. For the past 18 months they have formed the premises of the debates, both inside and outside the HSWP.

Now, the discussion is going to take a new direction. The issue of Hungary's foreign relations and, above all, the issue of the country's economic and social structure will come to the fore. An example was the discussion on the whether the new party should have factory cells. The social democrats were against, but Nyers torpedoed their proposal.

The big problems of the coming months and years will be determined by the introduction of the market economy and its social consequences. There is one big unknown, outside of the framework, the reactions of the working class. So far, the workers have remained more or less passive during the developments we have been discussing.

Directly involved in coping with the economic problems, the workers for the moment are maintaining a wait-and-see attitude. This fact leads us to predict new recompositions inside the new Hungarian Socialist Party, as in the other political forces in the country. The divisions in the future will not necessarily be the same as those two years ago. ★



From the Soviet Republic to the jails of Stalin

YOU WERE one of the founders of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP), but you are no longer a member. Were you expelled?

No, I left the HCP in 1924 with others because of deep political disagreements which centred on three questions.

On the prompting of the Communist International (Comintern), led first by Zinoviev and later by Stalin, the HCP leaders cut off from the real life of the country, wanted to impose a suicidal leftist policy on us. They promoted the theory that the social democrats were social fascists and pursued the policies flow-

They wanted to prevent us from working in the unions and the social democracy, which was still legal under the Horthy regime, when the CP was outlawed. [see box for historical references]. They were against the united-front tactic. They wanted us to agitate for the dictatorship of the proletariat, at a time when the working class was on the defensive.

These policies were leading the CP into a dead-end and a near complete paralysis. We did not accept this. Nor were we prepared to accept the financial blackmail whereby funds would be provided or cut off depending on whether or not one was prepared to slavishly follow Moscow's diktats.

The slogans promoted first by Gerö — who was later up to his neck in the GPU's murders in Spain and the assassination of Trotsky — next by Margaret Andez and finally by Rákosi, had no resonance in the country.

The result was an extreme organizational weakening. The HCP had hardly 100 members in 1945 when Soviet troops entered the country. Our group had been able to bring together and organize five to ten times more, despite the fact that we relied entirely on our own resources.

8 In our view, the Comintern was a real International in

ON JUNE 20, 1989, a public meeting on the Fourth International was held at the University of Budapest with Ernest Mandel. This was yet another sign of the spectacular acceleration of democratization and moves towards political pluralism in Hungary. The conference was faithfully reported in the main opposition daily and in other daily newspapers. The Hungarian radio broadcast two interviews with Mandel about the Fourth International. During his stay in Budapest, Mandel met Pál Demény, one of the last survivors of the Hungarian Republic of Workers' Councils and a founder of the Hungarian Communist Party. We publish below an interview that was given to IV by Demény.

Lenin's time, that is between 1919 and 1923. After 1924 it degenerated. If we had submitted to its mechanical discipline that would have been more or less the end of the communist movement in Hungary.

■ Were you accused of Trotskyism?

Yes, but we did not consider ourselves to be Trotskyists. We believed that Trotsky was also responsible, along with Zinoviev, for the leftist policies of 1924-25, and for the theory of social fascism. You say that this is not true. I will study the documents.

But we refused to attack or criticize

Trotsky in our publications when the campaign against him was launched in the Russian Communist Party and in the Comintern. It was a matter of principle for us not to pass judgement without a serious study of the texts. We could not make a decision on the basis of one-sided information. I will read with interest all the documents and books of Trotsky that you can provide.

■ What did you publish under Horthy's dictatorship?

Our material corresponded to the demands of work in the unions and the Socialist Party. There were leaflets, circulars, pamphlets for propaganda and agitation,

Marxist textbooks. Most of our publications were semi-legal, some illegal. We did not have a regular paper. This would have had to be illegal and the operation would have absorbed too many resources.

At the same time we adapted our organizational forms to the real situation in the country. For example, we did not call our base organizations "cells", since this would have automatically brought worse prison sentences for our comrades.

We called them "groups". For the same reason we did not describe ourselves as the "Communist Opposition" but as the "left of the workers movement" or the "left workers movement". But this did not mean that we did not function as a coherent, structured and disciplined organization.

We kept out of the factional disputes that tore apart the Hungarian communists in exile. Paradoxically, this meant that the official organ of the HCP as well as Moscow's publications did not attack us very often or very hard. They considered us as "left social democrats". We ourselves tried to avoid public polemics with the HCP except on very rare occasions.

■ Was the problem of repression that serious?

Certainly, and not only during the period of the white terror that followed the fall of the Soviet Republic. But it



Historical notes

From Béla Kun to Horthy: After the collapse of the Habsburg Empire in November 1918, power in Hungary fell into the hands of Count Miklos Karolyi, who proved wholly unable to put an end to the instability in the country. On March 21, 1919, in the revolutionary wave that followed the defeat of the Central Powers and the birth of the Soviet regime in Russia, power passed into the hands of the Socialist Party and the newly created Communist Party.

The short-lived Workers Councils' Republic, headed by the communist leader Béla Kun, was militarily crushed by the Allies, who immediately afterwards conquered the Bavarian Soviet Republic. This was the end of the hopes for an extension of the Russian revolution into Central Europe. Béla Kun's government resigned in August 1, 1919. In the inter-war period, Hungary was under the military dictatorship of Admiral Horthy, who unleashed heavy repression against the workers movement. The CP was forced into clandestinity. Many of its leaders were arrested and others emigrated.

The Stalinization of the Communist Party: The process of subjecting the communist parties to the total control of the Russian CP was set in motion in the framework of a so-called "bolshhevization" in 1924, when the Comintern was still led by Zinoviev. At the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928, the theory of "social fascism", which claimed that fascism and social democracy were identical, was imposed on the sections. This theory ruled out common action with reformist currents in the workers movement. Criticism of this ultra-left and sectarian orientation, which fed a belief in an imminent revolution at a time when the workers movement was in a phase of retreat and weakening, was at the root of the first opposition groups in the communist parties.

The Hungarian CP was led from Moscow by, in succession, Ernő Gerő, Margareta Andez and Mátyás Rákosi. The communist leaders László Rajk and János Kádár played a leading role in Hungarian history after the Second

World War.

The founding of the People's Republic: When the Hungarian Republic was proclaimed in 1946, after the end of the Nazi occupation and the invasion of the country by the Red Army, a government of national unity was formed. After 1947, with the onset of the Cold War, Hungary was transformed into a "People's Democracy". The multi-party system was replaced by the rule of a single party — after the fusion of the Socialist Party and the CP. The economy was completely nationalized, and "assimilated" to the Soviet model. In 1949, the Hungarian People's Republic was formed and joined the Warsaw Pact. In the framework of the new Stalinist regime, successive waves of repression, reaching their height above all between 1949 and 1953, were unleashed against opponents and critics, including communists. Among the latter category were Rajk, who was executed and Kádár.

Imre Nagy and the 1956 revolution: On October 23, 1956, following on mobilizations by workers and intellectuals in solidarity with the strikers in Poznan in Poland, Imre Nagy became head of the government. The intervention of Soviet troops radicalized the popular mobilization, giving rise to the formation of workers councils co-ordinated on a national level. Nagy proclaimed Hungary's neutrality as a protest against the arrival of Soviet troops and took part, along with the workers leaders of the insurrection, in the formation of a new communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

The demonstrations for democracy turned into an anti-bureaucratic political revolution. On November 4, the Soviet army attacked Budapest. The second Hungarian Soviet Republic was definitively crushed, a month later after fierce resistance. The regime of János Kádár continued the repression. Imre Nagy was hanged along with Marshal Pál Maléter and the journalist Miklos Gimes on July 16, 1958, after a secret trial. ★

ponderant influence in these for long periods.

■ What did your tendency do under fascism after 1944?

We gave priority to armed struggle, to sabotage, to protecting persecuted comrades, including CP leaders such as Rajk and Kádár, and to protection of Jews threatened with extermination. Almost all the armed resistance in Budapest was led by us.

We were helped by the left-socialist Jewish organization, Hashomer Hatzair.

We created three legal businesses where we could provide for our own comrades, communist comrades, Soviet prisoners of war and Jews directly threatened with extermination. The State of Israel recognizes us as among the "Just" who saved many human lives from the Nazi butchers.

■ What happened at the moment of the liberation of Budapest?

On November 6, 1944, the two communist factions fused. But it was impossible to do much given the intensity of the bombardment of Budapest. At the start of February 1945, the Soviet army liberated the district in Budapest where I lived with my family. On February 13, 1945, Gábor Péter (later chief of the Stalinist political police) came to visit me.

He told me that Gerő, the number two in the party after Rákosi, had just arrived in Budapest from Moscow and wanted to meet me to discuss the future. I followed him. But the car took me straight to the local office of the political police. I was prisoner. I asked why I had been arrested. They replied: "You are more intelligent politically than us, and we therefore refuse to discuss with you. You are an opponent of Rákosi and you are under arrest in the name of the party."

■ For how long did the Stalinists keep you in prison?

Eleven years and eight months. I have therefore spent more than 18 years in prison, under Horthy and under the Stalinists. I was given two trials. Once in 1946, when I was sentenced to four years and six months for "espionage and collaboration with the dictatorship and the fascists."

This was an absurd sentence that showed that the accusers did not even believe their own slanders. But what is worse, this was when there was still a coalition government, and both the social democrats and the Smallholders Party¹ believed these Stalinist calumnies and repeated them in their press.

In 1953, I was sentenced again, this time for 10 years forced labour for "activities against the Constitution and agitation hos-

got still worse under the fascist dictatorship (in the full sense of the term) that came in after the Nazis overthrew Horthy in 1944. Nonetheless we could survive and defend ourselves as long as we behaved politically and organizationally in a way suited to the real situation in the country.

■ You were yourself a victim of the repression under Horthy.

Yes. I was arrested for the first time in 1919 then again in 1921, and once more

later. I spent in all six years in prison under the dictatorship.

■ What was your main activity under the Horthy dictatorship?

We defended the workers' interests. We organized many strikes. We tried above all to work in the legal organizations of the workers movement — the unions, the friends of nature, the Esperantists and the cultural associations.

Sometimes, we were able to have a pre-

1. The Smallholders' Party was a popular peasant party that won the elections in 1947, beating the Hungarian CP. It participated in the national coalition government immediately after the Second World War.

against the Constitution and agitation hostile to the state." I was supposed to have carried out this "agitation" and these "activities" while I was still in prison! Note that "hostile activity" carried a heavier sentence than espionage. A truly nightmare universe.

I was released on February 13, 1956. My wife stayed in prison for four years, and my daughter for five. Subsequently I have been completely rehabilitated. First in 1957 I was exonerated of the charges brought in the 1953 trial, and then in 1989 of the 1946 charges. I received on these occasions a number of documents clearing my name.

■ **What is your view of the 1956 revolution?**

I was unable to take part personally, because I was seriously ill after my long years of captivity. It was a real popular revolution, carried out above all by young workers and supported by virtually all the workers of Budapest and the other big cities.

Obviously there were lumpen types and criminal elements who tried to take advantage of the events, but that happens in every revolution, and such things cannot be used to define the character of the revolution.

The great majority of the soldiers and the municipal police went over to the side of the insurrectionary popular masses.

Having said that, it was not a realistic revolution; it had no immediate political perspective. Soviet troops were in the country. Moscow had no intention of withdrawing them and abandoning Hungary. They feared the destabilizing effects that a Warsaw Pact withdrawal from Hungary would have on Eastern Europe.

■ **What do you think of Imre Nagy? What do you think about his rehabilitation?**

Imre Nagy was an old communist, sincere and devoted to communism. At the beginning, furthermore, he was a communist who was obedient to Moscow. After 1953, he took his distance and became a communist whose first loyalty was to the working class and people of Hungary.

He tried to save what could be saved of the Hungarian communist movement, by putting himself almost despite himself at the head of the revolution.

He was an honest communist leader. He behaved with dignity in front of his murderers. His rehabilitation is an indispensable act of justice.

■ **What do you think of the multi-party system that is being established in Hungary?**

Long live the multi-party system! In itself it is no danger to the survival of socialism. ★

Mole surfaces among Israeli youth

POLARIZATION in Israeli society is sharp among youth of high school age. There has been rightward movement among young people impatient with the continual insecurity of the Zionist state and looking for "decisive" answers. But it has become evident that there is also a radicalization of youth rebelling against authoritarianism, militarism and racism and a generally rightward moving society. At the beginning of the year, a new group of radical teenagers appeared, and has since grown to a significant size. It is called "The Mole." At the end of the summer, an activist of this group, "Tintin," gave the following interview to Gerry Foley in Paris.

When was the Mole group set up?

About twenty years ago, there was a communist group named "the Mole." There were some other groups named "the Mole." After all those groups broke up, some teenagers went to start a group where teenagers would have their teenage power, where they would not be oppressed by grownups.

They decided to call it "the Mole." It started with around ten students and people from the army, young people between 18 and 21. They were mostly Israelis.

They decided that it was time for teenagers to start speaking for themselves. The group was set up at the beginning of 1989. It held two-tier meetings. The first was an open session. The second session was for members, to plan demonstrations and so on. People started coming, and we started having contacts with Palestinian people from the territories, especially East Jerusalem. The group started growing slowly, until it came to be about 50 people.

■ **Are these people new to politics?**

It started with people who were involved in politics, some of them were in Ratz [a liberal Zionist group], some of them were in Matzpen [the Israeli state section of the Fourth International], all sorts of groups. I myself did not come from any group. I visited a number of groups where I did not feel comfortable before I found this group. All think for themselves. We don't say that we are anti-Zionist or anti-Israel. All have their own ideas. What we are against is the occupation, unemployment and racism.

■ **Do you have a program of your**

own?

We started writing a program. But there is no exact political solution. We don't call for two states, or one state. The program has 14 points. One is to get all of the Israeli army out of the territories, another is solidarity with the Intifada. We are trying to start a students' union in Israel. So, we have been trying to work out an idea of what schools, junior high schools and high schools, should be like.

We are teenagers, and we want our rights also. We focus a lot on that. This year, 1989-1990, we are going to focus especially on that, and we are going to have demonstrations on that in Israel.

On that we have a program with some detail. We do not want to go too much into details, because we want to be general enough so that most people can come in with no problems. Most of us are communists and socialists.

■ **How are you viewed by the authorities; are you viewed as an anti-Zionist group?**

Yeah. Most of us are anti-Zionists. We don't say we are. But because we have friends and members from Matzpen, from Hala ha-Kibush, all sorts of groups that are anti-Zionist, people think we are anti-Zionist. I am anti-Zionist. But the government seems to think we are the most radical group in Israel. We are the one that is the most active for teenagers. We are seen as anti-Zionist by the government.

■ **Are you able to hold organized activity in the high schools, be recognized as a school club and so on?**

We have not tried to do so until now because we were just getting started. We are going to try to do that in the coming school year. We want the students to know

that there is someone who wants to fight for their rights by holding conferences, demonstrations. But I don't think we will be able to hold meetings in the schools. No political groups are really organized in the schools. But that doesn't matter. We can meet anywhere, even in the streets

■ In what cities does this group exist?

It started in Tel-Aviv, and I think that there is one in Beersheba, and we are trying to start one in Jerusalem, and in some Palestinian villages.

■ How often does your publication come out?

Whenever we have the money. It averages once a month or once every six weeks.

■ Do you have an editorial board?

No. We don't want that. We think we can do it ourselves. All can write what they believe in. He or she might be a Zionist; you don't have to agree, but he or she is allowed to write it.

■ What's the basis for the existence of the group, then, this 14 point program that does not take a position on the state of Israel?

It doesn't oppose Zionism as such. As for the Intifada, as long as they recognize the PLO as the leadership, we recognize it. When that group no longer recognizes it, then we will have a discussion.

The program doesn't say anything about Zionism, just that we want democracy, a stop to interference with demonstrations, the Israeli army to get out of the territories right away.

■ What sort of activities have you engaged in?

We wanted to see some Palestinian teenagers in East Jerusalem. So, we started meeting them. That was one of our greatest achievements. For once, we could talk to Palestinians. We had an exchange of opinions, and were able to understand each other.

We want to continue these meetings with Palestinians. Then, we held demonstrations against the occupation.

We participated in a lot of demonstrations. Almost every demonstration there is, we participate in it. The one that was really great was for the second anniversary of the Intifada. We were the only Israeli group that went to a Palestinian village to demonstrate.

■ Do you go to these demonstrations under your own banner, or do you work with broader committees?

Normally, we don't like to go to demonstrations as the Mole, because we do not exactly have a program. When we come, we sell our newspapers, and we talk to people. But it's complicated, because once we start talking politics we break up.

■ So, how do you participate in these demonstrations?

Normally, we walk with another group, the Shministim, that is a group of people who are going to serve in the army but do not want to serve in the occupied territories.

■ Why do you walk with them, because they are the same age?

No, because all the left in Israel is against oppressing Palestinians, children. And that group is perhaps the one that most directly opposes it. It has no political solution. It just says no more-oppression of Palestinians. And they are people who are not going to serve, some are going to prison. And then there are some who say that they will serve in the occupied territories but not shoot. We walk with them because they don't propose a political solution, and everyone is OK with them. But on some demonstrations we went as the Mole, as to the funeral of Omar el-Kassem. In other small demonstrations, we went as ourselves. But in big ones, we don't like to go as ourselves, because you have Hala ha-Kibush [Down with the Occupation, a broad militant formation] and umpteen number of parties, so we go with the only group everyone agrees with, which is the Shministim.

■ Presumably, members can also have different ideas about what solidarity with the Intifada means?

Yes. We are also in solidarity with Palestinian women, who are oppressed by the Israeli occupation but also by a male chauvinist culture.

■ Doesn't that complicate relations with Palestinians?

No. Because the Palestinians we have met with have normally been left wing.; they weren't from the Hamas [Islamic fundamentalists] or the Muslim Brothers. In the Intifada, women are more open; now even they are throwing stones. Before, they were house bound; now they seem to have more power than before. We are in solidarity with the workers, with the unemployed.

■ Do you have Palestinian members?

Yeah. We do have Palestinian members. Not a lot, because we are mainly in Tel-Aviv. But we have half a dozen or so. They are not Palestinians from the territories. Mostly they are Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, because they are allowed to stay in Tel-Aviv.

■ You don't have anyone in the occupied territories?

We have contacts. It's hard for them to come to Tel-Aviv. Normally we go to them. We have very good contacts. We know what is happening.

■ Have you done anything on the labor front?

We tried a couple of times, but as far as I know we were not very successful. We tried to go to demonstrations with workers. We did not have much luck. It was very badly organized.

■ Under the best of circumstances, achieving a linkup between radical young people and trade-unionists is not easy.

In Israel, the trade unions are a disaster. Histadrut is not really a union. It is an employer. So, the workers don't like Histadrut. Normally, they go to the right, to the Likud. But if we go to them, I think they will like that, to know that somebody cares, that somebody has a better solution than the Histadrut.

■ Do you discuss socialism much in the group?

The group has an open meeting where we bring people to talk about things. We have had discussions about pacifism, about feminism, and sometimes socialism. Every member decides if he or she wants to listen. We are socialists; we do not say that we are communists, because then the group might break up.

■ Do you have an actual educational program, or are these discussions organized on an ad-hoc basis?

We organize a program for a month or a month and half. And every week we bring some one to talk. Sometimes, we have seminars. The group is going on a trip to see some Palestinians. They are going to have a seminar about the second world war. This is not like school, where we are forced to learn. Here we come to listen. And we can go whenever we want. Normally, we meet every Monday. The open meeting is 6:00 to 8:30. Then there is the members meeting, which can go on late. Some come to the open meeting, some just to the membership meeting, some to both.

■ What's the ratio between male and female?

In the beginning, there weren't too many girls, only three or four. Now there are a lot more. We are very happy about that. We are against chauvinism in all its forms. Now the proportion is around 50-50. Maybe there are a few more boys, three or four more. There is always something in our paper about women's oppression.

We don't demonstrate a lot on it, because our main purpose right now is the occupied territories and I think we should also give priority to working on forming a student union. There are other groups in Israel who deal with women's issues, the Women in Black, there is another group that writes letters to women prisoners and tries to help them. ★

Crisis explodes in Greek Communist Party

ONE AFTER the other about a dozen members of the Central Committee of the KKE have come out in support of the youth and have been forced to resign. At the time of writing, it is not yet possible to make a count of the dissidents in the C.C. and the other KKE leadership bodies, inasmuch as public statements of opposition to the party leadership by eminent members continue to be an everyday occurrence.

Fifty three of the 70 members of the Central Council of the KNE have come out in support of the secretary of the organization, G. Grapsas, and have denounced the brutal and unconstitutional interference of the KKE leadership in the internal affairs of its youth organization.

The remaining 17 members have either declared themselves neutral or as supporters of "normalization". The overwhelming majority of the KNE's base organizations (amongst others, the organizations in Athens, Piraeus, Patras, Saloika and other university towns) have declared their support for the new oppositional current in the organization.

Leadership takes direct control of youth organization

Meanwhile, the party leadership has decided to take direct control of the KNE, and has imposed a Bureau composed mainly of party cadres who were formerly members of the youth organization. The Central Council imposed from outside by this Bureau on the KNE have declared their intention to convoke a special congress as soon as possible. But whilst the Bureau considers as already expelled those who have failed to obey the dictates of the Central Committee, the new Central Council has already declared that it will institute the right of tendency, and give the minority the right to circulate its platform and be represented at the congress.

The editorials of the Greek press one and all gave the impression that the KNE was no more than an organization of unconstructed Stalinists who could not understand any of the realities of modern society. State television, the private radio stations and journals of the right, centre and left, including the KKE dailies,

THE CRISIS which has smouldered for long months within the Greek Communist Party (KKE) has exploded in a spectacular fashion in recent weeks. After a marathon session the Central Committee of the KKE decided to dismiss all 70 members of the Central Council of the Communist youth organization, the KNE. Following this decision, the Central Council met and reaffirmed its determination to remain as the leadership of the youth organization.

N. CHAMPI

unceasingly proclaimed that the dissidents were a product of the past, nothing but small-minded dogmatists. All the main political forces have participated in an unprecedented quasi-Stalinist campaign of defamation: on the very day when the members of the KNE demonstrated in the street against the massacre at Tiananmen Square, the Greek liberal press was accusing them of being supporters of Deng Xiaoping's butchers!

In reality, the dissident current within the KNE runs deep, and its disagreements with the party leadership centre as much on the key questions of domestic politics as on the situation in the countries of "actually existing socialism".

KKE in coalition with New Democracy

For example, it is the sharp turn to the right taken by the KKE with the formation of its coalition with the Hellenic Left (EAR)¹, and above all its participation in the coalition government with New Democracy, a bourgeois party par excellence, that has accelerated the process of differentiation within its ranks. Needless to say, the KNE and the oppositionists in the KKE have declared themselves absolutely opposed to this right turn.

At the same time, the events accompanying *perestroika* since 1985 have provoked at first questioning and later the maturation of clear anti-Stalinist tendencies, very often culminating in an overall critique of "actually existing socialism" and of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union as well as in the other Eastern bloc countries. It is thus wholly wrong to portray the KNE as made up of people nostal-

gic for the Stalinist past. In reality, the positions it has taken both in theory and in practice are bringing it closer and closer to the stance of the far left, and sometimes even its revolutionary Marxist current.

Obviously, there are political differences between the positions of the majority of the KNE youth and the oppositionists inside the party. As one might expect, the harsh treatment of eminent members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and other leadership bodies of the KKE has created an opposition whose ideas are not very clear and whose anti-Stalinism is of very recent vintage.

This has a positive aspect, in that the administrative measures of the leadership have swelled the ranks of the opposition, but also a negative aspect in that the newcomers (especially the older cadres) are not quite on the same wavelength as the majority tendency inside the youth organization. However, there are differentiations within the Party opposition.

In fact, there are a number of eminent leaders who enjoy great prestige amongst the rank and file (for example, party ideologue N. Kotzias², a well-known intellectual; professor E. Bitsakis; and the director of the Centre of Marxist Studies, G. Maniatis), who are already very close to the positions of the KNE in terms of having a radical critique of Stalinism and reformism in all its forms.

Opposition to class collaboration

To summarize, one can identify two key elements that unite all the oppositionists. Firstly there is their common opposition to the capitulations made by the party

to petty bourgeois class collaborationist pressures within the Left Coalition, which have led to participation in a government dominated by the right.

This is accompanied by a vehement criticism of the party's lack of internal democracy and the administrative methods of its leadership. The second central element consists of a rejection of blind obedience to Moscow and a critique of Stalinism and the Eastern bloc countries in both their past and present forms. In the context of these rather general points of agreement, there are obviously a number of tendencies with different sensibilities.

To understand the bitterness and the breadth of the conflict within the KKE and the KNE, it is necessary to put these historic events in context. For example, the unprecedented press campaign against the oppositionists is manifestly attributable to the fact that the Greek Communist Party is participating in government for the first time in its history.

Thus, the questioning of the policies of the Party leadership by tens of thousands of its members has direct implications for the bourgeoisie's management of its everyday affairs, as well as for its project (now very clear) for incorporating the reformist leaderships into the system, with a view to applying a very severe austerity policy. In short, the crisis that has broken out complicates the grand manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie and could even put in question their long term plans.

KKE's servile attitude towards PASOK

At the same time, it seems unlikely that ex-prime minister Andreas Papandreou's PASOK party will gain much from the crisis in the KKE, as today's oppositionists are precisely those who previously criticized (against the advice of the party leadership) the servile attitude of the KKE leaders towards the PASOK governments of 1981-89.

On the contrary, although this is not for the moment evident, the opposition in the KKE could represent an alternative for at least a fraction of the PASOK base who have felt frustrated by the scandals and the aberrations of their party, but who at the same time have felt no attraction for the collaborationist politics of the Left Coalition.

However it is clear that, even if indirectly, PASOK is exploiting the crisis within the KKE, demagogically attributing it to the refusal of the parliamentary parties of the left to cover up for its scandals and get into the mud along with it. Indeed it is

exactly this aspect of the politics of the KKE and the Left Coalition which the oppositionists have criticized, arguing that the blind desire for vengeance against PASOK on the part of the KKE/Coalition leaders has momentarily cemented the unity of PASOK instead of contributing to the hoped for break-up....

The crisis inside the KKE has broken out at a delicate moment and its broader ramifications even threaten the very props of the established political game. As well as possibly putting into question the medium to long term projects of the Greek



bourgeoisie, it could also complicate the classic game of alternation of power between the political forces that is central to the management of the crisis of the system.

The small Greek far left, as well as the Communist Party of the Interior (KKE-es), have already begun to direct their political work towards the events inside the KKE.

Thus within a few weeks the possibility of building an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic pole of attraction has acquired an unprecedented credibility. In the present circumstances, the fact that the various organizations of the far left, as well as a number of independent revolutionary militants, have for the past year been able to overcome their traditional sectarianism and unite in a common front

1. The Hellenic Left originated from a split in the Communist Party of the interior which had itself originated from a split in the Communist Party in 1968. After having followed a broadly Eurocommunist line of march, the Hellenic Left and its leader, Leonidas Kirkas, are today the foremost advocates of class collaboration and the governmental coalition with the major party of the right, New Democracy. Its forces are very limited and amount essentially to a few hundred "modernizing" intellectuals who have already carved out careers for themselves in the administration

with stable structures, the Anti-Capitalist Alternative Regroupment (the EAS, in which the Greek section of the Fourth International, the OKDE, participates) is not unimportant.

This unitary dynamic amongst the far left is evident also in the decision of the great majority of the leading members of the small Communist Party of the Interior to work towards the presentation of a single anti-capitalist list for the November 5 elections.

Obviously, a great deal depends on what happens over the coming weeks and above all on the results of the elections. A debacle for the KKE and the Left Coalition could accelerate the crisis and draw thousands more party members into the ranks of the opposition. It is quite possible in this case that the party leadership, headed by the chair, Harilaos Florakis, and the secretary-general, Grigoris Farakos, would decide to strike hard and quickly without having prepared the ground in advance and at the price of taking grave tactical risks.

But whatever happens, it is already clear that today's crisis has opened a new chapter in the history of the Greek left. This time it does not involve a few hundred dissidents with merely tactical differences, nor the appearance of an opposition attracted by the mirages of Eurocommunism or the rightist "modernization" of the workers' movement.

Opposition has high morale

It adds up to the biggest split in the KKE since its foundation (with the possible exception of the 1927 split led by the then secretary of the party and eminent revolutionary Marxist Pantelis Pouliopoulos. But at that time the KKE numbered no more than some thousands of members).

It adds up also to the appearance - if still embryonic - of an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic communist opposition that seems to have a very high morale and which sees itself as participating in a movement for the reconstruction of the revolutionary left not only nationally but also internationally. From this viewpoint, what is happening today inside the Greek Communist Party has an importance extending beyond Greece and should interest the whole European left. ★

and management of the state.

2. It is indicative of the breadth of opposition that the recent attempt by the KKE leadership to expel Nikos Kotzias, the C.C. member responsible for ideology, was rejected by an overwhelming majority. The base organizations which have disobeyed are above all those of the naval shipyards at Elsefina and the surrounding industrial region which bears the same name: this area is by far the biggest industrial area of the country and is a traditional bastion of the Communist Party.

Communist youth opposition resolution

WE publish below extracts from the resolution adopted by the Young Communists (KNE) after the decision of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) to impose a leadership on the KNE.

DOCUMENT

TODAY a number of problems are showing up regarding the spread of the impact amongst broad masses of youth of working class values expressed by the KKE. This situation is reflected in an intense way in the KNE's intervention, but also in its own functioning and in the problems that exist amongst its members and cadres.

We believe that we must directly confront the causes of these problems, which pose acutely not only the question of the effectiveness of the KKE's work, but more generally the question of the relationship between the left and today's youth, and the ability of the former to inspire the ideals of the latter.

Position of youth within society modified

And above all these questions are related to changes that have taken place in our country and in the capitalist world generally, which have modified the position of youth within society on an international scale, and have changed the terms in which the latter approach the mass movement, politics and the left. They relate also to the changes taking place in the socialist countries, and the image that today's youth have of the kind of future that communists want.

Certainly, there are divergences and disagreements on the part of the cadres of the KNE — and not only amongst the KNE — on the orientation of the Union of the Left, and they have been expressed within the framework of the internal procedures of the party. But this has not stopped the KNE from working within the framework of the Union of the Left, including at the last elections. If our disagreements have been made public, this is not the fault of the Central Council of the KNE. But what is more important is that, despite the efforts of sections of the press to present these disagreements as stemming from "dogmatic ossification" and "an inability

to keep up with contemporary changes", they actually have a different point of departure — the concern of a section of the cadres and members of the KNE about how the KNE should respond to today's needs, to the questions and problems facing the new generation. How, on the basis of the fundamental principles that underlie the politics and tactics of the KKE, is it possible to link up with the radicalism and combativity being displayed by broad masses of youth?

Unity in action and different opinions

The existence of these differing opinions does not reflect the existence of any majority or minority group. Rather they reflect the diversity of reality itself, and it would be impossible for them not to exist.

Moreover, the existence of more than one opinion is not contrary to the basic governing principle of both the KKE and the KNE, democratic centralism, since the latter exists precisely so that differences of opinion can be resolved in unity in action.

On the basis of the preceding, the Central Council of the KNE: Believes that the members of the KNE can and must "take into their own hands" the future direction of the organization. This is the only solution that can assure the unity of

the KNE through democratic procedures.

Thus, the Central Council has decided to organize an extraordinary Congress of the KNE, in the course of which it will report on its own activity. The elected Central Council is the only body that can, according to the statutes, open such a procedure. Any other procedure would be politically and organizationally arbitrary and would violate the essence of our statutory principles of functioning.

Methods worthy of condemnation

Already in the past such methods were injurious and worthy of condemnation, as the experience of the communist movement has shown. Today, they have the effect of making the left seem even more incapable of grasping the message of modern events, and oblivious to the spirit of creative investigation and discussion that *perestroika* has aroused throughout the communist movement.

The Congress will have as its theme the development of a more advanced analysis, in today's conditions, of the political situation of youth and also its future direction, with the central goal being to rally the new generation more rapidly around anti-conservative left positions. ★

Central Council of the KNE, Athens, September 21, 1989.

Extracts from an article which appeared in *Odigitis*, the weekly newspaper of the KNE, on 13 September 1989. The author, S. Antonakakis, is a member of the Bureau of the Central Council of the KNE.

(In reply to the question "are we witnessing the death of socialism?")

It is more worthwhile to examine what has "died". In doing that, one is faced with a number of questions: for example, what relationship can there be between the forms of property existing today in the countries that are called socialist — where state ownership of a hyper-centralized form dominates, in an authoritarian and anachronistic fashion (as the official documents of the CPSU have repeatedly observed) — and "the society of freely associated pro-

ducers" described by the Marxist classics. Moreover, because the structure and evolution of such economies have revealed their bankruptcy, does this mean that the abolishing of private property is no longer a precondition for creating a free society?

Again, what relationship can there be between socialist democracy, based on the principle of the participation of the masses in administration and political power, and these bureaucratic monsters that have become alien to society and its needs and that constitute a parasitic and reactionary army of bureaucrats living off the backs of society?

And how can the democratic and collective development of theory go hand in hand with periods of active censorship of thought and extreme authoritarian repression, all in the name of the defence of socialism? ★

Who benefits from the blockade of Armenia?

STATEMENTS AND REPORTS in the Soviet press about the situation in the Caucasus over the last month and a half have been very dramatic. For instance, the chair of the special committee set up to run Nagorno-Karabakh, Arkadi Volsky, told the Soviet Communist Party plenum in September that Armenia and Azerbaijan were on the verge of war. Despite all these alarm signals, information about the conflict, especially about the evolution of the political forces involved, remains scarce.

GERRY FOLEY

THE FLAGSHIP of *glasnost*, the weekly *Moskovskie Novosti* which appears in several languages, (*Moscow News, Nouvelles de Moscou*) has offered more information than the old hulks of the Soviet press, such as *Pravda* (now facing an overhaul). Most of this information has dealt with complex local incidents that leave the desired impression of a purely emotional, irrational conflict. It has, however, also published an interview with a leader of the Azeri People's Front, Leila Yunusova, which was distinguished by politically blind chauvinism and sovereign disregard for the truth.

Decision for railway strike taken by People's Front

She presented the Front as more militantly anti-Armenian than the Azerbaijan CP and republic leadership: "The decision for the railway strike was taken by the People's Front and not the [Azerbaijan] Supreme Soviet. Our conditions for ending this strike still stand: Armenia must give up its territorial claims on Nagorno-Karabakh. This is not a 'blockade.' We have just stopped delivering to Armenia what we have given it free before — that is our oil and foodstuffs."

Nouvelles de Moscou noted that the figures of the official body in charge of overseeing supplies to Armenia showed that only 3% to 4% of the freight reaching Armenia before the blockade originated in Azerbaijan.

In general, the reporting in *Nouvelles de Moscou* has put the Azeri Front in a bad light. In its October 20 issue, it noted stories going around in Baku that the Armenians themselves were attacking trains

going to Armenia. It quoted an Azeri Front leader Khikmet Gadzhi-Zade, who defended this fantastic tale: "It is not so incredible as all that. The Armenians have an interest in appearing ill-treated. They probably wanted the trains stopped and troops sent here."

Blockade gives Moscow pretext for intervention

There is certainly no doubt that quotes from Azeri Front leaders in the recent issues of *Nouvelles de Moscou* reflect the dimmest sort of chauvinism, as, more importantly, does the blockade of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh mounted by the Front. Gadzhi-Zade himself indicated how fundamentally counterproductive this action is for the Azeris, in seeming total unconsciousness. It gives Moscow a perfect pretext for intervening militarily any time it chooses. The Armenian independent leadership, on the other hand, is quite conscious of this.

Thus, Levon Ter Petrossian, a leader of the Karabakh Committees, in Paris for medical treatment, explained in an interview published in the October 3 *Libération*: "As for the blockade, if it continues this can only be with the approval of Moscow. The alarmist statements of Volsky, with whom we have been in contact several times, have a real basis.

"The situation is in fact very tense...But in talking about an 'imminent civil war,' dramatizing things this way, Moscow is pursuing quite specific political aims, that have nothing to do with Azerbaijan. It is trying once again to get Armenia to give up the conception of *perestroika* that the Armenians were the first to express in the USSR, democratization from below

and not from above."

Asked specifically about the attitude of the Azeri Front, Ter Petrossian said: "In fact, I have a lot of trouble understanding the position of the Azeri People's Front....About ten days ago, a delegation from the Karabakh Committee met leaders of the Azeri People's Front in Moscow, thanks to the mediation of a group of progressive deputies in the Congress of People's Deputies.

"This contact was repeated at the end of last week, without any tangible results. They have in fact the same position as the Azerbaijani government — no concessions, not even any extension of Karabakh's autonomy. This is in line with an ultra-nationalist policy encouraged for 69 years, which amounts to forcing the Armenians to leave Nagorno-Karabakh."

Pan-Turkist and pan-Islamic slogans raised

The Azeri Front arose in the aftermath of the mass anti-Armenian demonstrations in November 1988, encouraged by the Azeri and probably Soviet authorities. These demonstrations did get out of hand, from Moscow's point of view. According to the Soviet press, anti-Soviet, nationalist, pan-Turkist and pan-Islamic slogans were raised. Some "ring-leaders," such as Nemet Panakhov, were jailed. But these rallies fostered a chauvinist atmosphere that only a very authoritative and conscious leadership could have gone against.

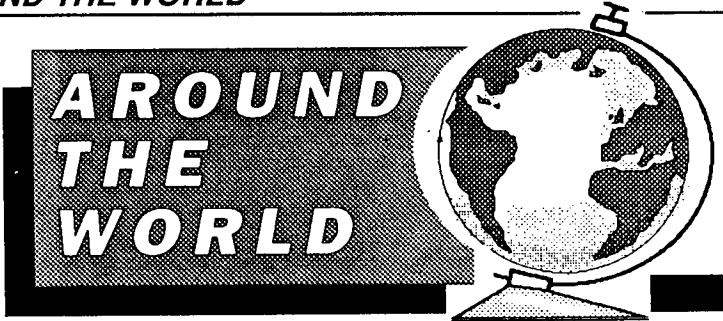
Apparently the majority at least of the Front leadership chose the easier path of trying to outbid the chauvinism of the Azeri authorities, who have been allied to the conservative wing of the CPSU. The leading conservative figure, Igor Ligachev, has offered unconditional support for the Azerbaijan government position on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nonetheless, it is also evident from the reports in the Soviet and international press that there has been real conflict between the Azeri authorities and the Front. The general strike that began in Baku on September 4, called by the Front, was ended when the republic government agreed to grant it legal recognition.

The strike also pressed sovereignty demands similar to those raised by the People's Fronts in the Baltic, greatly disliked by the Ligachev wing of the CP, which were later adopted by the Azeri Supreme Soviet.

In her interview in *Nouvelles de Moscou*, Yunusova said that at one point in the conflict, the first secretary of the Azeri CP ordered the arrest of Front members in the galleries of the republic Supreme Soviet.

So, it seems clear that there has been a real and sharp conflict between the Front and the Azeri authorities allied with the conservatives. The Front has a lot, perhaps everything, to lose if its disastrous anti-Armenian actions eventually open the way for a centralist crackdown. ★



SOUTH AFRICA

Free Mandela!

IN deciding to free eight black South African leaders held in prison since the 1960s, South Africa's President de Klerk has made a further move in his search for a negotiated way out from the crisis of apartheid.

Eight political prisoners were freed, including, most significantly, Walter Sisulu. This old leader of the African National Congress (ANC), who was sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1964, is considered the most popular black political prisoner apart from Nelson Mandela. By releasing Sisulu the South African government is giving a signal that the next step will be the release of Mandela, if the regime feels that negotiations with the ANC are now possible.

De Klerk's long meeting with religious leader Desmond Tutu on October 11 is also significant. Furthermore, the big unitary anti-apartheid conference previously planned for October 7, has been postponed until December in the hope that Mandela will be able to take part. An important change in the South African political scene is in the offing. Mass mobilizations will take place in a different situation, and this will require not only tactical changes but a wide-ranging strategic debate.★

SRI LANKA

Trade union leaders seized

FOUR members of the Sri Lankan Janaraja Healthworkers' Union in Colombo, all members of a Trotskyist group, the Nava Samasamaja Party (NSSP), were abducted from their union offices on September 15, 1989. They are still being held. The NSSP is convinced that this abduction is the work of sections of the state security forces, passing themselves off as anti-government terrorists.

According to a statement from the Committee for Workers' Unity, "This unexpected assault on the Trade Union and its leaders is a clear sign of a profound crisis within the armed forces and of a hardened attitude towards any anti-government activity. State terrorism is

doubly applied to the retaliatory terrorism of the rural youth.

"Sri Lankan rural peasant economy was destroyed by the penetration of Finance Capital under British colonialism which in turn hampered a proper organic capitalist development.

Up to this day, no ruling regime has had any policy to solve the questions of landlessness, rural indebtedness and they have shown their inability to utilize the rural resources. So the majority of the rural population are today unemployed, under-nourished and have literally become the scum of the earth.

"The rural youth have voiced their utter desperation of the rural people. They have led a rebellion against all established authority and all the accepted standards of the general ethos of traditional Sri Lankan society.

For the last forty years when their basic needs have not been solved, in utter frustration, the younger generation have been pushed into a blind alley and their means of retaliation have become extremely barbaric.

"This general situation has had an impact even on the trade union movement and has been able to swing a certain tiny layer of young workers to terrorism.

"This rural rebellion became enmeshed with communalism when their Tamil counterparts started their struggle for land and self-determination.

"The rural problem in both the north and south of Sri Lanka is of a nation struggling to possess its own land. This aspect of the rural rebellion can even attract the sympathy of the workers although they abhor communalism and terrorism as means of action.

"Therefore the ruling class in Sri Lanka senses the possible emergence of a combination of forces, the alliance of workers and the rural youth. So they have started an assault on the youth which will eventually grip the whole working population and the radical left movement.

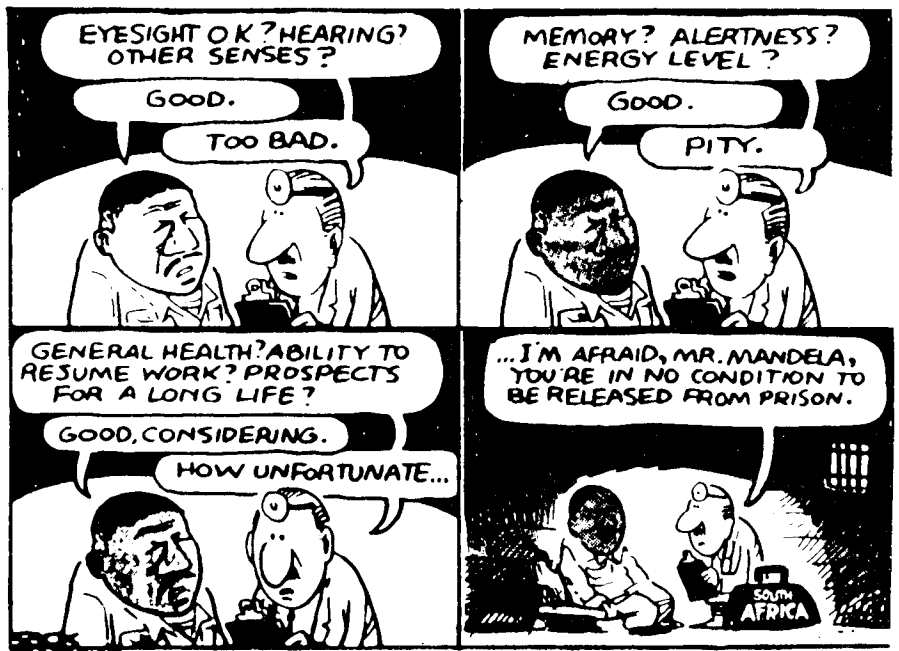
"We ask you therefore to campaign:

1. To immediately release all the Trade union leaders — Brothers W.A.D. Wimalaratne, W. A. Gunadasa of the Janaraja Healthworkers' Union and Brothers Mahind Silva and Dummintha Dharmasena of the Local Government Clerical Services Union.

2. To stop all military interventions in the work places and the Trade Union offices.

Send messages and telegrams to

1. His Excellency the President R. Premadasa
Janadhipathy Mandiraya, Colombo, 1, Sri Lanka.
2. General Cecil Vaidyaratne,
Combined Services, Havelock Town
(opposite Pediris Udyanaya), Colombo 05, Sri Lanka.★



NICARAGUA

Sandinista election campaign appeal launched

THE Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) has decided to organize a campaign to raise 100,000 francs to fund the electoral campaign of the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

Presidential, legislative, and municipal elections, as well as the election of representatives of the autonomous government of the Atlantic Coast (the zone inhabited by the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indians, as well as a Creole population), are all to take place on February 25 of next year. Eight parties have presented lists for the presidential election.

Undoubtedly, the principal adversary of the FSLN will be the National Union of the Opposition (UNO), an unlikely coalition of the most conservative forces, who have succeeded, after prolonged bargaining and haggling, in reaching agreement on the candidature of Violeta Chamorro, who had been a member of the first government formed after the 1979 revolution, a government that contained bourgeois ministers, but was nonetheless under the hegemony of the FSLN.

As director of the opposition daily *La Prensa* and widow of bourgeois "democrat" Pedro Chamorro (a wealthy newspaper owner assassinated under the orders of dictator Somoza), she poses as the Cory Aquino or Benazir Bhutto of Nicaragua, a martyr to the "Sandinista dictators".

However the Nicaraguan people have not been taken in by this posturing, as witnessed by the ironic graffiti which have recently appeared on the walls of Nicaragua: "*Violeta Aqui No!*" (No Violeta here!).

Today, the Sandinista leadership is confronted by a dramatic economic crisis: it is impossible to resist Yankee aggression for seven years with impunity....Under the Sandinistas, Nicaragua has vanquished the Contra mercenaries financed by Reagan, but the country is exhausted. International aid (whether from Western Europe or the "socialist" countries) is not even sufficient for everyday necessities.

And yet the holding of the second democratic elections in the history of the country (the first, in November 1984, confirmed the preeminence of the FSLN, who obtained two thirds of the vote) will be extremely costly.

UNO, for its part, is openly receiving millions of dollars from the United States (which, after having attempted to overthrow the Sandinistas by force, today plays the card of "democratic legality") and is soon to begin a tour of Europe, with the aim of convincing governments of the need for still more assistance in "re-establishing democracy" in Nicaragua.

The FSLN, whilst certainly possessing

Obituary – Sharad Jhaveri

COMRADE Sharad Jhaveri, one of the founders of the Indian Socialist Workers' Party, forerunner of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan (ICS), Indian Section of the Fourth International, has died.

While studying in Bombay he came in touch with Trotskyism, at a time when there was no Trotskyist movement in India. After completing his studies he practised law in his home town in Gujarat, maintaining his links with his political mentors and continuing his efforts to launch a Trotskyist organization in India.

When the Indian section was formed, he immediately involved himself and from then on, while continuing in his profession, he devoted his intellectual, material and moral resources to the new party.

While staying hundreds of kilometers away from the party centre and areas of activity in Gujarat, he maintained close links with cadres through correspondence, writings and frequent visits. He spent days and weeks with the cadres in Baroda during political campaigns, conducting mass meetings, study circles, press conferences and so on. He made an important contribution in the development of young cadres for the party.

He also played a crucial role in the internal debates. In its early years, the party had to make a great effort to understand and fight ultra-left currents in the organiza-

tion. Here comrade Jhaveri made his presence felt, providing a clear orientation to the party in Gujarat.

In the mid-1970s, when the imposition of the nationwide emergency by Indira Gandhi severely affected the organization, he began a concerted initiative to hold the party together. He drafted a crucial document on the emergency and the demagoguery of the government about removing poverty. He also actively participated in an effort to convene Party Congress during the emergency. This Congress brought him into the leadership of the party.

His period of work in the national leadership was the most productive period for him as well as the party. In this period he emerged as the party's chief political spokesperson, drafting numerous resolutions and documents. At this time he also wrote a Marxist analysis of the Indian Constitution and a paper on the state in India.

As he was working on the latter text, he was suddenly hit by an intractable disease. In his last years he was completely bed-ridden and lost his capacity to speak.

His death is a big loss for the Indian section. We salute his memory and extend our sympathy to his family. We believe that the real tribute to such a comrade is to intensify our efforts to carry forward the legacy of revolutionary Marxism and build a mass revolutionary party.

(abridged from a statement of the Central Secretariat of the ICS)★

vast strength in its potential ability to mobilize its militants and the members of the mass organizations, has no access to such funding.

And yet, money is centrally important to this new "war" against reaction, which promises the earth to a population understandably weary of the economic crisis.

The FSLN needs the support of all anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces around the world. For this reason, Sandinista leader commandant Omar Cabezas, when visiting Paris last June, officially asked for the assistance of the LCR in the struggle against UNO.

The LCR decided to respond positively to this request and is attempting to raise 100,000 francs to finance the FSLN's electoral campaign. It is appealing to all its militants and sympathizers to contribute to the success of this campaign.

Cheques should be sent to : LCR (for Stephane), 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93 100 Montreuil, France.★

IRELAND

Irish socialist on Loyalist death-list

IN A NEW twist to the "leaks" row (the scandal caused by revelations of Loyalist/British Army collusion in the murder of militant nationalists; see *IV 171*), Peoples Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International, has revealed that one of its members is among those whose photos and personal details have been leaked to the Scottish newspaper the "Daily Record". Former Peoples Democracy councillor for West Belfast, John McNulty, said, "this is proof positive that political and trade union activists are targeted by the UDR, RUC and British Army—and subsequently by their henchmen in the Loyalist organizations.

"The member concerned is a long-standing member of our organization and a bona fide trade unionist who has played an important part in major industrial disputes. He has never been a member of

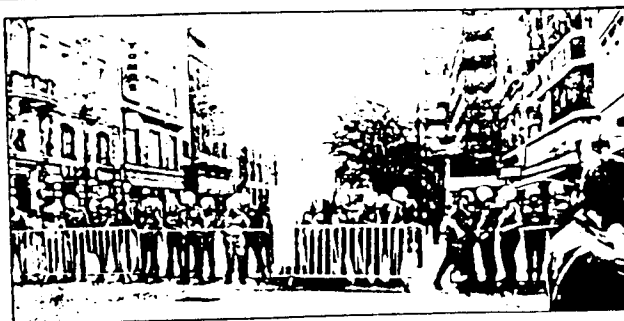
LIDOVÉ NOVINY

ROČ. 2. ČÍSLO 9

ZÁŘÍ 1989

Prohlášení LN

Od 14. srpna 1989 jsou v Bratislavě vězněni člen redakční rady Lidových novin dr. Miroslav Kusý a vydavatel Bratislavských listů dr. Ján Carnogurský. Spolu s Hanou Ponickou, Antonem Seleckým a dr. Vladimírem Maňákem, stíhanými na svobodu, jsou obviněni z různých trestných činů a přečinů pouze proto, že veřejně vyslovovali svůj názor k výročí



Sinn Fein or the IRA. His only arrest arose from a May Day demonstration in 1981, and this was the only occasion on which an official photograph was taken. We believe it is this photograph which has been leaked.

"The fact that our member's photograph was included in a photo-montage shows that this involvement in perfectly legal political and trade-union activity was considered sufficient for him to be routinely harassed and put at risk from Loyalist killer squads — for these groups the leak of the document would be sufficient grounds for murder.

"It has to be asked just how many of the "random killings" of Catholic civilians are the result of malice and political bias by the state forces coupled with collaboration with Loyalist assassins.

"This malice and bias extends to the RUC's response to the leaks. Our member was informed by a shoddy piece of photocopy paper pushed under his front door. Nothing could more clearly indicate the RUC's contempt for his rights and his life.

"The 'leaks' issue is not about pieces of paper but about the involvement of all sectors of the state forces in murder. Any serious proposal to end this threat would result, at minimum, in the immediate disbandment of the UDR and withdrawal of the RUC and British Army from nationalist areas". ★

GREAT BRITAIN

Lesbian and Gay triumph at Labour Conference

THE 1989 annual conference of the British Labour Party voted with a 62% majority to include an equal age of consent for lesbians and gay men and the repeal of all discriminatory laws in the Party policy, against the opposition of the party leaders and National Executive Committee. The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) had run a powerful campaign since May, when the Executive voted to drop the full equality commitment

from its "Policy Review". The conference resolution was moved by supporters of left newspaper "Labour Briefing". In a week when almost every progressive policy was abandoned by Labour at the leadership's behest, the LCLGR victory was doubly remarkable, and can be explained by a successful strategy of fighting for a united front with Labour and trade union leaders who could be won on this question, and winning a massive genuine rank and file level of support.

Many trade unions that otherwise voted with the leadership broke ranks on the issue of lesbian and gay equality. The struggle will now be to turn the conference victory into a manifesto commitment. ★

Soviet Union — Two Russian nationalist groups formed

TWO anti-*perestroika* organizations were founded in the USSR, apparently on the same weekend of September 8-9. The founding congress of the United Front of Workers of Russia was held in Sverdlovsk, where the local party leadership was defeated in the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies. Reportedly, the best known organization participating was the United Front of Workers of Leningrad, whose founding congress in June was attended by the notorious Stalinist and anti-semitic Nina Andreeva and the since ousted Leningrad party leader Yurii Solov'ev.

A prominent founder was Anatolii Pyzhov, who ran in Leningrad for the Congress of People's Deputies, getting only about 1% of the vote. Among other things, he has claimed that the only ones to benefit from *perestroika* have been the intellectuals. The new organization

Police move against independent publication

ON October 12 Czechoslovak secret police arrested Jiri Ruml and Rudolf Zeman, editors of an independent monthly magazine, *Lidové Noviny* [People's News]. The journal attempts to be objective and non partisan, presenting material from a wide range of viewpoints. Many of the best Czech and Slovak writers and journalists, prevented since 1969 from publishing in their own country, have written for the magazine.

It has been appearing since the beginning of 1988 in small editions of up to 1000 copies — not for lack of interest but for lack of paper — and represents an attempt by the Czechoslovak democratic opposition to operate in the same open and legally accepted way as is now, at least to some extent, possible in Hungary or even the Soviet Union.

The arrest of Ruml and Zeman, who have been charged with incitement against the socialist state and distribution of an illegal publication, is thus a deliberate anti-*glasnost* provocation.

According to a statement by Czechoslovak oppositionists this attack is aimed "not only at the free press of the opposition, but is also meant to intimidate the increasingly bold journalists and editors of official publications."

They call on journalists throughout the world to demand the release of Ruml and Zeman. ★

includes representatives of the so-called internationalist organizations claiming to represent Russian-speaking workers that have organized strikes in the Baltic Republics and Moldavia. Consequently, the name chosen, "United Front of Workers of Russia" seems to have a Great Russian nationalist implication.

In Moscow, the United Council of Russia held its founding congress, which was praised on September 14 by the neo-Stalinist daily *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. It was this paper that published the letter of Nina Andreeva, the manifesto of the neo-Stalinist opposition to *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the so-called internationalist organizations in the Baltic republics and Moldavia, along with Russian nationalist cultural groups, such as Otchestvo, the Brotherhood of Russian Artists and the All-Russian Cultural Foundation. ★

Glasnost and the crisis of the communist parties

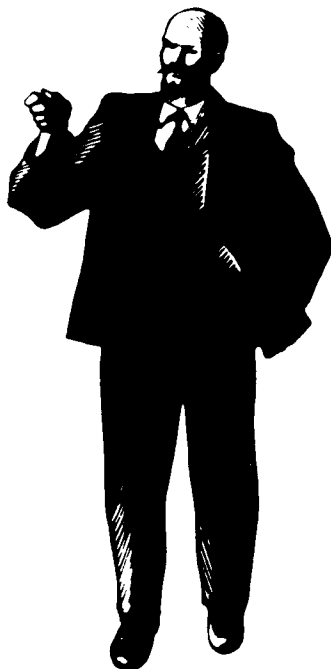
THE so-called World Communist Movement is more deeply divided today than at any time in its history. Above all, it is the attitude of the Communist parties to *glasnost* that is the indicator of this crisis.

ERNEST MANDEL

Party of Labor and the Portuguese Communist Party, as well as by most pro-Albanian and semi-Maoist groups.

The attitude of the US Communist Party has been hesitant. It has not declared itself one way or the other. We do not know the position of what remains of the Tudeh Party of Iran or the Communist Party of the Philippines. The South African Communist Party seems deeply divided on this subject, although it seems to be going along with Moscow, as its whole tradition dictates.

The situation is complicated by the fact that several of these CPs have substantial minorities, including in their apparatus, that do not share the majority position. Conservative minorities exist, notably, in the CPSU, the Hungarian CP and the Polish CP, while there is a "reformist" minority in the Chinese CP and the Dubcek tendency in the Czechoslovak CP. Dubcek is not formally a member of the



WE DEFINE *glasnost* as the process of political change underway in the Soviet Union, which in practice is widening the effective range of democratic freedoms. This process combines with the effects of the process of political reforms "from above," with a decline of repression and intimidation and de facto tolerance of autonomous activities and initiatives "from below," including those that do not conform to the laws in force.

Different motives for supporting *glasnost*

The leaderships of the following parties, among others, support *glasnost*, even if their motives are often different: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the Hungarian and Polish CPs, the Italian Communist Party, the French Communist party (with reservations), the Greek, Spanish, Swedish, Finnish, British, Dutch, Turkish, Danish, Belgian, and Swiss CPs and the Communist parties of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico (which formally no longer exists but operates within the party of Cauhtemoc Cárdenas), Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Australia and Lebanon.

The Communist parties of West Germany (DKP), Syria and Israel have abstained from any public criticism of *glasnost*. It is known that the majority of their leaders are in reality opposed to it. Some of the CP leaderships that back *glasnost* have done so more out of the tradition of unconditional support for everything that happens in the USSR than out of real conviction. This is creating tensions with more sincere champions of *glasnost*, tensions that could lead to splits, both in the DKP and the Greek CP.

On the other hand, *glasnost* has been rejected by the official leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the Romanian Communist Party, the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the United Socialist Party (SED) of East Germany, the Vietnamese Communist Party¹, the Cuban Communist Party, the Bulgarian Communist Party (in a more attenuated way), the Japanese Communist Party, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the North Korean Communist Party, the Albanian

CPCz but he is supported by hundreds of thousands of ex-members expelled in the period of "normalization," who are demanding reinstatement in the party. Pro-Gorbachev minorities also exist in the Romanian and Bulgarian CPs, as well as in the SED, but on a smaller scale.

On the other hand, the differentiations at the base do not necessarily follow the same lines as at the top. More "left" tendencies are also emerging in several CPs, notably the Greek CP (KKE), alongside tendencies at the base with even more far reaching social democratic inclinations than are to be found in the leaderships of certain CPs.

Profound divisions over repression in China

Another indicator is the attitude taken toward the Deng Xiaoping faction's bloody repression of the Beijing Commune. On this question the division is profound. It largely, though not entirely, parallels the lineup on *glasnost*. In the camp of those who have condemned the Tiananmen Square massacres are almost all the parties favorable to *glasnost*, plus the Japanese CP. But, in the case of the USSR, the Gorbachevite leadership of the CPSU has taken a very reserved attitude, while unconditional rejection of the Chinese action has been left to the radical wing. The US CP has not condemned the repression, and thus in this case slipped toward the neo-Stalinist conservative camp. The Cuban CP has kept quiet.

There is a third indicator that is just as significant — the attitude toward the dogma of the single party. Once again, almost all the pro-*glasnost* CPs reject it, except the Gorbachev leadership itself for the USSR. But, again, within the CPSU there are radicals who reject it. A growing number of Gorbachevites are beginning to question this principle. The Japanese CP in turn has rejected it. The anti-*glasnost* CPs including the Cubans are champions of the dogma of the single party.

The simultaneous expression of these positions and their political implications,

1. Reports have been multiplying about this for several months. The *International Herald Tribune* of September 7, 1989, confirmed them, referring to a speech by General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and to an article published in the party's central organ, *Nhan-Dan*.

seem to justify talking about a veritable faction fight taking place within the so-called World Communist Movement. Doubtless, it is not (yet?) an organized factional struggle. But "informal" consultations are multiplying. The conservatives in all the CPs mentioned want the elimination of *glasnost* in the USSR, since it is causing them big problems in their own parties and/or countries. Whether or not they are plotting together with the Ligachev-Chebrikov-Zaikov tendency to eliminate Gorbachev from the leadership of the CPSU or to put him in a position where he cannot "do any harm" depends on each individual case.

The choice of *glasnost* as the indicator of the main differences within the so-called "World Communist Movement" is neither arbitrary nor unilateral. There is hardly any opposition to economic *perestroika* within the CPs and the anti-*glasnost* factions in power, quite the contrary. The "conservative" CPs have declared themselves enthusiastic champions of it. They are, moreover, applying it in their own countries².

Albanian regime makes cautious opening to EEC

Likewise, practically all the anti-*glasnost* CPs approve of the projects for "peaceful solution of regional conflicts" in collaboration with imperialism and even the cessation of aid to the liberation movements that they imply³. So, it is *glasnost* that emerges as the real source of division. Leaving aside the Albanian Party of Labor, whose leadership is beginning to make a cautious opening to the EEC, the only substantial exception is the Cuban CP, whose opposition to *glasnost* is combined with a rejection of further compromises with imperialism and of a major recourse to market mechanisms.

Broadly, we can say that there are three international tendencies that claim in one way or another to represent communism — the pro-Gorbachev tendency that accepts *glasnost*, *perestroika* and "regional accords" with imperialism; the conservative tendency that rejects *glasnost* but accepts *perestroika* and the "regional accords"; and the revolutionary Marxist tendency that accepts *glasnost* but rejects *perestroika* and the "regional accords."

The fact that *glasnost* divides the so-called World Communist Movement has deeper roots. The bureaucratized post-capitalist societies (bureaucratized workers' states) are going through a social crisis of exceptional gravity. Everyone is aware of this in the countries concerned as well as internationally. The bankruptcy of bureaucratic dictatorship in all its variants is manifest. It is going hand in hand with a no less deep moral and ideological crisis. Everyone therefore poses the question: How could it come to this? How can the situation be turned around? What is the way out of it? Has socialism failed, if not,



what?

Glasnost is the beginning of a frank and open debate over these key questions. This is an indispensable precondition for seeking and finding a proper solution. Inasmuch as this debate cannot fail to challenge the very nature of the bureaucracy, its power, its privileges and its main ideological devices, all factions of the bureaucracy are opposed to total *glasnost*. The differences concern the limits to be imposed on this debate over the causes of, and remedies to, the crisis. However, for 60 years the socio-political system of bureaucratic dictatorship as it functioned in the USSR and similar societies and the equation of this with socialism have been the basis of the identity of all Communist parties throughout the world.

Iron unity buffeted by new socialist revolutions

Of course, this "iron unity" was strained by the victory of new socialist revolutions (Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua), which gave the CPs in these countries and the Sandinistas a material and political base independent of the Kremlin. Certainly also, the growth of "Euro-Communist" and similar phenomena after the crushing of the "Prague Spring" severely buffeted this identity.

Nonetheless, in general — with the possible exception of the Italian CP — the USSR, "actually existing socialism" and the "socialist camp" remained a reference point for the great majority of cadres of the CPs, even if this allegiance did not exclude criticisms, which were sometimes quite sharp. Moreover, even the harshest critics did not fail to repeat that, in any case, Khrushchev (the Twentieth Congress) and Gorbachev (*glasnost*, *perestroika*) came from inside the CPSU.

However, the revelations and dynamic of *glasnost* are dealing blows to the most sacrosanct underpinnings of this reference point and identity. There are terrible injustices, inequalities, poverty, grave

forms of oppression in the USSR. Crimes no less terrible have been committed there. *Glasnost* has opened the way for exposing them and fighting them. This is an exceptionally grave blow to all the CPs. Their divisions are essentially over how to absorb it.

Lost legitimacy of "actually existing socialism"

Some try to make the best of a bad bargain. They hope that Gorbachev will be able to bring about an improvement in the USSR and thereby get them out of their predicament. The old lost legitimacy of "actually existing socialism" could be replaced by a new legitimacy of a "socialism with a human face in the process of being built." The others try, instead, to deny or to minimize the crisis so as to avoid the repercussions in their own countries and/or parties of disclosing it and of the attempts to overcome it.

To this end, they stress heavily "the positive gains" of the Stalin and Brezhnev eras. They furiously oppose damaging revelations. They continue to defend the methods of "actually existing socialism" and the idea that "the party is always right" against all odds. Hence their fierce hostility to *glasnost*.

However, denying the crisis of the system afflicting the USSR, East Europe and the People's Republic of China means denying the obvious. Opposing a frank airing of it means opposing an honest discussion of its origins, underlying causes and the means of overcoming it. This is a

2. See, in particular, a statement by an SED theoretician that you would have to be suffering from a "fit of madness" to oppose *perestroika* in the USSR (in an interview in the Zürich *Wochenzeitung* of September 1, 1989.) *Perestroika*-type reforms have been applied in Vietnam, Bulgaria and other such countries.

3. It should be added that economic collaboration between the USSR, China and North Korea has increased considerably in the framework of *perestroika*. According to *Pravda* of July 6, 1989, 70 industrial complexes furnishing 25% of all industrial production in the Democratic Republic of Korea are now operating with Soviet aid.

rearguard battle destined to failure, even if it may temporarily score some points, as occurred in China after the crushing of the Beijing Commune.

This is neither a struggle of "the right against the left" or of "revisionists" against "defenders of Marxism-Leninism." Neither of the two opposing camps in the "World Communist Movement" is "more right wing," more "revisionist" or more "pro-imperialist" than the other, or conversely, more "left," more "orthodox Marxist-Leninist" or more "anti-imperialist." To reach this conclusion, I am applying the golden rule established for politics by Karl Marx. That is, you have to judge people and tendencies not by what they say, and especially not by what they say about themselves, but by what they do.

In the light of this criterion, the judgement I have just made is based on solid evidence.

The Deng Xiaoping faction has never, not for one day, not even on the day of the Tiananmen Square massacre, stopped collaborating closely with imperialism. In fact, there is a radar station in China for receiving signals coming from the USSR, run jointly by the Americans and the Chinese. This same faction has never stopped backing some of the most repressive pro-imperialist regimes in the third world, just as it supported the Zia regime in Pakistan. It collaborates militarily with the Thai dictatorship. It was involved in providing military supplies to the Contras in Nicaragua. In what respect is its behavior any more "anti-imperialist" than that of Gorbachev and his allies?

West German subsidies to Honecker

The Ceausescu regime in Romania is the one in Eastern Europe that has collaborated most systematically with the Zionist state. The Honecker regime in East Germany is the one most integrated into the European Economic Community (EEC). It gets fat subsidies from West German imperialism. The "reformers" in Hungary and Poland would be happy to get comparable aid.

There is nothing "orthodox" from the standpoint of Marxism in rejecting *glasnost*, especially the right to strike and freedom of association and above all freedom for the workers to form unions and other self-defense bodies, or rejecting freedom of expression, cultural pluralism and freedom to demonstrate in the streets. Identifying these freedoms with "bourgeois democracy" runs counter to the whole Marxist tradition in this regard, starting with the clearly expressed views of Marx and Engels themselves.

Democracy is bourgeois when it serves to protect and defend the power and property of a bourgeois class. It would be hard to demonstrate that the political pluralism and ideological debate in the USSR are

today serving that function. It would be still harder to demonstrate that the right to strike and trade-union freedom defend capitalist property.

The idea professed by Ligachev that having several parties would equal bourgeois democracy contradicts positions clearly expressed by Marx, Engels and Lenin himself, at least up until 1920. It is also a distortion of history.

Multiparty system compatible with socialism

Was the Paris Commune bourgeois democracy? Nonetheless, there were several parties. Was the Russia of the soviets from 1918 to 1921 a bourgeois democracy? Nonetheless, there were several parties, and in the midst of a civil war too. Is Nicaragua a bourgeois democracy? Nonetheless, there are several parties.

An instructive example is offered by freedom of the press. It is bourgeois when the bourgeoisie holds the capital necessary to buy, corrupt and manipulate the press and the media. Since this power is never total under a regime with freedom of the press — as opposed to a dictatorship — and the workers can also enjoy this freedom, even if in a limited way, the workers' movement has an interest in defending even the freedom of the bourgeois press against attempts to restrict or eliminate it.

However, when the bourgeoisie has lost its economic and political power, when the power of capital to take over the print shops, radio and TV has disappeared, freedom of the press ceases to be bourgeois and becomes freedom for the popular masses. The problem then is to guarantee access to the press and media for all working people, as Lenin demanded. "All workers", of course means not just those who express themselves the way the leaders of the "party" or any institution want. Restricting such freedom of the press is not repressing the bourgeoisie; it is repressing the proletariat, the toiling masses.

Glasnost's social content is revealed all the more clearly because the conservatives of the anti-*glasnost* camp do not just call for restricting, or eliminating political pluralism, do not oppose just freedom of the press, freedom of association and freedom to demonstrate. They also and unequivocally oppose trade-union freedom and the right to strike (see especially the interview given by the chief of the Hungarian conservatives to the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* of August 21, 1989). The statements of Ligachev and Chebrikov are no less eloquent. And even Fidel Castro has not hesitated to say that the imperialists rejoice at strikes in the Soviet Union, which are therefore in some way "anti-socialist."⁴

Where are the capitalists who rejoiced at the Soviet miners' strike, and still more the present strikes in Poland? All the

information proves the contrary. Still worse. The aggressive wing of the conservatives in the USSR, notably, the famous Nina Andreeva, are adopting clear and publicly proclaimed Great Russian chauvinist and anti-Semitic positions. (See the interview with her in the *International Herald Tribune* of August 2, 1989.) Are such positions less revisionist than those of Gorbachev?

This wing, moreover, is overtly Stalinist. It minimizes, if not justifies, the crimes of Stalin, the great purges of 1934-1939 and 1945-52 and the military repression of the Hungarian workers in 1956.⁵ There was a big portrait of Stalin at the last congress of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). A group of old Stalinist cops and prison warders have made a film entitled "Stalin is with us" to support Nina Andreeva. (*El Pais*, August 20, 1989.)

Russian conservatives organize

The congress of the United Council of Russia held in Moscow on September 8-9, 1989, brought together conservatives in the apparatus, admirers of "the strong authority" symbolized by Stalin, traditional anti-modernist and anti-Western pan-Slavists and fiercely anti-Marxist rightists and even semi-fascists. (*Le Monde* of September 16, 1989.)

This significant linkup was symbolized by Aleksandr Zinoviev, the virulent anti-Soviet satirist, in a striking interview in *Nouvelles de Moscou*. At the same time as fulminating his hatred of socialism and democracy, he declared that the age of Stalin was, after all, a "great" one. He also accused Gorbachev of wanting to "Westernize" Soviet society. His desires go in the direction of another voluntarist, Stalinist regime.

What does this repugnant cocktail have to do with "the left," "Marxist orthodoxy," "defending socialism"?

The Cuban CP occupies a place apart. Up until now, the Cuban revolution has not experienced a comparable degree of bureaucratization to that of the USSR, the People's Republic of China and the Eastern European countries. This is the result of a dialectical relationship between the origins of this revolution, its principal social gains — which are outstanding, from any point of view — the role of the Cuban leadership and a continuing participation of the masses in the process of building a new society, although the extent of this fluctuates and remains confined to limited areas.

Fidel Castro continues to enjoy real

4. All the references to Fidel Castro's July 26, 1989, speech have been taken from the *Granma Weekly Review* of August 6, 1989.

5. You find this same justification of the 1956 and 1968 repressions among the Czechoslovak and Hungarian "conservatives," as well as among those in East Germany.

prestige in the eyes of the masses. The Cuban revolution, moreover, faces constant economic aggression from the imperialists, as well as a military threat that has never ended. Only the Nicaraguan revolution finds itself in a more threatened situation.

Cuban revolution must still be defended

In these conditions, the duty of the international workers' movement and of revolutionary Marxists is more than ever to defend the Cuban revolution against imperialist and its regional agents. It is also to denounce the economic pressures that Gorbachev is putting on the Cuban leadership to get it to accept the "regional accords" and adapt its economic system partially to perestroika. These pressures are unacceptable, even if they will undoubtedly not go so far as a drastic cutting off of aid.⁶

This duty is not affected by anything one might think of the Cuban CP's course or the concrete steps taken by the Cuban leadership. While we disagree with some of these measures and attitudes⁷, it has to be stressed that alone among all the components of the so-called World Communist Movement, the Cuban CP combines its opposition to *glasnost* with a condemnation of an excessive recourse to market mechanisms, a condemnation that we sympathize with, even if we think that the alternative proposed — voluntary work — is insufficient and in the long run unrealistic.

Moreover, we support unreservedly the thinly veiled criticisms of the proposals to "resolve" "regional conflicts" at the expense of the liberation movements in the regions concerned. At the same time, we fear that the Cuban leadership itself may end by bending in a similar direction, at least in Latin America.

As long as there is no separation between the state and party, the needs of government realpolitik dictate the party's attitudes, contrary to what happened in Soviet Russia under Lenin. The state leaders are already saying, contrary to "Che," that a socialist revolution is not on the agenda in Latin America. But the defense of the Cuban revolution is ill served by an attitude of complacency and uncritical admiration of the sort typical of "the friends of the USSR" or "the friends of China." Criticising what is wrong in the behavior of the Cuban leadership does not harm Cuba. It serves the revolution. Hiding the truth or prettifying it harms the revolution.

From this standpoint, the open attacks by Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership on *glasnost*, that is, on the process of partial democratization underway in the USSR, are contrary to the interests both of the international proletariat and those of the Cuban revolution and the working

masses in Cuba. They threaten to provoke a grave crisis of the legitimacy of the Cuban leadership itself among a section of the masses, especially the youth.

These attacks were already included in the speech that Fidel Castro made on July 26, 1989.⁸ They led to banning the distribution of two Soviet publications in Cuba, *Novedades de Moscu* [*Moscow News*] and *Sputnik*. These measures have to be condemned unreservedly. They threaten to put Fidel Castro and the Cuban CP leadership in a de facto alliance with the conservative tendencies in the "World Communist Movement," the most retrograde and corrupt tendencies and those most inclined to repress the masses.⁹

To justify banning these two Soviet publications, the Cuban CP organ *Granma* claimed that they advocate capitalist methods in the economic field, that they defend bourgeois democracy and "bourgeois values," that they distort the past and thus threaten to exert a negative influence on a part of the Cuban youth. The charge of "distorting the past" is a transparent allusion to the systematic exposure of Stalin's crimes.

Covering up for Stalin's crimes

In this respect, Fidel Castro talks about "errors" committed by the CPs in power. Was the murder of a million communists and in particular of 90% of the Red Army commanders an "error"? Is it necessary to continue to cover up the scope of Stalin's crimes for the sake of political convenience?

The accusation that *Moscow News* advocates capitalist methods in the economic field is out of place.¹⁰ At most, one could say that this weekly paper has published a few articles favorable to certain capitalist mechanisms, just as it has published some articles that put in question the legitimacy of the October Revolution. I have not read a single article advocating

the restoration of capitalism. But alongside the sort of articles mentioned, there are many others that say exactly the opposite. The truth is that the Cuban leadership has banned a forum of debate and discussion, not a pro-capitalist organ.¹¹

To say that *Moscow News* defends "bourgeois democracy" is just as false. I already pointed out that fighting for the freedom of expression, for political and ideological pluralism, for a free contest of ideas, has nothing in common with fighting for "bourgeois democracy." The opposite view assumes an all-knowing and infallible leadership. This idea seems to show through in the formula that *Granma* of July 9, 1989, used in commenting on the execution of Ochoa: "When the party speaks, not a single word, not a single comma, departs from the truth."

A bureaucratic caste in Cuba?

Unfortunately, in the 1970s the Cuban party proclaimed the value of "market mechanisms"; today, it condemns them as "capitalist methods." Just recently, the party condemned as "imperialist slanders" any criticism of the Ministry of the Interior (that is, the police). Today, it is loudly denouncing the abuses of this same ministry. Recently, an editorial in *Granma* of September 10, 1989, went so far as to say that there was a "bureaucratic caste" in Cuba. Not so long ago, Cuban Communist activists who expressed much more modest criticism in documents not circulated publicly were imprisoned. Would it not have made it easier to correct such errors if critics had been allowed to express themselves freely, if their views had been freely debated?

In his speech of July 26, 1989, Fidel Castro said that "socialism is a science to win the people to this great cause." But a science is never complete for all time. It is always open to new problems. To advance, it requires practical experimen-

6. It should be recalled that the Khrushchev leadership totally halted all economic and military aid to the People's Republic of China overnight, which had disastrous effects for the Communist movement as a whole and the mass movement in the third world, especially in Asia and Africa. It split the CPs and gave rise to the notorious realignments of the Maoist leadership. It should also be recalled that the Brezhnev leadership went as far as aiming nuclear weapons at the big Chinese cities. Nor should the scandal of the Kremlin dealing out aid with an eye-dropper during the Indochinese war be forgotten.

7. In their their scope and practical effects, all these betrayals went beyond what Gorbachev is doing today.

8. He even goes as far as to evoke the possibility of a "great civil war" in the USSR, or even a disintegration of the country.

9. I might cite the example of Ceaucescu in Romania, who has established a veritable family regime. Most of the working people lack necessities, and cannot even heat their homes in the winter. But this despot gives an absolute priority to paying off the debt to the capitalist countries by pushing exports at the same time as pursuing a scandalous policy of investing in luxurious and grandiose prestige projects. This, no doubt, is another proof of his "Communist orthodoxy." (See the indict-

ment written by a former member of the State Security Council and top party leader Professor Dumitru Mazilu in *The Times* of August 22, 1989.) Amnesty International has just denounced cases of torture in Romania.

The vice president of the People's Republic of China, Wang Zhen, for his part, has not hesitated to call for "totally eradicating...the bourgeois liberals, rioters and counter-revolutionaries...to get rid of a large number of them, kill them or reeducate them, as the various cases call for, send a lot of them to the labor camps." (*Le Monde*, August 31, 1989.)

10. Behind this thesis, there is an equation by Fidel Castro of commodity-market relations (which anyway survive in Cuba) with "capitalist methods." This is wrong from a theoretical standpoint. Market relations existed a long time before capitalism without leading automatically to it. They will survive a long time after the disappearance of capitalism, as Lenin, Trotsky and all the classical Marxist theoreticians maintained on many occasions.

11. Paradoxically in his July 26, 1989 speech, Fidel Castro said: "Are we seeing a peaceful transition from socialism to capitalism? That is possible. We are not against it." As for us, we do not think that this is possible, just as a gradual transition from capitalism to socialism is not. And in any case we would have to be against it.

tation and a confrontation of different interpretations of a constantly changing reality. As Friedrich Engels said in a letter to the leadership of the German social democracy, science can only develop through free discussion. This is why he severely condemned this leadership's attempt to introduce censorship and exclusion of documents in its own publications. What would he have said about banning organs of a "sister party?"

To believe that newspapers could tip a part of Cuban youth into the pro-imperialist camp, you would have to believe that the revolution's arguments were no longer able to counter those of the counterrevolution and believe that administrative measures (bans, repression) were the only effective means of fighting wrong ideas. This reflects a loss of confidence in the superiority of revolutionary thought and propaganda over bourgeois thought and propaganda.

It reflects a loss of confidence in the capacity of the masses and the youth to distinguish truth from falsehood, reason and justice from lies and injustice, their own interests from those of the exploiters and oppressors.¹²

In the 1960s, at the time of the fight against Anibal Escalante's faction, Fidel Castro's anti-Stalinist and anti-bureaucratic positions reached their peak. Castro delivered a speech with the striking title, "The Revolution Must Be a School of Unfettered Thought." This was neither a "normative" nor a "utopian" position. It was an eminently practical one that corresponded to the interests of defending the revolution, which made possible greater effectiveness in building socialism.

But today fetters on free thought are multiplying in Cuba. They are being justified theoretically. Abandoning the correct thesis of former years in favor of a substitutionist view represents a damaging ideological regression for the Cuban CP, a suicidal one in the long term.

Fidel Castro seems now to be focusing on the danger of a bureaucratic degeneration of the Cuban state. But he rejects *glasnost*, pluralist democratization, institutionalized mass inspection at all economic, political and social levels. To eliminate this danger, therefore he has no recourse left but a bureaucratic (administrative, repressive) struggle against the bureaucracy, with at most occasional and stage-managed interventions by the masses. This is destined to certain failure, as we have seen in the USSR and the People's Republic of China.

The factional struggle between the

"reformist" and "conservative" wings of the CPs in power is an inter-bureaucratic conflict. It reflects essentially a difference of judgement and political options over the best means for salvaging the bureaucratic system in these countries. But in most of these countries (Cuba and Nic-



aragua are special cases) this inter-bureaucratic struggle is intertwined with social conflicts between the following four main social forces:

- The top levels of the bureaucracy, who enjoy enormous material privileges and base themselves on a broad layer of less privileged middle and low-ranking bureaucrats. Both pro and anti Gorbachev factions have their roots here. But the majority of the bureaucrats are anti-Gorbachev and above all anti-*glasnost*.¹³

- The toiling masses, essentially wage earners, but still including a majority of small peasants, as in China and Vietnam.

- The petty-bourgeois forces and the initial nuclei of a middle bourgeoisie both in the countryside and in the towns.

- The salaried "new middle classes," that is the intelligentsia, which have a real weight, especially in the USSR, East Germany and Czechoslovakia but to a lesser extent in the other bureaucratized workers' states and in Cuba.

This way of approaching the conflicts underway in the USSR and the other bureaucratized workers' states gives precedence, as a Marxist analysis must, to the real interests of the social forces present over the ideological or verbal aspect of political positions. This in no way involves underestimating the role of ideology in the political struggle.

By codifying the neo-social democrat

gradualism already in fashion in the CPs for decades, by sowing illusions about the potentially "peaceful" nature of imperialism, by suggesting the possibility of resolving the major contradictions of our epoch not by class struggle but by class collaboration, by uncritically singing the praises of the market, Gorbachev's "new thinking," and still more that of the outright anti-Marxist wing represented by his advisors, is giving grist to the mill of the international social democracy, and even to the free enterprise offensive of the international bourgeoisie. This is disorienting the organized workers' movement. It is an impediment to a workers' fightback against this offensive, which is a material need of the class.

It is necessary to distinguish the effects of this ideology — the "new thinking" — from Gorbachev's outright counter-revolutionary pressures and concrete political measures with regard to specific struggles underway, which are a continuation of a practice that was already the rule under Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The weight of the ideological factor in the real unfolding of the political conflicts in the bureaucratized workers' states remains subor-

ordinate to the confrontation of real social interests. It is the latter that will be decisive in the coming period.

However delighted they may be by Solidarnosc's spectacular political victory over Jaruzelski's attempt to eliminate their organization by a military coup d'etat at the end of 1981 and however great the real ideological influence (often exaggerated abroad) of the church and nationalism, the Polish workers will act decisively to defend their standard of living, their jobs and even the miserable social security that they have gained when any government, even one led by Solidarnosc, attacks them.¹⁴ It is their interests

12. The Czechoslovak CP chief, Jakes, said in an interview in the July 30 issue of the Spanish-state daily *El Pais* that 99% of the population is against ideas of Vaclav Havel and Charter 77. If that is really so — which is far from proven — why fear and forbid their dissemination? Why does dissemination of these ideas "impose" anything on anybody?

13. A study by Peter Reddaway in the August 17, 1989, issue of the *New York Review of Books* confirms that the majority of the bureaucrats are very hostile to *glasnost* and, at bottom, hostile to Gorbachev. See also a similar study in the weekly *Die Zeit* of September 29, 1989.

14. See a significant commentary by the Solidarnosc senator and famous Catholic writer Andrzej Szczypiorski: "There is a paradoxical mentality among us. People also say that they are against communism. That's true. But at the same time they do not want a state like those in the West, with unemployment." (*Die Zeit*, September 8, 1989.)

and not any "ideological values" that in the last analysis will determine their day-to-day behavior, even if they may give a "period of grace" to the first government in 40 years not led by the Stalinists and which, undoubtedly, better reflects the political preferences of the popular masses than the preceding governments.

Solidarnosc faces new dilemma

One of the main theoreticians of anti-Marxism on a world scale, the ex-Marxist Polish professor Leszek Kolakowski, grasped perfectly the dilemma facing Solidarnosc as a result of this situation:

"The new government has inherited a bankrupt economy and the discontent flowing from this. Before, Solidarnosc existed to defend the workers. Now, if the more and more widespread feeling of despair leads to rebellions — with or without provocations from the Stalinist forces of the Party and the police — it [Solidarnosc] will be in an ambiguous position." (*The Times* of August 22, 1989.)

However, an ambiguous line of action is incompatible with the role that the nomenklatura and the IMF has assigned to the Solidarnosc-CP coalition, which is to get the working class to accept austerity in order to receive new imperialist credits, to assure "order" and "stability" at any price, as a precondition for so-called "economic reflation."

Jacek Kuron merits respect for the years he has spent in prison in Poland. Without his tenacious efforts, which at the beginning were confined to "grouplet" activity, the working-class explosion of 1980 would not have happened, or at least it would have appeared much later.

But the respect that we owe him cannot cover up the nightmare that awaits him. As minister of labor in Mazowiecki's government, he risks becoming the minister of the police and anti-working class, anti-pluralist repression, if he agrees to drink to its dregs the cup of an "economy open to the world," that is, the rules of the game of international capitalism.

A realistic estimate of the social forces present in the USSR and in the other bureaucratized workers' states, of the relationship of strength among them and of the dynamic of the principal socio-economic contradictions leads to a clear conclusion.

The main question in the political struggles underway is not the restoration of capitalism. The main question is whether these struggles head in the direction of an anti-bureaucratic political revolution or of a partial or total elimination of the democratic freedoms acquired by the masses under glasnost. The main fight is not between pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist forces. It is between the bureaucracy and the toiling masses,

that is, except in China and Vietnam, essentially the working class.

In none of the bureaucratized workers' states does the petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie represent more than a small minority of the society. This element is undoubtedly operating in an international context favorable to it. It enjoys support, although quite limited, from international big capital.¹⁵ But overall this convergence will be insufficient to impose any restoration of capitalism in the short or medium term.

No serious bourgeois observer believes in the possibility of such a "restoration" through political initiatives coming from right or far-right forces, or even a "spontaneous" restoration of capitalism as a simple result of a widening of the market mechanisms. The only minimally realistic possibility for arriving at such a result is relying outright on the "reform" wing of the bureaucracy. The fears of the dogmatic tendencies point in the same direction.

No Soviet "capitalists" are expected to "restore" capitalism in the USSR. This is a sinister design attributed to Gorbachev (and in Poland and Hungary to his local allies). Some have also attributed this objective to Deng Xiaoping in China.

At the root of this interpretation of the social dynamic operating in the USSR is a misunderstanding of the nature of the bureaucracy as a crystallized social caste holding enormous power over the entire society and enjoying enormous material privileges. It is not a new ruling class. It has neither the stability, nor the underpinnings nor the capacity of self-reproduction of its rule over the long term that typify ruling classes historically. But it nonetheless has a real capability for self-defense in the short and medium term, when its power is threatened.

Bureaucracy opposed to capitalist restoration

For the majority, in fact the very great majority of the bureaucracy, the restora-

tion of capitalism would reduce their power and privileges. Only a small minority would or could transform themselves into real entrepreneurs of big industrial or financial firms, firms genuinely independent from an economic point of view, that is, into private owners able to pass on this status to their children. For the great bulk of the bureaucrats — not just the small and medium-rank ones but members of the nomenklatura, which can be estimated at some 300,000 households in the USSR — the restoration of capitalism would involve a loss of power and material advantages.¹⁶

Assuming that the bureaucracy is heading in this direction means assuming that it is ready to commit hara-kiri as a crystallized social caste. This is an error parallel to the one of thinking that in an acute crisis it would go over bag and baggage into the camp of the proletariat. Trotsky predicted that in an acute crisis, a "Reiss wing" favorable to a political revolution and a "Butenko wing" favorable to the restoration of capitalism would emerge from the bonapartist bureaucracy.¹⁷ But he never said that the whole bureaucracy would divide into a Reiss wing and a Butenko wing.

Two decisive historical tests for bureaucracy

Two decisive historical tests have taken place in this regard in the USSR. The two gravest crises experienced by the bureaucratic dictatorship were in 1927-1933 and in 1941-1943. In both cases, the majority of the bureaucracy and its bonapartist leadership opted neither for the proletarian solution nor capitulation to the bourgeoisie. It clung, by the most desperate means and at a terrible cost to the Soviet masses, to the defense of its own power. It did so successfully both times.

All those who failed to understand this possibility — starting with the unfortunate "capitulationists" from the Left Opposition around Pyatakov — paid with





their lives for this error in judgement, after committing terrible political mistakes.¹⁸ There is hardly any point in repeating this error today. The political and social struggle in the USSR and in the other bureaucratized workers' states is, and will remain, for a whole period a triangular and not a bipolar one.

This analysis, moreover, has just gotten a resounding confirmation in the People's Republic of China. Deng Xiaoping unquestionably played the role of sorcerer's apprentice in pushing economic "liberalization" as far as he did, much further than Gorbachev. But when a grave economic crisis of "overheating" resulted, with the beginning of a breakdown of planning, an uncontrollable budget deficit and galloping inflation, his response was not "restoration of capitalism" but to restore firm bureaucratic control of the economy. Tens of thousands of bureaucrats were sent into the provinces and the enterprises to re-impose state control of the economy.¹⁹ This came before the massacre in Tiananmen Square.

The Chinese bureaucracy did not commit hara-kiri either in response to the "spontaneous market forces" or the masses. It clung desperately to its power and privileges. Historically, in the very long run, the bureaucracy has neither a future or a destiny of its own. But for a certain period, it is capable of defending its bonapartist position. That is the verdict of 60 years of historical experience. It will only

disappear from the scene when it is overthrown by the conscious political action of another social force, either a real bourgeois class or a real working class.

In view of the relationship of forces existing today at least in the USSR²⁰, it is much more likely that the bureaucracy will be eliminated by the working class than by a new bourgeoisie. I say conscious political action, because state power remains the decisive factor. No spontaneous economic process, no "inherent logic" of the market mecha-

15. The imperialists fear above all the destabilizing efforts of grave political and social conflicts in Eastern Europe on Europe as a whole, or even on the world situation.

This is why the most representative leaders of big capital, not just West German but also American, insist strongly that no major change should take place without the Kremlin's agreement, or without taking the Kremlin's interests into account.

16. An interesting article in the June 17, 1989, issue of the *Indian Economic and Political Weekly* refers to a lecture by Nobel-Prize-winner Vassili Leontiev, in which he maintained that no coherent market economy is possible without a market of the means of production and a labor market, that is, without capital [in other words, capitalism]. But, at the same time he reported, that in all of the USSR there were hardly 100 managers.

17. Ignacy Reiss, a Polish Communist in the service of Red Army intelligence, broke publicly with Stalin and the Comintern after the first Moscow trial in 1936, and announced that he was going over to the Fourth International. He was assassinated shortly afterward in Switzerland. Fedor Butenko, a Soviet diplomat, also broke with Moscow in 1936. He went over to the Italian fascists.

18. Pyatakov, one of the main Bolshevik leaders at

nisms, can transform the social nature of the state without the active intervention of political forces pursuing determined ends.

Today, whatever impressionable journalists or people who confuse their desires with reality may say, in Poland and Hungary it is the bureaucratic nomenklatura and not "the pro-bourgeois forces" that control the state apparatus. They have the support, to be sure more discreet than in the past but no less real, of the Kremlin. Before the Mazowiecki government was installed in Warsaw, the chief of the KGB made a much noticed visit to give his approval to the new coalition government (in office, not in power — there is a big difference). Gorbachev's speech in East Berlin on the fortieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic left nothing to the imagination in this regard.

Paul Sweezy, for his part, thinks that, except for Cuba and East Germany, things are moving in the long run toward a restoration of the market (*Monthly Review*, September 1989). Let us leave aside the fact that "in the long run," a lot of things are going to change, both in East and West Europe, in the USSR and in the world. Let us also leave aside the fact that Sweezy is blithely forgetting that until recently he claimed that a new non-capitalist ruling class was in power in all these countries. (Here is a "new ruling class" eliminating itself — that is really an adventure in dialectics.)

The essential thing lies elsewhere. Not once does Sweezy make any allusion to the role, the activity, the reactions or the interests of the working class. It is not even a pawn on the chessboard. It does not exist — 350 million people are wiped off the world scene. This theorem should be turned upside down. No change in the system in any of these countries is possible without violent social conflicts, in which the working class will be the main actor.

It will defend its interests. Unless it suffers a severe defeat at the outcome of these conflicts, no restoration of capital-

time of the revolution, and a member of the Left Opposition, capitulated in 1928 after the Stalin leadership's "left turn." He was executed in 1932, after the second Moscow trial.

19. See *Neuer Zürcher Zeitung* of July 22-23, 1989, on the bureaucratic apparatus' firm resumption of control over the Chinese economy.

20. Even in Poland, where there is a lot of talk about the "privatization of the nomenklatura," you have to look behind the verbiage. In its September 11, 1989, issue, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* soberly noted that it would take 20 to 25 years to re-privatize industry, which is 95% state owned. Who could buy this industry, except foreign capital? And why would foreign capital buy up enterprises that are generally subsidized, that is, unprofitable from the capitalist point of view?

Le Monde of September 2 ran the headline: "The Polish nomenklatura reserves the better part of the private sector for itself." But on looking closer you see that what was involved was an agricultural consortium, a swindle, against which the population has already begun to protest.

21. See Catherine Samary, *Le marché contre l'autogestion*, Paris, La Brèche, 1988; and Notebooks for Social Research, Amsterdam, on the problems of transitional society.

ism is possible. For the moment, it is necessary to prepare for these struggles, and prepare for them without assuming that defeat is inevitable when the battle has not even been engaged.

The whole foregoing analysis leads to two political conclusions. Revolutionary Marxists strive in all circumstances to defend the immediate and historic interests of the proletariat. They do not identify either with the Gorbachev or the conservative wing of the bureaucracy. They form an independent political tendency, independent of any faction of the bureaucracy.

They seek to base themselves in the working class and among its allies, that is among the sections of the intelligentsia and the youth that defend the interests of the proletariat. They see political revolution — “revolution from below” — as the only positive road to a resolution of the problems facing the USSR, the People's Republic of China and the East European countries.

However, this position of intransigent anti-bureaucratic class independence does not by any means involve an attitude of “neutrality,” that is, de facto abstentionism, in the concrete political and social conflicts unfolding today in the USSR and in the other workers' states, including less bureaucratized ones such as Nicaragua and Cuba. In every case, it is necessary to take a position in accordance with what is really at issue in the conflicts and the practical implications for the cause of the struggle to emancipate the working people.

From this standpoint, the following guidelines emerge regarding the attitude to be taken toward the factional struggle rending the “World Communist Movement.”

1. Revolutionary Marxists support fully the concrete measures of *glasnost*, that is, every extension of freedoms that the toiling masses can enjoy. The idea that *glasnost* interests and benefits only the intelligentsia is an inept myth.

You only have to look at the size of the vote for opposition candidates in the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies. You only have to study the scope, the organizational forms, the demands and the consequences of mass strikes culminating in the miners' strike to see to what extent the toiling masses are using *glasnost* to their own advantage.

The main result of *glasnost* in fact has been the development of the activity,



politicization and self-organization of growing layers of the working class. This is what emerges in a dramatic way from a Washington Post Service feature that appeared in the *International Herald Tribune* of August 29, 1989;

“Everything has changed since the strike,” said Aleksandr Kalinin, a Soviet journalist with long experience in the Donbass minefield. “The workers have stopped being afraid of the chiefs. It is as if they had suddenly thrown off their chains and become free.”

Workers accuse management of corruption

“Now that the strike is over, the 5,700 workers of the Gorky mine have begun to use their political muscle. During a ten-hour meeting this month, they accused the mine management of corruption and bad administration, and after a vote the 17-person strike committee led by M. Boldirev was transformed into a new workers' council. Not a single manager, Communist Party leader or leader of the official union was elected.”

The criticisms that revolutionary Marxists make of *glasnost* are that it does not go far enough; that the censorship has not been entirely lifted; that freedom of association and demonstration are still restricted; that the right to strike is regulated, that is, limited; that elections are not entirely free.

However, the advances with respect to the past regimes are enormous and qualitative. Any restriction of the democratic freedoms gained would be a very grave defeat for the Soviet working class and a very severe blow to the world workers' movement.

2. Revolutionary Marxists combat all those perestroika measures contrary to the

interests of the working class, which it rejects or to which it takes a skeptical attitude. This applies in particular to all those measures that can bring cuts in jobs or plant closures without re-employment with a guarantee of the same wages and housing; any speed-up or reorganization of production without workers' control (that is, the right of veto for the workers); any increase in the prices of necessities not compensated for by a sliding scale of wages under workers' control; any violation of the principle of free health care and education, and in general any reduction of social services in the lives of the workers.

3. It is necessary to denounce any widening of social inequality, any maintenance of the nomenklatura's privileges; any increase in the benefits of the small and middle bourgeoisie beyond a certain limit.

4. On the other hand, inasmuch as the workers themselves express the view that resorting to market mechanisms in the sphere of services facilitates the solution of the problems of daily life, revolutionary Marxists accept this opinion. It is up to the working people themselves and not to the ideologues to decide questions affecting the material life of tens of millions of homes.

5. Revolutionary Marxists support any struggle for the right of the minority nationalities in the USSR to determine their own destiny in full sovereignty. At the same time, they fight against chauvinism in all its forms. They reject in particular Great Russian chauvinism and pogrom-type developments such as have been seen in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

6. Revolutionary Marxists are opposed to all deals between the Kremlin and the imperialists to restrict the freedom of action of liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, notably in southern Africa and in Palestine, where such movements are confronted with bloody repression and the denial of elementary political rights, including that of self-determination.

They are opposed to any intervention in the world workers' movement aimed at making it more “moderate,” either with respect to its forms of action or its goals under the pretext of “deepening peaceful coexistence” with the international bourgeoisie. They denounce the reduction of aid to the revolutionary movements and of economic aid to Nicaragua and Cuba.

7. Revolutionary Marxists look favorably on the withdrawal of Soviet troops

from Afghanistan; the USSR's disarmament initiatives; the abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine of "limited sovereignty" of the East European countries; on the re-establishment of normal state relations between the USSR, the People's Republic of China and North Korea, and on greater economic cooperation among them on a basis of equality, without using economic aid to put on political pressure.

8. Revolutionary Marxists defend the validity of the fundamental theses of Marxism, intransigent condemnation of capitalism and imperialism and the validity of the socialist project. They defend these principles both against the neo-social democrat conciliationist theses and the conservative neo-Stalinist ones, which are simply two variants of the revisionist bureaucratic ideology.

Neither faction has unified project

Such a concrete attitude toward the main problems raised in the faction fight within the "World Communist Movement" stands in contradiction to any thesis attributing a "coherent unified project" to Gorbachev or the conservatives. The first of these theses implies rejecting *glasnost* as indissolubly linked to *perestroika*. The other implies critical support for *perestroika* and especially for the Gorbachev team, out of fear that otherwise *glasnost* would be doomed.

Let us leave aside the fact that none of the factions of the bureaucracy is distinguished by any ideological or theoretical "coherence." They operate in an essentially pragmatic way.

The Chinese experience has already confirmed that, far from going hand in hand, economic "liberation" and political democratization in time come into contradiction, inasmuch as economic "liberalization" increases social contradictions and thus leads to explosive clashes and reinforces the tendency of the bureaucracy to respond by repression.²¹

No fundamental "turn" in economic policy in the USSR toward genuine democratic planning or real self-determination of the toiling masses, is possible without overthrowing the bureaucracy's power. Nor is any fundamental "turn" in the USSR's foreign policy toward supporting the world revolution possible without such an overturn.

But no overturn of the bureaucratic regime is possible unless the masses acquire, through a process of widening democratization, a growing capacity for self-organization and the necessary political experience to achieve such a revolution. That is why *glasnost* is vital for the future of socialism in the USSR.

The Soviet workers, moreover, understand this themselves. The chair of the Kemerovo strike committee in the Kusbass has said: "*Perestroika* (he might more accurately have said *glasnost*) has

shaken people up, especially the youth. Over the last few years, the development of people's consciousness has moved ahead particularly quickly."

As David Seppo has added: "Two important changes have occurred in the workers' relations with the political and economic bureaucracies. On the one hand, having tested the waters in small-scale strikes, workers have gradually shed their fear of repression. The barrage of criticism which the central authorities and the press have been directing at the economic administration has also had the effect of encouraging worker protest."²²

Concretely, this means that when the workers fight in defense of their immediate interests, you have to be ready to support them regardless of the possibility that they might weaken the Gorbachev wing. Any other attitude would be opportunist and counter-productive.

But parallel to this, in the event of concrete threats to *glasnost*, that is, to the real democratic freedoms that the workers are enjoying today in practice, you have to be ready to unite in action with all forces ready to act, including "Gorbachevites," to prevent the advent of a more repressive regime.

Any rejection of such a united front would represent a irresponsible sectarian attitude comparable to that of Third Period Stalinism.²³

If the conservatives gained a temporary victory, those guilty of such sectarianism in the Soviet Union would have lots of time to consider the consequences of their errors in the prisons, the Gulag and the psychiatric hospitals²⁴, or at best in the isolation of their apartments. It is no accident that the demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square started with placards saying, "Long live *glasnost*." That precedent will not fail to have further repercussions.

Three positions in Supreme Soviet

The debate in September in the Supreme Soviet over restrictions on the right to strike has made it possible to clarify these options earlier than we expected. There were three clear positions. The conservatives opposed the right to strike, and especially the exercise of it.

They hardly bothered to hide this. The "radicals" were in favor of a limited right to strike and against repression of strikes. The Gorbachevites wavered between these two positions, but tended, with moderation, to move toward the first.

Gorbachev proposes ban on strikes

Gorbachev introduced a proposal for a decree banning strikes for 18 months and severely regulating the exercise of the right to strike (which, on the other hand, he was ready to legalize for the time) through compulsory arbitration.

Then, something happened that has not been seen in the USSR since 1919. Under the pressure of the workers' movement and the reflection (still very limited and contradictory) of this movement in the parliament, the majority of members of the Supreme Soviet rejected Gorbachev's proposal, that is, the proposal of the government and of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

They forced Gorbachev to make a compromise — one that is still not acceptable for intransigent defenders of workers' interests, but which is still a far cry from banning all strikes for 18 months.

Above all, this spectacular result of the Supreme Soviet debate will encourage the workers to pursue their actions and their strikes to press their demands, without worrying about any legal rules.

Millions went on strike in the USSR in 1988, and 2 million in the first half of 1989. And millions more will in the coming months and years. This was inconceivable under Stalin, under Khrushchev, under Brezhnev and under Andropov. It is inconceivable today in China, North Korea, Romania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Vietnam and Cuba. It represents an enormous step forward that has to be defended tooth and nail.

No progress toward socialism in the USSR and in the world is possible unless this movement grows, unless the self-activity and self-organization of the Soviet, Chinese and East European workers develop to the point of becoming a real "revolution from below," a real political revolution. Political democratization is a powerful encouragement to this process. ★

22. See David Seppo's Article on the miners' strike in IV 170.

23. Before the coming to power of fascism in Germany in 1933, the Communist International had refused to follow a united-front policy toward the social democracy, which it characterized as "social fascist."

24. According to *Nouvelles de Moscou* of July 23, 1989, Aleksandr Kuznetsov, a worker delegated by his fellow citizens in Koluna (a section of Moscow) went to see Brezhnev to complain about the local authorities. Later, after adding to his reputation as a "seeker of justice" by critical remarks at a factory meeting

about the first secretary of the city committee, he was brought before a court on the charge of "spreading notorious lies slandering the present Soviet system and state."

He was sent to a special psychiatric hospital, where he was held for two years, after spending a year in prison. Three years in captivity for verbal criticisms of a party secretary! Should you be "neutral" on the question of whether such methods should never again be applied in the USSR? Is not their elimination now an enormous step forward? Does this gain of *glasnost* favor "bourgeois democracy"?

Unity for a socialist alternative

IN THE CONTEXT of the crisis of "actually existing socialism," not just in East Germany but in general, opponents of the East German bureaucratic regime met in Böhlen at the beginning of September to draw up a program for unity behind a democratic socialist alternative.

Their press statement said: "In view of the economic stagnation and resulting political crisis in the German Democratic Republic [GDR], the participants in this meeting discussed the need for collaboration of all political forces and others in the GDR that stand on the positions of socialism and the need for working out a left, socialist alternative in the spirit of socialist democracy and freedom." The following are excerpts from the platform adopted at this meeting, which we have translated from the version published in the October 12, 1989, issue of *Die Linke*, the paper of the Austrian section of the Fourth International.

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THE EXAMPLE of the Hungarian People's Republic shows that in these conditions [the crisis of "actually existing socialism"], uncritical borrowing from the arsenal of market regulators in an attempt to carry out economic reform itself produces crises and social differentiation.

If here in the GDR reforms that are overdue in view of accumulating political, economic and social problems are allowed to lead to a "leap into the dark," there are real dangers of a sellout to capitalism or a military dictatorship with a neo-Stalinist option.

Nonetheless, the GDR and Czechoslovakia offer the best economic and political preconditions for a successful radical social turn toward socialism, if the undoubtedly strong socialist potential for such a perspective can be regained.

GDR faces historic chance

We believe that the GDR especially is facing a historic chance to renew the conception of socialist society. If it is missed, this will have consequences that, perhaps not only in our country, will suspend the perspective for a socially just collective life guaranteeing the full development of every member of the society.

The external conditions for a radical renewal are complicated enough. In modernized international capitalism, the disillusionment of the working people with

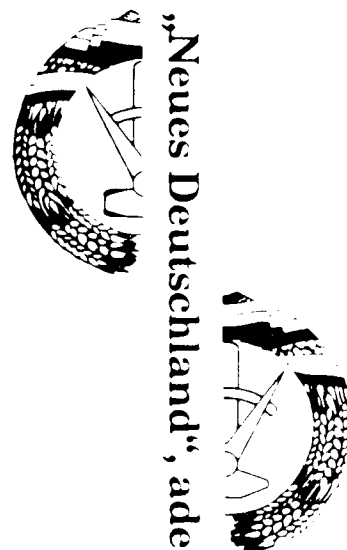
the ineffectiveness of the social democratic welfare state model favors the continuing neoconservative turn.

The unions have their backs to the wall. The decline in influence of the West European Communist parties and their galloping social-democratization deserve the adjective "drastic." The internationalism of the mass Communist parties has in fact ceased to exist, and they can hide behind the still functioning but nonetheless pitiful social-democratic internationalism.

Fascination gives way to concern

The fascination caused by the CPSU breaking out of its ghetto of stagnation, Stalinism and arrogance of power is more and more giving way to the concern that the centrifugal forces growing now can destroy more than a blockade against a real socialist development. The economic upheaval in the reform countries is not bringing success. In view of the challenges, the lack of a radical renewal of theory on a Marxist basis is catastrophic.

And yet the chance is there. A turn toward socialism today would no longer face military intervention from "well-intentioned fraternal countries." On the basis of the dreary economic situation, the political intervention of the West through "economic cooperation" is much



greater.

The decisive question remains the social base, political maturity and forces in the country itself that seriously and programmatically support socialism.

For us, in the prevailing conditions in the GDR, this means regaining this base. And here the preconditions are undoubtedly more favorable than in other countries of "actually existing socialism," despite the continuing political repression that hits left forces in the GDR also and in fact first.

The left in our country cannot engage in any sectarianism. It must be the driving force of a "coalition of reason," based on the variety of all political and social forces in the GDR that support socialism, but above all all social and political groupings that offer a perspective.

No one excluded from process of renewal

No one who wants to contribute to this process of renewal, including members of the SED [Communist Party], can be excluded from it. On the other hand, recent experience shows where unprincipled relativism without any social philosophy can lead. We firmly reject any "replacement" of political-bureaucratic oppression with capitalist exploitation.

The left must unite on the following basis:

- The predominance of social ownership of the means of production as the basis for socialist socialization.
- The development of self-determination of the producers in achieving real socialization of total activity.
- Consistent application of the principle of social security and justice for members of the society.
- Political democracy, a state of laws, consistent application of all human rights and free development of the individuality of every member of society.
- Restructuring of industrial society to conform to the needs of protecting the environment★