

International VIEWPOINT

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Salvadoran people face death squad government

CONTRARY to what is being written in most of the press, the FMLN offensive is not over. What is really happening is that the Salvadoran revolutionaries are using every possible means to force the government of the death squads to accept an outcome favourable to the historic needs of the Salvadoran people.

On their side, Cristiani and the military along with the Bush administration, rather than facing up to the reality of their political weakness and the collapse of their plans to isolate the FMLN from the population, have opted to go all out for a military defeat of the FMLN at the same time tending to more and more generalize the conflict throughout Central America. Cuba and Nicaragua have been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of El Salvador and of giving military help to the FMLN.

US Green Berets discovered in Sheraton Hotel

The events surrounding the capture of the Sheraton Hotel by FMLN forces on November 21 showed the cynicism of Cristiani and Bush. The presence there of 12 US Green Berets in possession of high powered weapons, is a question that has

ALL THE signs are that the end of this year will see a sharpening of the war in El Salvador and possibly the spread of conflicts throughout Central America. After the assassination of the leaders of the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS) at the end of October came the murder of the Jesuit priests and the strong offensive launched by the FMLN on November 11, demanding a genuine dialogue with the Cristiani government that could put an end to the war and find a real solution to the terrible crisis in El Salvador.

ALFONSO MORO

not until now been clarified by either the Salvadoran government or the US. Nobody can believe the argument that they were only passing through. On the contrary, the presence of US military advisers, who have directly participated in the night-time bombardments in San Salvador, is becoming ever more obvious. Bush is spreading the idea that there is a danger of US citizens being attacked — a claim that could be used to justify direct military intervention by the United States

in El Salvador. In fact, the FMLN general command has publicly stated on a number of occasions that neither North American positions nor installations are to be attacked — a position that was maintained during the assault on the Sheraton hotel.

Feeling ever weaker, the Cristiani government has resorted to generalized terror against the population, not only through political assassinations and constant bombardments launched on the poor areas of the Salvadoran capital, but also — with the backing of the ultra-right ARENA party — by making 28 amendments to the penal code and judicial procedures and by extending the scope of the "anti-terrorist" legislation.

Thus the minimum age at which a person can be punished has been lowered from 16 to 14 years. The maximum period for which a person can be held for investigation has been extended from 72 hours to 15 days.

Blatant attempt to institutionalize terror

Fascist-style articles have been added defining new crimes such as "justifying terrorism" or "being suspected of being a terrorist." The process of institutionalization of terror is so blatant that on the day when these reforms were passed, the parliamentary groups of the PDC and PCN withdrew from the assembly in protest against the "anti-terrorist" legislation.

In its attempt to keep the situation under control, the government of the death squads has used chemical weapons against the civilian population in urban areas. Between November 11 and 21 some 182 air attacks were made on the poor districts of the capital. On November



29 armed forces entered the offices of the United Nations, causing enormous destruction. We do not know as yet what happened to the people working there.

What all this amounts to is an irreversible change in the political situation inside El Salvador. The repeated refusal of Cristiani to negotiate a political agreement has moved the terrain for a possible solution of the conflict from politics to the military struggle. The Salvadoran revolutionaries have demonstrated that they have the strength to impose their terms on this terrain.

In fact, the FMLN relaunched its offensive on November 28 and 29 in Soyapango, Ayuxtepeque, Mejicanos, San Miguel and so on at the same time as taking positions in the rich districts of San Salvador, which the military will be more hesitant to bombard. With the development of new fronts in the west, north and east of the capital, the FMLN has succeeded in establishing what it calls the "Circle of Liberty" and already controls half of the city.

The name used is significant, especially if we remember that the FMLN have given the names of comrades fallen in battle or murdered by the death squads to all their previous operations. The field of action of Cristiani and the high command continues to shrink.

Relations with Nicaragua severed unilaterally

The international situation is becoming increasingly complex. After the crash of an aircraft carrying arms to the FMLN, the Cristiani government has been trying to provoke an international scandal, accusing Cuba and Nicaragua of involvement in sending the material. Furthermore, the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Managua is clearly aimed at putting still more pressure on besieged Nicaragua.

The aim may be to sabotage the meeting of Central American presidents that will be reassembling at the start of December in Managua with the aim of finding a global political agreement about the regional conflict, or to bring about an increase in military aid from the US to the El Salvadoran army.

As the FMLN general command has indicated, the aim of Cristiani's action is to throw a smokescreen over the genocide being perpetrated by the Salvadoran army against its own people. But everybody knows that the first to escalate the war were the army who launched indiscriminate land and sea attacks against the population. It is really bizarre to hear Cristiani lament the use of anti-aircraft weapons by the FMLN at a time when the recent bombing raids by his own air force have been the cause of more than three thousand deaths in less than two weeks.

In this situation it is absolutely legitimate for the FMLN to get arms from wherever and by whatever means they can, especially when this gives them the

possibility of defending the civilian population from new massacres. Apart from this, the Salvadoran government's account of the airplane incident is increasingly coming into question, particularly given the fact that one of the Nicaraguan crew members alleged to have been killed when the plane came down has just appeared at a press conference in Managua to deny the version of events being put about by Cristiani.

The importance of the airplane incident is underlined if reports in *Le Monde* (November 30 and December 1) are to be believed. Here we read that in the middle of these events, a Soviet delegation met Cuban and Nicaraguan officials in Managua and called on these countries to cease their support for the Salvadoran revolution, in order to prepare the ground for the Gorbachev-Bush summit in Malta at the start of December.

Nobody has the right to restrict support of whatever kind to the revolution in El Salvador and much less to try to turn the countries in this region into bargaining chips for superpower deals.

Dangerous escalation of regional tensions

Finally, the victory of Rafael Callejas, candidate for the rightist National Party (PN) for the Honduran presidency and his immediate turn towards an "unshakable union with the United States"; the recent declarations of Vinicio Cerezo, the Guatemalan president, accusing the Salvadoran ultra-rightist D'Aubuisson (suspected of being behind the murder of Archbishop Romero in 1980) of supplying arms and ammunition to the Guatemalan far right; and the possible increase in US military aid to El Salvador to some \$1.4m each day (*Newsweek*, December 4) are leading the whole of Central America towards an explosion in the short term.

It is necessary to redouble our efforts to prevent Central America being drowned in blood. We need to demand: the removal from power of Cristiani; an end to United States material and economic support to the Salvadoran high command; the removal of all US military advisors from Central America; and for the people of El Salvador to be permitted to determine their own destiny. It would be unpardonable to prolong the sufferings of the Salvadoran people, or allow the crimes of the government of the death squads to go unpunished. It is necessary to support the FMLN's proposal for the immediate start of negotiations, in which all social and political forces in El Salvador are able to take part, on ending the war. This is the way towards a workable solution to the Salvadoran crisis and to lessen the dangers of the generalization of conflict throughout Central America. ★

THE MASSIVE outpouring on November 12 was a powerful proof of the strength of the abortion rights movement, and another sign of the militant role being played by the National Organization of Women (NOW). Immediately after the July 3 Supreme Court ruling upholding restrictive abortion laws in Missouri, NOW called for a national protest action in Washington DC. Leaders of other national organizations within the pro-choice movement, who favor state-focused lobbying action to influence legislators, opposed calling for a mass action with a national focus. But NOW's refusal to call off the national demonstration compelled other groups within the women's rights movement to organize events in cities across the country in what became a coordinated project entitled "Mobilize for Women's Lives — Across the the USA and Washington DC."

They couldn't have been more than eight or nine years old. They might have been sisters — or maybe best friends. They stood untiringly for hours at the edge of the reflecting pool between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. They smiled, posed for an untold number of photographs — and they inspired everyone who passed by. Their shirts were covered with buttons and ribbons and the name of their county's pro-choice coalition. Their signs read, simply, "Future Feminists, Here by Choice". These two young women were among the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who rallied in Washington D.C. to demand continued access to safe, legal, and affordable abortions for women in the United States and around the world.

Contingents from around the world

Sisters and brothers from Canada, Mexico, and a large contingent from France travelled to D.C. to lend their support. Messages were received from France, Japan, Austria, the European Commonwealth, Feminists International, and a coalition of progressive Belgian organizations (on November 7 the Belgian Senate had voted to decriminalize abortion). One speaker from Canada, asserting that the U.S. struggle for abortion rights has been an inspiration to all women, noted that there are finally no laws forbidding abortion in Canada, and noted that the recent period has seen abortion rights demonstrations and organizations in 33 Canadian towns and cities.

The November 12 mobilization came only seven months after what had previously been the largest women's rights demonstration in U.S. history. Last April 9 600,000 men, women and children of all ages, religions and ethnic groups marched on the nation's capital to demand that the Supreme Court uphold its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion. Yet

Nationwide mobilizations for abortion rights

THE LARGEST mobilization for abortion rights in U.S. history took place on November 12. One million participated in events in 150 cities and in each of the 50 states. It began with a sunrise candlelight march in front of President Bush's vacation home in Maine, and ended with a sunset action in San Francisco. The largest rallies were 300,000 in Washington D.C. and 100,000 in Los Angeles. Cities reporting the biggest ever abortion rights demonstrations included; 20,000 in Austin, Texas; 14,000 in Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri; 6,000 in Seattle, Washington; 2,000 in Boise Idaho. In Alaska 400 rallied in 25 degrees below zero weather. Demonstrations in solidarity with this mobilization were held in Australia and New Zealand, in Stockholm, Paris, London, Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Sao Paulo, and — in what is described as the first women's demonstration ever held there — in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

MELANIE BENSON

despite this massive and powerful display of pro-choice sentiment, on July 3 the Supreme Court rendered a decision in the Webster case that granted individual states the authority to restrict access to abortion. The outcry from supporters of women's rights was instantaneous. NOW immediately called for the November 12 march. Its smaller size in relation to April 9 was more than compensated for by the breadth of the actions which took place all across the country.

On Sunday morning, prior to the start of the rally, hundreds attended the dedication of an Unknown Women's Memorial, commissioned by NOW and developed by the Fund for a Feminist Majority. The event specifically commemorated the lives of six U.S. women who had died of illegal abortions between 1929 and 1988. The first of these, Clara Bell Duvall, 33, mother of five children ranging in age from 18 months to 13 years, had attempted a self-abortion with a knitting needle



and died after weeks of agony. In 1977, Rosie Jimenez, 27, mother of a small daughter, was the first known victim of the Hyde amendment which blocked funding for legal abortion for poor women reliant on government funding (Medicaid). In 1988, "Cathy", 17, was the victim of a state law in Indiana requiring parental notification for abortions for teenagers. She self-aborted and died of the resulting complications rather than "disappoint" her parents by telling them about her pregnancy.

Two speakers at the meeting were daughters of women whose lives were being remembered. Another speaker, from the United Church of Christ, represented the hundreds of church leaders who had helped provide a safe underground network for abortion services before the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. A brochure distributed to participants noted that prior to the legalization of abortion in the U.S., 10,000 women died yearly of illegal abortions — and today 200,000 women worldwide die annually from illegal, botched abortions.

Monument to women who died from illegal abortions

The brochure stated in part, "This project is undertaken with the belief that if the names and faces of all the women who suffered and died were known, the debate on abortion would end". The monument itself read: "In memory of the courageous women who died from illegal, unsafe abortions because they had no choice".

"Freedom of Choice" was the overriding theme of the nearly five-hour rally that followed, and of the hundreds of signs, buttons and banners carried by those attending. There were nurses, social workers, psychotherapists, and emergency-room personnel for choice. There were trade unionists, artists, television personalities, and musicians for choice. There were politicians, mountaineers, organic farmers, and "MIT Nerds for Choice". There were Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, Methodists and "A Baptist Grandmother for Choice". There were fathers, children, toddlers, infants and "Loving Mothers for Choice".

There were students, and more students, from almost four hundred large and small high schools and college campuses across the U.S. The *Daily Bruin*, student newspaper at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), reported on November 13 that "almost 20,000 students registered with NOW for the demonstration. The largest groups came from University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University, which each registered 850 students". The contingent from UCLA was part of a 400 member NOW delegation from Los Angeles.

Some demonstrators marched and chanted in small groups. Some performed street theater. Some stretched blankets out on the

grass. Some stood packed closely together near the speakers' platform, singing along with the well-known folk songs of Peter, Paul and Mary, Ronnie Gilbert and Pete Seeger. They sang "I Am Woman" with Helen Reddy and cheered "Take the Power" by Kay Weaver.

The mood was jubilant and celebratory at times, angry and defiant at others — the outrage directed at U.S. President George Bush, the Supreme Court, and elected officials who vote against a woman's right to choose. Bush, who had just vetoed a bill that would have allowed Medicaid funding of abortions for poor women who were victims of rape and incest, came under heavy fire. As NOW President Molly Yard observed in her opening remarks, "How ironic that...as the Berlin Wall comes tumbling down, President Bush would enslave the people of this country by denying reproductive rights. We say 'No! We will not obey your dictates!' We will work with our sisters everywhere to make abortion a right all over the world. Let freedom ring here and around the world for women and for individual rights!"

Yard pledged that the movement would help build a "political army on behalf of freedom for women" by electing women and pro-choice politicians.

Participants flushed with feeling of power

Several elected officials and political candidates spoke at the rally, with the loudest applause given to David Dinkins, the first black mayor-elect of New York City, whose victory at the polls five days earlier was still fresh in everyone's minds. His victory, along with those of pro-choice governors of Virginia and New Jersey, had rally participants flushed with a feeling of power. A huge banner hanging across the front of the speakers' platform boasted: "Score: Pro-Choice 3, Bush 0". Sheri Odell, NOW vice-president and rally coordinator for both April 9 and November 12, administered a pledge for feminist voters that was enthusiastically received: "I pledge not to vote for nor to support with my money or my time any candidate for any public office who does not fully support and work for women's equality and the right to safe, legal and accessible abortion."

Several rally speakers referred to the "feminization of power" in our lifetimes. This theme was featured in much of the press coverage of the rally: in the *New York Times* "celebrating recent political victories and vowing to redouble their efforts in battles to come"; *USA Today* "Theme: Power at the Polls"; *Baltimore Sun* "Tens of thousands of youthful voters massed at the Lincoln Memorial here yesterday, cheering passionately as speaker after speaker threatened Bush and other politicians with defeat unless they come out firmly for abortion rights"; and the

Washington Post "Abortion rights demonstrators around the nation served notice yesterday that they will take revenge at the ballot box against candidates who oppose freedom of choice in reproductive decisions".

Along with "freedom of choice" the political (electoral) response was a major theme of the placards, banners, and buttons throughout the crowd: "I'm Pro-choice and I Vote", "Play Politics With My Body — You Lose", and "Dear Politician — Listen loud and clear/It's choice we want/or your career — Love, the Majority".

This focus by rally speakers and participants on the question of electoral politics points to one of the key problems that faces the women's movement today. The fact is that none of the politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties will be able to meet the criteria set forth in the voters pledge ("to fully support and work for women's equality and the right to safe, legal and accessible abortion") — not even those whose electoral victories were hailed on November 12. These two parties cannot be made to serve a feminist agenda. Their first loyalty is to the profits of the big corporations that rule America, and that loyalty is, in the final analysis, completely incompatible with equality for women.

Women need an end to two party system

Certain individual politicians can, on certain key issues like abortion, be forced to take a correct stand at times due to mass public pressure. But if feminists want a real political alternative which can actually help lead the fight for women's rights — and not simply react to the fight which is being waged by the women's movement — it will have to find a way to aid the formation of a new political party, one based on the labor movement and the struggles of Blacks, Hispanics, and other oppressed sections of the U.S. population. At its convention last summer NOW discussed this issue and a resolution raising the idea of a new party was adopted. Unfortunately, little has been done so far to actually put that perspective into practice.

Other speakers stressed the multi-pronged nature of the struggle, promising that it would be fought not only at the ballot box, but also at the clinics and in the streets. They spoke of the need for forging or strengthening alliances with more African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, men, gays and lesbians; of the need for education on the abortion issue; of the need to maintain an international focus. Robin Morgan, author of "Sisterhood is Global", reported that 340 million women in 65 countries are affected by the U.S. administration's refusal to contribute to International Planned Parenthood and other international family planning agencies.

A resounding ovation was given to Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu from France, medical researcher and developer of R.U. 486 (a pill that induces safe abortion in the early weeks of pregnancy), who spoke of the role of science in giving choices and relieving suffering. He pledged the support of the biomedical community in the current struggle. Although the pill's availability is now severely restricted, easier access to and proper use of this pill, he said, "will defuse the abortion issue...[the] societal impact will be lessened with earlier intervention and a narrower circle of persons involved".

Representative of women in organized labour movement

Representing thousands of women in the organized labour movement, Joyce Miller, President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) explained that the question of abortion is a health, civil rights, privacy, family and work issue — and that there can be no decency, justice or equality for working women if women have no reproductive rights. She expanded the concept of choice to include the need for choice in health care, family planning, quality child care, parental and family leave, livable and affordable housing, and "schools that educate". At the AFL-CIO national union federation convention later that week, she and other CLUW delegates were going to be presenting a resolution to put the AFL-CIO on record for freedom of choice and reproductive rights.

Dr. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, speaking on behalf of Dorothy Height (National Council of Negro Women), explained that "[Black Americans] have tasted the bitter fruit of the denial of our rights. We have fought too hard, come too far, wept too bitterly, bled too profusely, and died too young...to allow turning back".

Warren Hern, author and doctor from Boulder, Colorado, who had helped to successfully defend his abortion clinic against a serious assault by "Operation Rescue" (zealous anti-abortionists) called illegal abortion "barbaric, like the bubonic plague, slavery and public flogging" and claimed that the pro-choice movement is "on the side of history, truth, mercy, justice and freedom", avowing, "We will prevail!"

Finally, Rabbi Lynne Lansberg, in closing the rally, defended religious liberty, reminding those assembled that overwhelmingly, despite fundamentalist assertions to the contrary, religious people, "people of faith", are pro-choice. Her eloquent speech, ending with, "As God is our witness, pro-choice is pro-life!", brought a huge response from the crowd.

After five hours of speeches on every aspect of the issue, one sign perhaps conveyed the message most clearly and most simply: "No one knows better. No one else should decide."★

Knights of the round table

ACCORDING to opinion polls organized by West German institutes and magazines, a general election today in the DDR would give a relative majority to the New Forum, the most important of the opposition groups, followed by the German Democratic Liberal Party (LDPD — "liberal" party in the Bloc which has quickly emerged as the vanguard of "reform" within the organizations of the old regime). The SED would trail behind with between 10 and 14% of the vote. The new Social Democratic Party (SPD) would be a little weaker still. The accuracy of such polls is doubtful, but it is obvious that the SED would be in a clear minority position.

For all that the masses chant "Free elections now!", the oppositional groups have declared that they are not ready, from a programmatic and organizational point of view, to immediately confront the SED's apparatus in elections. This certainly complicates the situation and allows the SED new margins of manoeuvre and a chance to regain the initiative. According to the initial declarations of representatives of the opposition currents, the round table would have the task of elaborating a new provisional constitution, or of provisionally amending the current one (even Krenz has spoken of this), above all removing the paragraph fixing the "leading role" of the "Party of the working class".

Urgent need for legalization of opposition

It must also formulate an electoral law and establish the material conditions for elections (possibilities for publication, means of information and organization etc.). Needless to say, the legalization of the opposition groups is an urgent theme — it would in any case be an unprecedented absurdity for the regime to sit down at the same table as people representing "illegal" organizations. Autumn 1990 is the date most commonly given for the holding of free elections.

However, the demonstrations and other autonomous mass activities seem to have lost some of their impetus. Of course, things are far from over, and embryonic independent trade unions have been formed here and there, but there has been no significant emergence so far of workers' self-organization in the enterprises. If this does not change, the discussions of those forces that are clearly on the left and are struggling for socialist democracy — organized primarily, it seems, in the United Left — who are opposed both to the

THREE weeks before the special congress of the East German Communist Party (SED), which is to take place from 15 to 17 December, Egon Krenz, general secretary of the SED and head of state of the GDR, has proposed a round table, at which the organizations and groups of the opposition will be able to participate, as well as the SED and the former parties of the "National Bloc". Krenz's initiative has surprised everybody. It is true that a good number of opposition personalities and groups have raised the demand for a round table in order to negotiate with the regime the measure and pace of political and economic reforms, and the transition towards a democratic regime. But this demand had never been foremost amongst those raised either by the opposition groups or the masses, and nobody expected that the SED leadership itself would launch a process which, according to a slightly naive but common viewpoint, had led to the "loss of power" by the Party/State in Poland and Hungary. The Krenz initiative was also surprising on another level — the organizations and opposition groups who have been named as partners in this round table dialogue have not yet even been legalized.

MANUEL KELLNER

generalization of market mechanisms and the adoption of a political system of the bourgeois parliamentary type, will remain very theoretical. It is impossible to transfer power to councils which do not exist. But it is necessary to propagandize for the idea and to stimulate rank and file self-organization which can go in this direction. The motivation for this is clear — the force of the popular mobilization can quickly exhaust itself and, if the masses do not want to be manipulated once again by political apparatuses claiming to represent them, they must form their own organizations with representatives elected by the rank and file and subject to recall at any time.

Honecker signed order for armed intervention

The SED leadership is beginning to bow before the demand that the dignitaries of the old regime be punished. Even Honecker is going to be indicted, above all for having signed an order for armed intervention against the demonstrators in Leipzig on October 9. But this manoeuvre

too is very transparent. The role of Krenz in this affair is very dubious — contrary to his claims, he does not seem to have opposed Honecker's orders. All the same, it is going to be very difficult for the majority of SED leaders today to pass judgment on the grotesque abuses of power and privilege now coming to light, without risking their own necks. Meanwhile, the economic pressure is becoming dramatic.

Speculation and unequal exchange

The indebtedness of the state is much deeper than the old regime had admitted. Enormous sums of East German marks are illegally bought, at a ratio going from one to twenty, to buy subsidized products at very low prices in the GDR and resell them at a very much higher price in West Germany. The government of the GDR has taken measures against this, reinforcing frontier controls and decreeing that it will be necessary for citizens to show their East German identity cards to buy the subsidized products. But this is only one of

the problems. The government expects massive aid from both the state and private capital in West Germany, but the latter will impose more and more difficult conditions in return. In response to pressure from West Germany, the GDR government has, like any third world country subjected to similar pressures, refused to vote for the United Nations resolution condemning West Germany for having allowed its firms to co-operate with the racist South African regime and providing it, for example, with plans for the construction of submarines....

Well-supplied ghetto of the bureaucrats

"It is good to be part of the dominant class" — so goes a well known witticism of Erich Honecker. It is true that the ghetto of the higher dignitaries of the workers' and peasants' state at Wandlitz (a quarter of Berlin surrounded by a wall), called "Bonzograd" by an ungrateful people, was not only well furnished but also well provided with champagne, caviar, foie gras etc. But the good life of the bureaucrats, unlike that of the capitalists, takes place behind closed doors, and it is not integrated into an ideology which renders it legitimate in the eyes of the masses. Thus, the questioning of the privileges, the fear of losing them and of being fingered has troubled the souls of a considerable number of members of the parasite class. A whole series of suicides began from the moment when Krenz exchanged his villa (with twelve bedrooms, three bathrooms and a sauna) for more modest accommodation. They killed themselves with revolvers, possession of such being amongst their bureaucratic privileges. Now this is over — the government has quickly stepped in to confiscate the revolvers. There is no longer a problem of suicides, for one of the problems of the bureaucratic psychology is precisely a lack of imagination and a sense of innovation. ★



"We are a grouping of left opposition forces"

ANDRÉ SACHADAE is a full-time worker in Leipzig for the East German opposition movement New Forum (see IV 173). The views expressed are largely his own, since New Forum (NFm) has a policy of collectively discussing any statement. Issued from the organization as such. The interview was carried out on November 21, 1989 by Rebecca Flemming.

TO BEGIN, could you tell me how the NFm was set up?

IN August about 50 people came together, and for the first time something concrete was produced — the document "Departure 89". This was distributed widely to try and found an organization to give a voice to opposition to the current regime and expose the many problems in the GDR. The main aim and basic concept of the group was to provide the opposition with a voice and bring people together.

■ **There are many different views within the NFm, but you manage to work together.**

Yes, but only within certain boundaries. We are trying, particularly after the latest events and the opening of politics, to create our own style and distinguish ourselves from other groups. Especially from certain tendencies which might hint at a Republican [right-wing nationalist] character and the groups supporting reunification, which is not positive. In the last demonstration I sensed a certain degree of nationalism which worries me greatly because I have been involved in studying and thinking about fascism. I think the problem is that certain parts of the population who go through the anti-fascism course at school, link this with the SED (Communist party) ideology and when they reject the SED, they reject this anti-fascism also. This is a great danger, although it has not clearly expressed itself yet. It doesn't mean that there are

fascist tendencies, but I see possible beginnings.

■ **How is the NFm structured? Does it have regular meetings?**

Naturally, with an organization that is only three months old, the structures are still being developed. We are busy building the structures at the moment and working on our political programme. We are trying to do programmatic work and react immediately to current events. But it is quite hard work to inform the public about what is going on because all the copying and publishing has to be done on a private basis. Of course, lots of different people have home computers and can produce up to 200 copies each for NFm. The copies are given to the information bureau here. The structure is designed so that basic groups exist, or are being founded in all the cities, regions or boroughs. In addition to this, groups get together in the workplace, linking in with the co-ordination bureau of the NFm.

■ **Is the NFm a national organization?**

I can't imagine any other way of building a structure. NFm Leipzig, however, works quite independently. But it is, of course, in contact with Berlin, we receive materials and so on. We are basically trying to develop our own programme, to formulate the wishes of the people and react to the current deplorable state of affairs in Leipzig, and of course, nationwide.

■ **Do you have links with other opposition movements in Eastern Europe, for example Czechoslovakia?**

At the moment the situation in Czechoslovakia is very tense. We have private contacts which have been built up over a couple of years and can now be made public.

■ **What are the main demands of the NFm?**

The main demands, which were formulated three weeks ago are:

- The separation of the legal and political systems.
- The re-introduction of referenda, as guaranteed in the GDR constitution of

cheap labour market of the FRG.

■ **Are there many women involved in the NFm and is it taking up any feminist demands?**

Unfortunately the group that is drawing up the programme is composed of eight men, which is very bad. But the women's group of the NFm is developing and publishing material with demands and so on. The feminist movement in the GDR is very small, but very important.

■ **It seems that the opposition is strongest in Leipzig. Why is this?**

Leipzig was the starting point for all the demonstrations for organizational reasons. In Leipzig there has been for months, even years, regular Monday meetings in a church. This was after the Peace Prayer people tried to organize. This has been suppressed for years. In respect of the situation three months ago, there was such a massive increase in discontent that demonstrations happened spontaneously. The NFm developed parallel to this, in Berlin, Leipzig and other districts. For a month the NFm have been the spokespeople for the broad masses and it must stay that way. But in my opinion some of the broad masses are beginning to go down a dangerous path — towards re-unification — without realizing where it will ultimately lead them. In this you cannot say that the NFm is supporting the views of the broad masses. But we affirm that we want to hold the people responsible for the current deplorable state of affairs to account. Naturally, we stand for a new democratic structure and strive to build, as a whole society, a new and better way of life. This is very idealistic. And it is very idealistic to state that neither the GDR nor the FRG can be taken as a model for this in their current situations. There should be a third possibility, another way. It is worth working for, this different model.

■ **What does the future hold for the GDR? How do you think the situation will develop?**

The leading role of the SED is no longer controversial. It simply needs to be abol-

ished. Of course, there will be elections and it should be clear that the SED will have to wave goodbye to its leading role and possibly lose it to a coalition of groups currently in opposition which will become parties for the elections.

■ **Will the NFm stand in these elections and on what programme?**

Yes to the first question. Our programme is still in its early stages. We are working on it and a first draft will be ready on Wednesday this week (November 22). You will be able to get it in Leipzig in the usual way.

■ **And after the elections, what direction do you think that a coalition of opposition groups would take the GDR in?**

Until now a complex market economy has been spoken about so it is not really clear. Of course, there is the possibility of investment by West German companies...But we shall have to see.

■ **And is the NFm in favour of a market economy or not?**

Not for a free market in the sense that we can be bought up by the West. We don't want to sell ourselves or be sold. Because we massively value the minority groups and the less well off. It must not happen like in Hungary, where nobody is talking about these groups.

■ **The big question in the West is whether the GDR will move towards capitalism or not. What do you think about this?**

This is also a big question for me. I am very worried because there are points in our existing socialism which we must hold onto.

■ **Some groups that are fighting for socialism in Western Europe would say that GDR socialism has not been real socialism. What would you say about that perspective?**

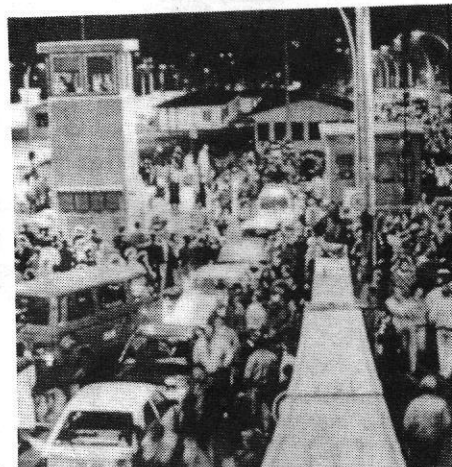
I say this: capitalism has had 300 years to develop while socialism is in the dock after only 80 years, which is not fair. I think it is very, very necessary and it is bound to happen that socialism is going to regain its reputation. At a moment what currently calls itself socialism in the GDR is under threat and a re-development is taking place. It is difficult to build this new, shining socialism in the GDR because there are plainly massive economic problems.

■ **And finally, what should socialists in the West be doing in solidarity with the movement in the GDR?**

What we are trying to do is put the socialist house in order, point it in the right directions. In your countries you should be doing this too and do all you can to fight conservative euphoria. ★

"There should be a conference of workers' delegates"

HERBERT Misslitz is a member of the Group of Democratic Socialists, which in September last year helped organize a demonstration in East Berlin against the World Bank, at the same time as the massive anti-IMF demonstrations in West Berlin. About 1000 people attended the demonstration. He is a skilled plasterer and is on the group of spokespeople for the "United Left" initiative. This interview with Misslitz appeared in the November 23 issue of *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the paper of the United Socialist Party (VSP) in which members of the Fourth International work. The interviewer was Angela Klein.



WHAT do you think of recent events? Did the opening of the wall come too early, as Barbel Böhley said?

I must first of all point out that there are differing opinions: that is essential for the whole project. I will therefore sometimes say "we" and sometimes "I".

On this question, however, we are all of the same opinion. The wall was opened too late, not too early. It is understandable that thousands even millions, of citizens of the GDR are taking the opportunity to travel to the West. The way in which the opening up took place has created a bit of chaos, but that is no big problem. We are, however, also of the opinion that not only the opening up and the gaining of freedom to travel, but also the way in which this came about are an expression of the fact that we get our rights from above, from a leadership that uses them as safety valves.

This leadership, furthermore, is without perspectives, as is clear to everyone. To get ones rights from a leadership in these conditions is quite different from perceiving them as an expression of the popular will. Rights such as the right to travel could be sorted out by people for themselves.

■ What does that mean? What is the difference?

We are trying to develop some kind of direct democracy in this country, which involves forming people's committees out of representatives of the people, chosen by those that live in this country. That would be a real expression of popular sovereignty.

With the opening of the borders, many burning problems have been pushed into background. It is for example not clear how far the SED is going to stick to article 1 of the constitution which affirms the leading role of the party, something that

would be called into question by elections.

■ The central demand at the moment is for free elections. In West Germany we understand this to mean, free elections to the House of the People. Is this how free elections are understood in the GDR, or is there an audience here for your idea of another type of popular representation?

The situation at the moment is that propaganda for alternative conceptions is very patchy. Many ideas are disseminated by the Western media, and leftist concepts do not get much of a chance as far as the radio and television are concerned. Things are understood here in categories taken from the West. Thus, it is projects for bourgeois parliamentarianism that are favoured here. Also, until now the United Left has not had the opportunity to put its positions directly through its own press so as to influence the discussion. We have to rely on our own slender printing resources. We are trying to put forward our position through factory meetings and panel discussions and so on. This is not enough, and we are clear that we want to change this situation. Discussions are going on at various levels about how to develop an independent left press and also to develop some kind of paper for the discussion of theory, in which all the groups will be able to put forward their positions in detail. Then of course there are a lot of bureaucratic problems.

We are intending to involve ourselves more in factory journals. The first attempts are being made there. Evidently we will take part in editing such journals.

At the moment whatever is most publicized is most discussed. Aktuelle Kamera [liberal East German TV programme] and the Western media have the advantage here.

■ We are aware of two proposals from the opposition: firstly that there should be a referendum over the planned new electoral law, and secondly that the May local elections, whose results were falsified, should be rerun. This would make it possible for the opposition groups to strengthen their base and build themselves up. Do you support these proposals?

We certainly support the idea that there should be a Round Table that would allow all the groups, the parties in the governmental bloc, the SED and also the mass organizations to openly discuss different electoral conceptions in the media. In this way something that is urgently necessary will take place, that is to give some life to the concept of "free elections" and the specific differences will also find expression.

Our ideas about how free elections should look are quite different to those of the groups that support bourgeois parliamentarianism and multi-partyism on the West German model. We say that at the same time as the Round Table there should be a country-wide conference of workers' delegates

We are preparing for this in the factories along with other groups. It will take some time to realize this perspective, since people here are not used to taking personal responsibility for political decisions, although a wide process of politicization is now taking place.

Such a delegate conference could also consider the issue of forms of real participation and forms of factory self-management, as well as the rights and duties of independent factory councils. The election of such workers' councils would be, so to speak, the second step. The party and union organizations should orient towards this kind of elaboration of the demands of the workers.

■ What is the situation in the factories?

There is a lot of discussion going on in factories. The appeals of the opposition groups are put up everywhere. The central point discussed is the possibility for increased consumption, partly also the problem of the future of the factories. If the productivity principle is consistently implemented, this will put the continued existence of many factories and combines in question. Many factories and combines do not function efficiently, and suffer from severe weaknesses in innovation.

I talked to colleagues in the Leuna works who spoke in the following way: "We do not have any desire to go on working in this filth (the Leuna works is the biggest polluter of our country), but we also do not want to be without work." They call for experts, economists and technocrats, who are now urgently needed, to take a position on these problems. The technocrats are being called on to represent the interests of the workers.

■ The founding meeting of a nationwide United Left will take place at the end of November. What are your perspectives and what do you expect from the left in other countries?

Our priority is to put forward the idea of socialism as something that is relevant today. Wide sections of the population have turned away from this idea as a result of the lies of the bureaucracy, who claimed that we already had a developed socialist society here. We need to work out transitional demands for this.

This is the context in which we approach the question of connections with the international left. We can see that Comoecon does not represent a workable alternative model to integration in the EEC and that there is a danger that the rich West will buy the East. That means that we have to work out solid political concepts to combat the greed of the financial sharks with the left in the East and also in West Germany. We also consider it important to work out, together with the West German left, a defensible point of view against the demand for reunification that is being raised, above all by rightist circles. Another question is, what possibilities are open to the left in the West to influence the forms of economic help. The fact is that the GDR cannot overcome its technological backwardness from its own resources. Financial help and credits are needed and perhaps even debt cancellation. This needs to be done without conditions and not, as has already been hinted at many times, on the condition that financial circles in the West are allowed to use the credits to interfere in the GDR. Here perhaps, there are some bases for common action. But common work with the left in the East is just as important as with the West. ★

As referendum rebuffs regime, workers' councils movement develops

THE COMMUNIST PARTY, re-christened the Socialist Party, was clearly rebuffed in the referendum held November 26, in which the principal disputed question was the date of the projected presidential elections. Four opposition parties — the League of Free Democrats, the Federation of Young Democrats, the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Smallholders' Party — had collected the necessary 100,000 signatures to force a referendum on the issue. They wanted the vote for president to come after the election of the new multi-party parliament, rather than before, on January 7, the date set by the regime.

The vote was almost evenly divided, and the final results have not yet been announced as we go to press. But the Socialist Party presidential candidate, Imre Pozsgay, conceded in the evening of November 26 that the opposition had a clear edge. The regime seems, thus, to have accepted defeat.

The largest opposition party, the Democratic Forum, also suffered a rebuff. It had called for a boycott of the referendum, but the turnout was over 58%. The Democratic Forum has a presidential candidate of its own, but reportedly is inclined to give a certain tacit support to Pozsgay as the guarantor of compromise between the regime and the opposition.

The other opposition parties have expressed fears of a plebiscitary maneuver to create a monarchical presidency as a bulwark of continuity. They argued that before the parliamentary elections, which are supposed to inaugurate a multi-party system, they would have difficulty in mounting a campaign against Pozsgay.

A Free Democrat representative, Ivan Peto, has said that his party is not against direct elections for president in principle, if the president's role were purely ceremonial. But he did not think that Pozsgay, an outspoken leader of the local variant of *perestroika*, was interested in being a figurehead.

The following article reflects views held by some left oppositionists in Hungary on the referendum.

IMRE UTAZO

A NEW experience for the Hungarians; from now on they will looking to parliament to find out what the future holds. Since the introduction of a multi-party system and the self-transformation of the ruling communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP), into the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) [See IV 172] the seat of power has moved along the Danube from the party building, the "White House" to the Westminster-style parliament.

The new HSP leadership around Imre Pozsgay has accelerated the transition towards "parliamentary democracy" and economic liberalization, often cutting the ground from under the opposition's feet. Thus, at the congress of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the main opposition organization, which has a Christian democrat and a social democrat wing, an alliance with the new HSP was seriously considered "in order to bring about a peaceful but determined transition to democracy." The congress also decided to put forward Lajos Für as its candidate for the presidential elections. A historian well-known to other historians, Für is unknown to the wider public and seems to be a "sacrificial" candidate to allow Pozsgay to be elected and open the way to an agreement between the two parties. Some such formula as Pozsgay president/MDF majority in the future assembly seems to be the option most discussed in Budapest today. But the electors, who have been deprived of electoral expression for decades, could spring a surprise....

Pozsgay burdened by his past in Communist Party

While Pozsgay is doing well in the polls, he has a weak point: his membership of the HSP and his past in the HSWP. The removal of every symbol, not only of Stalinism but of the whole Communist tradition (red stars and so on), as well as the demand for entry into the Socialist International have not until now been enough to convince the Hungarians, who have been giving the MDF majorities in by-elections. And far from gathering in the 300,000 militants hoped for during the congress. The HSP has between 15,000 and 20,000 members today, with the hope that the presidential campaign will increase the figure. The 85% vote in favour of the transformation into the HSP at the congress has not overcome the hesitations of the militants expected to join the new party and who lack confidence in its prospects.

All the more so in that there is a trend towards a revival of the old HSWP, one around the ultra-conservatives led by Kádár's one-time secretary, Robert Ribanszki; the other around the conservative Communists headed by Károly Grosz, ex-general secretary of the HSWP. The

former by allying themselves with other small Stalinist groupings such as the Marxist-Leninist Workers Party, the United Workers Party and the Democratic People's Party for Unity, can hope for 10,000 members. Grosz is looking for 100,000 members. Even so, the HSWP's old membership of 720,000 is a thing of the past. The ex-members are hesitating — above all the full-timers and functionaries, who are waiting to see which way the wind will blow.

The test of November 26, when the referendum imposed by the neo-liberal Thatcher-style opposition, the Alliance of Free Democrats, (SzDSz) and the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESz), will provide them with their first answer. The referendum will put four questions to the voters:

1. Do they want to elect the head of state by universal suffrage before the legislative elections or to have the president elected by the new parliament?
2. Do they agree that the party should leave the workplaces?
3. Should it list its goods and properties?
4. Should the workers' militia (the party old guard) be disbanded?

Right whips up prevailing anti-communism

Only the first has a real importance, since the three others have already been decided. But whipping up the prevailing anti-communism is tactically profitable for the radical right, who want to speed up the changes in order to foil the PSH's plans and not wait for a response from the workers to the government's first economic measures.

The economic situation in Hungary is just as confused as the political situation. The opening to foreign capital, encouraged at the highest levels of the government, and the agreements with the International Monetary Fund on the debt will have consequences that may upset all the plans. The first measures to be taken are aimed at the workers and the least privileged layers. The recent decision to limit the allocations of foreign currency to \$50 per person per year, in the name of reducing the balance-of-payments deficit, has been seen as profoundly unfair since it only affects those layers of the population that do not have access to the black market in hard currency.

The massive introduction of foreign capital into the Hungarian economy is speeding up. For example, the British press baron, Robert Maxwell, has taken a 40% stake in the Hungarian government daily *Magyar Hirlap*, which is no longer the government's organ. His adversary Rupert Murdoch has picked up the challenge and is showing an interest in the weekly *Reform*, which is close to the MDF.

This foreign penetration is most sharply felt in industry. Symposiums and meetings are multiplying. Foreign investors are being wooed and offered the choicest morsels of the Hungarian economy. The first concrete steps have set the workers' teeth on edge. The promised benefits for them in terms of wages have turned out to be crumbs at best. The workers have responded by creating workers' councils, which are raising the problem of the ownership of the enterprise.

Such workers' councils have come into being in a number of places in the past weeks. The first councils were set up on the initiative of the SzDSz, such as at the Herend porcelain factory, where its purpose was to sell the enterprise to foreign capital. Then, the MDF, at the same time as creating its own trade union, Hungarian Solidarity, set up councils in order to outflank the official trade union (SZOT). Now, faced with a deteriorating economic situation, it is the left of the PSH, organized around the "People's Democracy" platform, that is encouraging the setting up of councils that are truly representative and independent of the managers. They are linking up with local teams who are refusing to see their enterprise privatized, with the effect that this would have on those employed there.

Workers' councils congress in December

This movement has only begun and there is much confusion over what the real role of the councils should be — simple enterprise committees tied to management or real organs of workers' self-management. But a congress to coordinate the workers' councils has already been called for the start of December to which all the currents have been invited. The aim is to set up an ongoing liaison committee and a national federation of workers' councils that can force the adoption of a law on ownership and "prevent the sale of the country". For the moment, contacts with the official union and regional and sectoral unions are difficult, although the metalworkers' union is supporting the setting up of councils in its sector.

This beginning of independent working class organization, linked to the emergence of independent unions in some enterprises may turn out to be the spanner in the works of the political projects underway. The HSP is in the firing line in this debate: the split between partisans of economic liberalization and of "self-government" is going to widen. The political realignments underway will also be affected by this process. More than ever, international solidarity with those who go into struggle — such as the Pécs miners this summer — will influence the way things develop. ★

Interview with Left Alternative leader

TAMAS KRAUSZ, a founder of Left Alternative, (Baldolali Alternativa — LA), a group supporting self-management, and of the People's Democracy tendency in the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), agreed to answer our questions on the situation in Hungary and in the surrounding region. LA is at the moment involved in the setting up of workers' councils in Hungary and is leading a fight for a self-management law. This organization is calling for a break with the present government, which it describes as an "IMF-SzDSz¹ government". For this reason it is calling for the mass organizations to leave the tripartite (Party/opposition/mass organizations) Round Table and for the creation of a permanent left forum, based on the workers' councils. The interview took place in Budapest on November 3, 1989.

CAN you explain the nature and role of Left Alternative and what its name signifies?

To sum it up in a single phrase, it is all about people who are interested in social self-government, organizing from below as expressed for example by the workers' councils. We support these councils from a legal, moral, political and intellectual point of view. At the same time, LA is a theoretical tendency, not a party. On the contrary it is an anti-party organization. Its members come from different political parties or from none. What unites us is our belief in the possibility of a spontaneous development of self-organization from the base of society. We are preparing theoretically for that. We have no intention of intervening in the affairs of the various parties unless it is unavoidable.

■ What is your approach to the present economic situation in Hungary, in particular the problem of the debt and relations with the IMF?

The old Kadarist system is exhausted. It is not open to the left or working class tendencies, something that is common to governments of Stalinist origin, who mix up democratization with free enterprise. The result, as we see today, is complete decomposition. The structures are disintegrating and foreign capital is taking their place. The present government is a means for the restoration of capitalism, under the cover of a restoration of Christian Democracy. There is a crusade against commu-

nism. The head of the government, Károly Grosz, an old Stalinist and everybody, including Poszgay, all the old Stalinists are proud now to be anti-communist.

■ You spoke of the restoration of capitalism in Hungary. What is the present situation? Have big firms, or key sectors of the economy been sold to foreign capital?

Foreign capital is picking out the enterprises that work best, leaving us with the less efficient firms. At the same time, as far as the debt trap is concerned, the Hungarian economy is in the grip of the IMF and the international banks. Currently the left is divided. It stands in the dock.

■ What was your attitude to the HSWP congress in October? What is your analysis of the transformation of the HSP and a continuing HSWP with the old apparatus?

It is necessary to break with the old ruling party. That means that we have to break with the conservative Stalinist forces; that is what happened at the congress. Our aim is to free ourselves of the free enterprisers as well. The anti-Stalinist left does not want to join the party. At the same time the right does not want to join the new party, because the "People's Democracy" platform, of which I am one of the representatives, won a majority at the congress over the Union of Reformers. We had a very big influence at the congress. We only organized

ourselves five days before the congress, while the reformist circles have already been in existence for a year. The left of the Union of Reformers is close to us. I believe that in the near future the right wing is going to leave the HSP, along with the head of government [Poszgay].

The HSWP is a grouping of the old conservative Stalinist forces, although there are also real communists within it who are still backward looking. They find it very hard to break with the old structures. Furthermore, the new HSP has abandoned the old symbolism both under pressure from below and for tactical reasons. The red flag has been retained, but the red star has been abandoned and replaced by the red carnation. I am not, personally, in favour of this, but you have to understand that the Kadarist system has completely discredited these traditional communist symbols in the eyes of the public.

■ Can you give an analysis of the different forces at work here? There is what you call the left, the conservative forces and the neo-liberals who are for the restoration of capitalism.

In Hungary, these different forces do not exist as political parties. The Socialist Party also has an extreme right tendency that is out and out bourgeois restorationist. The restoration is to be carried through by the IMF. On the other hand, the Christian Democrats (MDF) have a workers section that is close to us. But the left wing retains the most conservative traditions. At the same time all the parties are anti-communist. That is how they hope to get power. The SzDSz has 6,000 persons, including ex-Marxists. Of course these renegade Marxists propagate the neo-liberal theories with the enthusiasm of the newly converted. There is also a left-wing minority, socialist "à la Mitterrand".

The HSWP has a Stalinist wing, but also a progressive left-wing which did not join the HSP because of the right's strength in that party.

The small October Party is very confused, radical both in a leftist and rightist sense. They are violently anti-communist, but they also want workers' councils. Sándor Rács (ex-workers' council leader in 1956 and now a candidate for the presidency) is a nationalist of the extreme right, and very Catholic. A lot of these people from 1956 have become violently anti-communist because of their imprisonments and so on. Now they are having difficulty in representing the interests of the workers' councils because the young people do not understand them. The youth do not understand the language of hate. On October 23, in front of the parliament it has become clear. The youth do

1. SzDSz — Szabad Demokratik Szövetség — Free Democrat Association; supporters of "western-style democracy".

Left Alternative appeal for Mayday 1989

(Left Alternative Mayday 1989 appeal distributed in Budapest)

WORKERS! ENTERPRISE EMPLOYEES! ENTERPRISE COUNCILS!

The changeover law will soon be in force! This is the **LAST POSSIBILITY**, because if you give your enterprises to national or foreign capital, the present state exploitation will grow into capitalist exploitation. **TAKE YOUR DESTINY AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY IN YOUR HANDS!**

The workers, who spend half their life in the factories, have always made efforts and had the capacity to take over the running of their enterprises, on the basis of their skills and direct interests. Remember the historical examples of **WORKER SELF-GOVERNMENT!**

There is no capitalist or state management system that can achieve such efficiency or such results as the creative forces of *workers' collectives and their direct material interests!* Only this can save you from servitude and the country from its crisis.

CHOOSE and employ leaders responsible to you, who are amenable and good for your cause.

Real, non Stalinist, socialism rests on the development of self-organized and self-governed communities, on solidarity and on collaboration.

The dictatorship of the apparatus: that is Stalinism; the self-government of the workers: that is socialism!

Economic democracy is the road to social development. Every other road leads backwards.

ORGANIZE YOURSELVES!

UNITE!

ALL ECONOMIC POWER TO THE WORKERS!

The Economic Policy Committee of the Alternative Left association.

not understand the language of Christian nationalism.

■ **In this political situation, what is your attitude to the forthcoming presidential elections?**

My own personal opinion is that the elections represent "parliamentary cretinism". A political and financial elite will come to power. There will not be "parliamentary democracy" in Hungary, but a parliamentary dictatorship, because there is no self-government structure on which the parliament can base itself. The present parliament has an HSWP majority. It has voted for political parties to get out of the enterprises. I am against this decision. It is contrary even to bourgeois democracy. It is a counter-revolutionary law. What do you think I can expect from this government when it has a majority? There will be an anti-communist crusade and new steps towards the restoration of bourgeois democracy.

Unemployment will increase and there will be resistance from the workers. This will shuffle the pack for the IMF. All the plans of the bourgeois liberals are going to be upset.

■ **Does this mean that you are not going to take a position on the presidential elections? Who do you consider the best candidate?**

Imre Poszgay, the HSP candidate. The others are worse, so that's the choice we're left with.

■ **You said that the creation of forms of self-government in the enterprises would change the political situation. What is the situation today with regard to the development of such organs? I understand that you envisage a congress of workers' councils taking place soon.**

We are going to organize soon a conference that will bring together all the workers' councils organized by all the political parties. Of course, the People's Democracy platform will have the greatest weight in the organization of this project. The idea is to regroup the most progressive elements of the old party, that is the anti-Stalinist nucleus in the HSP, influenced by the LA. The forces that come will support the broadest possible assembly of workers' councils.

■ **What is the reality of the workers' councils today? Are they everywhere, or is the process only in the initial stages?**

They exist here and there. But in my opinion they are the last chance for a socialist alternative today.

■ **A more general question. Hungary belongs to the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. Are you closely following what is happening in the other countries of the Eastern bloc?**

Of course. I wrote a very long article in the first number of *Eszmelet* (Consciousness) about what is happening in the USSR, the Gorbachev phenomenon and so on.... There is a great danger that there will be a civil war between nationalities today in the Soviet Union and even inside the Republics. Or perhaps the reestablishment of control by a conservative dictator. The last chance for *perestroika* and *glasnost* is for Gorbachev to unite with the revolutionary forces in the apparatus to support the strikes like that of the miners against the conservatives.

In Poland, I do not see essential differences between the Communists and Solidarnosc since the latter is now also frightened of workers' self-government. Little by little I expect to see collapse, because the IMF is going to ruin the whole of Eastern Europe. There is a process of Latin-americanization in Eastern Europe, which the GDR is now part of. The old Stalinist regimes are wholly compromised. They have no more legitimacy. They are pushing free enterprise more and more in order to deprive the workers' movement of room. For this reason we are going to see the collapse of the old CPs in all these countries and the birth of a new left, both anti-free enterprise and anti-Stalinist. All the CPs have lost their old links with the working class. No other party has such close links with the working class. The Stalinist dictatorships have little future in Eastern Europe. Only capitalist restoration, that is a military dictatorship with no social base can stop a turn to the left.

■ **A more personal question to finish. What was the reception in Hungary of your selection of writings by Trotsky?**

In distinction to another book about Stalin there was not the invasion of political books like now.

In this period of Christian national restoration, Marxist literature is being progressively marginalized. Those who are Marxists liked the book. But it did not provoke a debate. Some comments were favourable. But the opposition (SzDSz, FIDESz) hates Marxism, Communism and Trotsky. I describe our modern epoch as "the new Stalinism under a white flag", a democratic Stalinism financed by international capitalism. ★

West European Ostpolitik in turmoil

IN THE WAKE of the opening of the Berlin wall, François Mitterrand, now serving his turn as chair of the European Economic Community (EEC), declared: "We are coming out of an established order, and we cannot define the new equilibrium; in fact we are going to live for a time without one." The whole Western "upper crust" had been crowing endlessly over the evolution in Hungary and Poland. Was this not, from their point of view, proof that capitalism and the market had won out once and for all over "communism"? But all that had to happen to set all this charming company worrying and wondering was for millions of East Germans to cross over freely to the West for a weekend and then go back.

CLAUDE GABRIEL

TO JUDGE from the consternation of Bush and Thatcher and the perturbed look of Mitterrand, you would almost have thought that these rakish Berliners, proud of their revolution, had become more dangerous than the Warsaw Pact armies.

Lech Walesa's call for bankers was answered by Jacques Delors, chair of the European Commission, with the paternalistic observation that the Poles have first to learn "economics," that is, learn capitalism. The Hungarian government, which is expecting financial aid from the EEC, got an explanation from the French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, that Budapest had first to reach an agreement with the IMF. He added that the Hungarian government had to get the support of the opposition to apply a program of economic reforms that would be very hard on the population. Isn't this reminiscent of relations with the third world?

Loans will be made under market conditions

The loans to Poland and Hungary envisaged by the European Investment Bank will be made under market conditions, and thus for the moment will not go very far, in view of these countries' indebtedness. The Brussels Commission has started to negotiate easier access to the EEC market for agricultural products from the East European countries. But lo and behold, the Western European professional associations concerned are making discreet protests.¹ The West German industrialists are showing an interest in making investments, referring to the attraction of low wages. The French, German and Italian bosses are talking about

the need for stepping up sales to the East European countries, but they are demanding first that their respective governments assure the solvency of potential customers through loans! Doesn't this resemble point for point the relations of the Twelve with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP)?²

Danger of new forms of dependency

The official fine speeches about democracy and a greater Europe are astonishing. Are the Hungarian, Polish and East German workers who have risen up against the unequal forms of exchange between their countries and the Soviet Union and decried losses of "national sovereignty" going to sit back and watch a new form of dependency being established?³ One can hardly count on that now. In fact, we will see the same reactions as we have in the third world when the IMF imposes draconian austerity policies.

The capitalists want guarantees. They want profitability and profits and the right to fire people. That is certainly not the idea of the "market" that the Hungarian workers have when they shout that they do not want "communism" any more.

So, what is in question is not a widening of the EEC or a future "social democratic" greater Europe. Over and above the speechifying, it is the European capitalists who shape the real policies. As far as they are concerned, nothing more is involved than new opportunities for investment in accordance with the profits expected. The limited solvency of the populations concerned reduces the possibilities for a buoyant consumption of intermediate

products.

For the moment, the market envisaged is essentially for producers' goods, based on loans, foreign aid and relocation of plants or joint-ventures in order to exploit comparative advantages and cut risks. As in the third world, the bosses are going to try to get their governments to insure them against the risks of social and economic instability. It is precisely because it is flesh-and-blood capitalists who are calling the tune, and not just the Brussels institutions, that what is happening in East Germany and elsewhere is destabilizing the project of the Europe of the Twelve.

Behind the Single Act, behind the "political will" that the heads of government talk about so often, behind even the overall economic imperatives, there is a real social class — the bourgeoisie. The big common-market project corresponds to the general interests of capitalism in the medium term — cutting costs, free circulation of capital, deregulation and so on.

Patterns of behaviour of ruling classes

The persistent pattern of behavior of European ruling classes and the various capitalist groups that make them up is another factor that has to be studied. The overall project does not mechanically represent a "European boss class," nor a European state. Even if the various EEC governments are looking for greater political integration, they can only pursue this in accordance with what is happening concretely at the core of capitalist industry. But on this level, all the signs are that the bosses' choices in the various industries and lines remain highly diversified, both inside and outside of the EEC.

The threats hanging over the cohesion of the EEC today do not come from some "natural" slide of West Germany toward central Europe. The German enterprises have worldwide strategies, like all the European multinationals. They have no

1. For the moment, the lifting of the quotas for some non-sensitive goods, that is products that are not very competitive with EEC industry, is projected for Poland in 1994 and for Hungary in 1995.

2. Sixty-six countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) signed an economic and commercial agreement with the EEC, the Lomé Convention, which notably includes conventions on access to the Community for the primary products exported by these countries, on the basis of exemption from tariffs.

3. Already today, the bulk of these countries' exports to the EEC consists of raw materials and semi-finished goods, exchanged for imports of technology and producers' goods. The EEC exports 10,443 million Ecu to the East European countries (excluding the USSR) and imports 11,499 million Ecu from these countries (1 ECU equals approximately 1 dollar).



special ideology that would incline them to look fondly to "Mitteleuropa." On the other hand, they are on the lookout for new markets or new comparative advantages. Thus, they can "take a plunge to the East" *4, in order to get in ahead of their competitors.

The Europe of the Twelve no doubt has a "big market" project. But there is still no single European imperialism. In order for that to exist, there would have to be a higher level of integration and economic cohesion, real "European" multinationals and a corresponding state apparatus. For the moment, none of these things exists.

Companies count on national governments

As the example of the setting up of the Lomé Convention linking the EEC and the ACP countries has shown, over and above the general choices of the Twelve, competition rages between the enterprises over markets for producers' goods. And most of the companies count on their "national" governments to give them a hand. Thus, the shares of the market won (in the ACP countries and tomorrow in East Europe), and above all the evolution of these shares, correspond to the relationship of forces among the various European economies.

16 So, there is nothing surprising in today's Europe about the German Kon-

zernen looking like the favorites to win this race for markets.⁵ There is nothing surprising either about Kohl wanting to symbolize the strength of German imperialism by quickly raising the question, in his own way, of German reunification.

Competition is going to rage, and the already fragile EEC edifice is going to crack a little more. However, predictions of the end of the Single Act scheme would be hasty speculation. Immediate and long-term interests cannot persistently conflict. More than East Europe, the world-market and the international conditions for realizing capital will be decisive.

In the immediate future, it is clear that the new stakes and the competition they generate can only aggravate the internal tensions in the EEC. The whole argument over economic and monetary union, largely centered on the question of a common currency and the sovereignty of the member states, is going to heat up.

Enthusiasm for German re-unification

However, the policy of the governments themselves is not proof from upsets, once it is faced with new economic and strategic stakes. Are the military blocs in question? It was amusing, to say the least, to see Kohl and Mitterrand waxing enthusiastic for German reunification without saying a word about the Western military deployment in West Germany. How can they continue to justify the immense military arsenal accumulated in Germany and in Europe? How in France can they justify maintaining the nuclear "striking force"? How can they defend maintaining NATO troops in West Germany? Bush, Mitterrand, Kohl and the others will have some difficulties in explaining themselves on such questions.

They are already evoking the dangers of civil war in Central Europe and the possibility that Gorbachev may be overthrown. The essential problem, however, is not there. For more than 40 years, the

Western governments have justified enormous military spending by referring to the dangers of German "revanchism" or a Soviet attack. The capitalists have benefited from this manna from heaven in terms of credits and markets. Thus, the national budgets have financed immense profits for the bosses, to say nothing of the practical by-products for scientific research, which has been to an extent focused on military needs.

The Berlin Wall, as a symbol of the "war threat," entirely suited Boeing, Siemens-MBB, Thomson, Rolls Royce and son, and all the firms that profited from military spending. And now you have thousands of East Germans starting to pass freely through the Wall to have a beer in West Berlin!

Moreover, this whole affair is now caught up in the European debate, because the European Community is far from being a homogeneous entity from the standpoint of military policies. The EEC, NATO, the West European Union, the group of the four countries responsible for the status of Berlin — which authority is the appropriate place for resolving these contradictions? What is going to happen to the "European defense" project? How, finally, can the military-industrial complex be re-adapted?

Working people bring down Berlin Wall

The future of Europe, fortunately, does not depend only on the big Monopoly game played by the bourgeoisie. The Berlin Wall collapsed because the East German working people brought it down. More than ever, the only alternative is internationalism, that is, organized and concrete links among activists able to bind together struggles independent of governments, crossing the borders of countries and "blocs."

Workers' struggles, youth and cultural movements, environmental movements and struggles against all forms of oppression and militarism are more and more issues on which it is possible and necessary to cross frontiers in order to fight together. That sort of Europe does not resemble the one of Delors or Kohl. Nor does it resemble the "common home" that Gorbachev talks about. Above all, it is not a Europe built on the "values" that Gorbachev claims now to share with President Bush or Mrs. Thatcher. ★

4. A slogan thrown out by Roger Fauroux, French ministry of industry, to the French bosses in October 1989.

5. The West German companies already are well ahead of in the East European countries. Moreover, East Germany, the biggest industrial power in East Europe after the USSR, is already selling three times as much to West Germany than to the 11 other members of the EEC. The trading relations between East Germany and the EEC are already very close, and largely go through exchanges with West Germany.

Are negotiations on the way?

ON 16 November, F.W. De Klerk, the new South African President, announced that certain racial segregation, notably on the beaches and in hospitals ("petty" apartheid laws), would "soon" be abolished. This decision has been welcomed as a "great step forward" by the world press. However, the past ten years have seen the abolition of numerous discriminatory laws. But the basic laws of apartheid remain unchanged, and the state of emergency is still in force. The important laws governing residence (the amended Group Areas Act), segregated schools, land ownership, registration by "race" (the Population Registration Act) remain, as well as the segregated elections for whites, Coloreds and Indians, and the absence of any right to vote for Africans. The limited "liberalization" measures that have taken place need to be put in the context of discussions about a "negotiated settlement" in South Africa.

PETER BLUMER

EACH day brings its share of surprises in terms of overtures by the regime or new possibilities for the opposition to express itself openly and massively.

In July 1989, in Lausanne, a seminar on "post-apartheid" society brought together South African officials, members of the African National Congress (ANC), Soviet and East German experts, and Afrikaner economists¹.

On 1 October, in London, ANC leaders met representatives of the Broederbond, symbol for decades of Afrikaner power.²

How will change be structured?

On 11 October, after three hours of discussion with Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak and Frank Chikane (leaders of the "moderate" wing of the mass movement), De Klerk declared, "We need to bridge that gap created by mistrust... We are really no longer arguing about the fact that all South Africans must have a vote, that all South Africans must become involved in all decisions affecting their life. What we must now start talking about is how we structure that".

Walter Sisulu (a historic leader of the ANC) and seven other political prisoners, sentenced to life imprisonment, were freed on 15 October. On 29 October, tens of thousands of black people rallied in Johannesburg, at an occasion recognized by everybody as the first legal mass meeting of the ANC and the South African Commu-

nist Party.

In themselves, these facts are sufficient to show that a new political situation has opened up in South Africa, and that the concrete conditions in which the Black movement is waging its struggle are changing radically. How should this fast evolution be interpreted?

ANC seeks to divide partisans of regime

For several years, the ANC has had contacts of differing kinds with the white liberal establishment, reform-minded Afrikaner sectors, or even government representatives. In the midst of the mass upsurge, this corresponded to a change in the relationship of forces and the need for the ANC to divide the partisans of the regime and obtain concessions.³ The government, for its part, always responded belatedly to the pressures of the mass movement. It introduced various reforms, but continued to impose a severe repression.

Meanwhile, the ANC gained a credibility that extended into the highest spheres of the South African bourgeoisie. It required the second state of emergency, together with new and still more repressive labour laws (the Labour Relations Act), for the bosses and the regime to regain a capacity for political initiative in relation to the Black movement.

Today, the contacts and the "talks about talks" are situated in another context. They are not simply an extension of

earlier tactics. A qualitative leap has been made, which has to be explained in order to understand what will happen in the near future.

For the moment, the agenda is confined to "talks about talks" and the search for a consensus on "post-apartheid society". The contacts between the ANC and the government are not yet at the stage of open negotiations for concrete constitutional change. This adds up then, more or less, to a first round of exploration, where the form of the contacts remains more important than the content of the dialogue.

The problems to be resolved by the constitutional road are so numerous and complex that, whatever happens, a long period of negotiation and transition would be necessary to "peacefully" reform South African society. And such "democratic transition" would, in any case, require taming the workers' movement so that social demands be brought little by little within bounds of the reformers' schemas.

Talks at the top difficult to control

Whatever the tempo of the "negotiations" in the period ahead, the mass movement is henceforth in a situation where it will be very difficult for it to exercise control over the dialectic between rank-and-file struggles and talks at the top. How will the mobilizations be used to influence the official discussions, and what will be the effect of the latter on the mass movement — these are the questions that are going to be discussed in the organizations.

What lies behind these sudden developments? For the past seven years the country has seen the largest mobilizations in its history. The 1980s have seen the development of an unprecedented level of consciousness, organization and activity. Moreover, this fantastic radicalization has combined with a long economic depression and has obviously aggravated it. The ruling class has been profoundly divided by this, and the imperialist governments are themselves divided over what attitude to adopt towards their South African ally.

The Black movement is more and more

1. A very open meeting of the same type will be held at the end of November in Paris.

2. The Broederbond, which might be compared to a kind of Afrikaner freemasonry, has been in crisis for several years. It has become "reformist" and in June 1989 published proposals for a reform of the system.

3. The ANC thus played a supportive role in the mediation launched by the Commonwealth in 1986, with the delegation of plenipotentiaries which became known as the "Eminent Persons Group". It was the South African government that was responsible for the failure of this first initiative.

organized around a majority that is socially proletarian, in the trade unions but also in the communities. The repression has hit very hard, and a relentless attack has been waged to cut down the organizational capacities of the movement. But this has never succeeded in pushing back the average level of consciousness of the Black population. Finally, with the passing of time, experience has led broader and broader sections of the working class and youth to pose the problem of socialism as the sole means of breaking definitively the mainsprings of racial segregation.

But is such an analysis sufficient to explain the situation today? Are the overtures and concessions made by De Klerk only the expression of a relationship of forces unfavourable to the apartheid regime, as the ANC maintain?

Four great periods of struggle can be distinguished in the course of the last ten years. The first ended in 1984, after the great boycott of the elections for "Coloreds" and "Indians". The mass movement was very strongly structured and highly mobilized. The second period is that of the school boycott, the great strike movements, the boycott of white businesses, etc.

Renewal of big mobilizations against elections

Then followed the period of setbacks, with the second state of emergency, the fall in the number of strikes, the weakening of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Finally, a new conjuncture has opened, starting from August 1989, with a renewal of the big mobilizations against the elections to the "white", "Colored" and "Indian" chambers⁴.

But it is insufficient to look only at the recent mobilizations. The imperialists, to begin with the Americans and the British, and the South African government have certainly noted on this occasion that the Black movement still has enormous reserves of combativity. But these two or three months, in themselves, have not provoked the dramatic turn of events in South African political life and the great turning point today. We have instead to hark back to the period of setbacks in 1987-88.

At that time, the mass movement was suddenly faced by the regime regaining a capacity for initiative — the state of emergency, selective repression, winning over the employers through a program of de-regulation and privatization etc. Thus, despite the extent of the confrontations in the preceding period, the state apparatus had not suffered any lasting damage, and no real weaknesses had emerged within the army⁵. The regime was undermined, but the Black movement, for its part, was unable to solve the problem of the seizure of power.

This dilemma was aggravated by the fact that, throughout the years 1985-87, the propaganda of the ANC had claimed

Extracts from an OAU resolution proposed by the ANC

TOGETHER with the rest of the world, we think that it is essential, before any negotiation can take place, that a climate favourable to negotiations be created. The apartheid regime has the urgent responsibility of responding positively to this universally held desire and thus of creating this climate.

Consequently, the regime today must as a minimum:

- unconditionally release all prisoners and political detainees without imposing any restrictions on them;

- lift all banning orders and restrictions on all organizations and persons;

- withdraw all troops from the townships;

- put an end to the state of emergency and repeal all legislation, such as the internal security law, which limits political activity;

- end all trials and public executions.

These measures are necessary to create the conditions for a free discussion — an essential condition for ensuring that the people themselves will participate in the process of rebuilding our country. The above measures must then precede any negotiations.

Guide lines for negotiations

We share the viewpoint of the South African liberation movement according to which, after the creation of such a climate, the negotiation process must begin along the following lines:

- discussions must then take place between the liberation movement and the South African regime leading to the suspension of hostilities between the two sides by a mutually binding cease-fire agreement;

- negotiations must then take place in order to establish the basis for the adoption of a new constitution, in accord with, amongst others, the principles laid down above;

- the parties, after agreeing on these principles, must then negotiate the necessary mechanisms to draw up a new constitution;

- the parties must agree on the role which the international community will play in order to ensure a successful transition towards a democratic order;

- the parties must agree on the formation of an interim government to supervise the process of drawing up and adopting a new constitution; to govern and administer the country, as well as to effect the transition towards a democratic order, including the holding of elections;

- after the adoption of the new constitution, all armed hostilities will be considered as formally terminated;

- for its part, the international community will lift the sanctions which have been imposed against apartheid South Africa;

- the new South Africa will have the qualities required for membership of the Organization of African Unity. ★

that it was becoming impossible to administer apartheid, that a situation of dual power existed, and that the final stage had been reached in building a people's army.

The middle cadre, and above all the young militants of the townships, were convinced then that the end was near⁶. For all that, the question of power was not on the agenda. The armed struggle of the ANC had been a particular form of propagandism, which galvanized the youth, but did not represent a convincing strategic project.

It suddenly became necessary to pose the question of the lines of retreat and of defending the gains of the movement. It was already too late to stabilize the movement in the townships. Such questions as the links with the trade unions, structures and instituting democratic procedures within the mass movement had been neglected⁷. A turn towards a more long term strategy had to be made.

Problems emerged then even in the ranks of the ANC leadership in exile. The

debate became public, between those who began to evoke the possibility of partial victories against apartheid, and those who developed above all the line of "armed struggle", advocating a perspective of a revolutionary arming of the masses, and insurrection.

It is significant that this intense debate, occurring at the very heart of the ANC, was not replicated in any form either in the other political organizations or, above all, in the trade union movement. While the question of tactical retreat was raised in

4. See IV, 170, October 2, 1989.

5. However problems have recently emerged within the police force. The impact of the campaign against military service should not be forgotten either, although the essence of this initially was above all the refusal to go and fight in Angola and Namibia. (see IV, 147, 19 September, 1988).

6. This judgment was not generally shared by the principal trade union leaderships.

7. This question was at the centre of the report of the COSATU secretariat to the federation's special congress on 14 and 15 May 1988.

8. The public debate in the ANC's review, *Sechaba*, was officially closed with the issue of August 1989.

9. The Kabwe conference.

some trade unions, nonetheless when the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) met in conference in May 1988, nothing explicit was proposed on the strategy to follow.

The debate within the ANC has not been one of abstract theories of "militarism" versus "realism". For the first time, some protagonists have explicitly defended the objective of partial reforms and compromise, starting from an assessment of failure in the years 1984-87. Taking account of the weight of the ANC in the Black movement, it would have been difficult to keep these questions from having practical consequences. And the problem of temporary tactical retreat, to let the mass movement get a second wind, did not relate to the questions being raised in the ranks of the ANC. It was not on the same level, and could not prepare people for the reorientation underway.

So, the ANC was to demonstrate that it has the decisive say in the political orientation of the Black movement. Neither the trade union left nor the other political currents have, for the moment, been capable of taking initiatives in the debate opening up or offering as practical a perspective as the ANC's new orientations.

ANC puts accent on armed struggle

In 1985, the national conference of the ANC⁹ put the accent on the armed struggle. In 1988, its leadership made public a draft of a constitution for a South Africa without apartheid (see box). In August 1989, it got the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to endorse a document laying down the conditions for negotiation. This political turn took place at a time when, on the ground, the mass movement was experiencing profound difficulties.¹⁰

The Constitutional Guidelines do not offer activists a coherent project of an alternative society. Whilst the text contains all the elementary democratic guarantees (elimination of all references to race, the right to organize, the right to strike, etc.), fundamentally it constitutes a clear turning point in relation to the socio-economic content of the Freedom Charter (the ANC's programmatic document).

In the latter, the perspective of nationalization of the essential means of production left the door open to different interpretations of the social foundations of the new state. The South African economy has had, until now, a very strong state sector, whilst also being marked by powerful private monopolies. A project for nationalizing the enterprises, as conceived by the Charter¹¹, thus objectively raised the debate over a transformation of social relations. Certain left interpretations of the Charter have thus been able to develop, over an entire period, claiming that the application of the Charter would require



the overthrow of the capitalist system¹². In the 1988 text, there is an explicit scheme for a mixed economy, leaving no room for ambiguity about some anticapitalist dynamic¹³.

Impact of Kremlin's new realism

None of this can be explained without reference to the new international situation. It is almost two years since Soviet officials began to propagate the Kremlin's new realism. The departure of Cuban troops from Angola and the Namibian independence process fit directly into the framework of the settlement of regional conflicts to which Gorbachev is so attached. After having had to close its main bases in Angola, the ANC has also been forced to reduce its presence in Zambia. These are the direct effects of international negotiations. Those who believe that the Namibian affair was essentially brought to an end by the Cuban military victory against the South Africans at Cuito Carnavale in Angola hardly think of this aspect of things¹⁴.

The nature of the USSR's support for the ANC has thus changed. Having been the trump card in the ANC's diplomatic and military policy for 20 years, Soviet aid is now entirely directed towards the project of a short term negotiated settlement with the apartheid regime. And, if

De Klerk is accelerating his overtures, it is because, at the international level, he enjoys new conditions and guarantees.

The impasse of the entire liberation movement from 1987, and the ANC's search for a rapid but partial solution have harmonized with Soviet pressure¹⁵.

South African stock market crash in October

To explain today's "talks about talks" solely by reference to a weakening of the apartheid regime is then very one-sided. Certainly, the economic situation is bad — on 16 October, there was a stock market crash of 10.6% — despite the satisfaction displayed by business about the new political situation. But industrial and financial sanctions have not had the expected impact. The South African economy has used them to accelerate its restructuring, and the country has obtained a rescheduling of its foreign debt, for a total of eight million dollars.

The system has obviously an urgent need for reforming, in order to restore a higher rate of profit. Apartheid, as a system of social regulation, has definitively ceased to serve the interests of capital. And the regime's interest in reform is explained, in part, by these new needs. Thus it is a combination of the social and structural crises that has been impelling the regime, since the beginning of the 1980s, to adjust apartheid, and then to put

10. The South African Communist Party has just produced a new program in which it introduces the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power. Speaking of possible "compromise" and a negotiated settlement, it adds contradictorily that these must be the result of a generalized crisis and a heightened revolutionary upsurge, with a view to the seizure of power.

11. "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the people as a whole. All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people".

12. See *IV*, 111, 22 December, 1986.

13. Recently, one of the principal leaders of the metal-

workers' union and of COSATU, Alec Irwin, argued for a socialist project of democratic planning (*Work in Progress*, number 61, Johannesburg). But the debate with the Constitutional Guidelines of the ANC remains very implicit.

14. See *IV*, 158, 6 March 1989.

15. "The ANC wants political negotiation, I must tell you. There is no need to push them on that. But it takes two to tango". Soviet secretary of State Anatoly Adamichin, Harare, March 1989, cited in *Transformation* number 9, Durban.

16. See *Work in Progress* number 61, September 1989, Johannesburg.

it in question.

This deepgoing evolution has confronted the workers' movement with new problems. How to struggle against an employing class delighted with new labour laws more repressive than the previous ones which at the same time offers Black workers shareholdings? How to respond to a state apparatus that, at the national level, has maintained until recently a very repressive policy but which, at a local level, is opening negotiations little by little with representatives of the people's associations¹⁶? How to conceive a long term strategy when, alongside the continuation of dire poverty for the Black majority, a layer of small entrepreneurs and black yuppies is growing very rapidly, who aspire to reach the level of consumption of the white majority?

Well before the beginning of the great debate on negotiations, the question of partial gains was present in the minds of the trade union leaderships. For if the 1984-87 movement did not open the way for the seizure of power, it was then necessary to devise a new strategy to safeguard the workers' movement. But the scenario envisaged at that time was not one of reforms negotiated at the top.

Workers' Charter not put forward as socialist

At COSATU's July 1989 congress, the debate on the "Workers' Charter" illustrated this evolution. Before then the trade union left had presented the Workers' Charter as an overall socialist project. But now it was put forward as a program of democratic and social demands, certainly basic, but not in itself constituting a socialist project. It is easy to understand the views of those workers' leaders who, convinced that the question of power is not on the agenda, believe it necessary to fall back on a more modest project of defending the working class. However, as a result the Workers' Charter becomes in fact a supplement to the Constitutional Guidelines, in the same sense as the ANC's Charter on education or on women. It is no longer seen as providing the working class with an overall program¹⁷.

Today's openings provide radically different conditions for the everyday struggles. The demonstration authorized at the Cape on 13 September, and the rally in Johannesburg on the 29 October, symbolize the new margins for manoeuvre the mass movement has at its disposal. It is essential to recognise this in order to understand how the overwhelming majority of the mass movement are going to relate to the ANC's new policy¹⁸. The rank and file militants are going to perceive the new situation as an opportunity to bring down apartheid.

Already, important debates are going on in the most advanced sectors:

— the ANC has presented its Constitutional Guidelines as a project which the

whole mass movement must freely debate. At its July 1989 congress COSATU passed a resolution on the negotiations process, saying that it was necessary "to ensure in the event of negotiations taking place that the masses of our people are involved in shaping the process so that no negotiations take place without the democratic participation of the people" and "that only a sovereign body mandated by the people and accountable to the people as a whole can have the authority to develop a new constitution and decide on the method of implementation".

What can be the basis for representing the mass movement in a genuine process of negotiation? How open will it be? How is COSATU going to reconcile its project of uniting with the other trade union federation, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), with its adherence to the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), in which the ANC is strongly dominant?

Charter current faces choice on unity

In principle, the big unity conference "for a democratic future" must clarify these questions. Either unity is preserved, and all the workers' and revolutionary currents can participate as foreseen, or there will be a return to the old sectarianism, and the Chartist current will reduce this meeting to a front between itself and the bourgeois democratic currents¹⁹.

— Everybody agrees now on the demand for a "non-racial" South Africa, that is to say without any law making reference to racial or ethnic origin. The old debate on the existence of separate "nationalities" or of "nations" in South Africa is now closed, at least for the time being. But, what will a South Africa genuinely free of all discrimination look like? What definition to give to the term "equality"? Formal equality before the law? Equality of opportunity to claim a place within a market economy²⁰?

— The question of the land is inextricably linked to the question of the Bantustans: How is this essential part of apartheid to be dismantled? What do the ANC's Guidelines mean by an agrarian reform conducted by the existing state?

— Numerous statements, notably from the Chartist current, reaffirm that the working class must be the central force of change. But what kind of social and political hegemony is it to exercise? How, for example, in the current situation, can the trade unions conserve and defend their independence, as well as their unity and democracy?

— The debate on the mixed economy has been introduced by the ANC and the Soviets, with the examples taken being Nicaragua and the Soviet Union. Is it not curious to treat as identical three radically different situations: that of a small

dependent country, at the beginning of the transition to socialism, that of a highly industrialized country after seventy years of "socialism", and finally that of a country like South Africa, for which the ANC's project is not one of a revolutionary state?

— Will the regime try to combine negotiations with partial constitutional overtures? Should the local elections be boycotted or not? Should the regime's constitutional gestures be totally opposed or, on the contrary, should a line of generalized boycott be upheld?

Problem of compromise over government

— The principle of an interim government proposed by the ANC raises the problem of compromise at the highest levels of state power. But nothing has yet been specified about what the composition of such a government should be. What concrete content does the ANC want to give to this plan? And what are the risks for the mass movement?

In these debates, those who continue to uphold a struggle for socialism as their objective will face two interlinking problems. On the one hand, how to propose concrete and unifying objectives for the mass movement, in the present circumstances in which the ANC dominates and the majority are hoping for a rapid end to apartheid. On the other hand, how to construct a strategic long term project capable of attracting all forces, including those in the Chartist current, that seek to take advantage of the new conjuncture to pose in new terms the question of anti-capitalist struggle.★

17. Moses Mayekiso, leader of the metalworkers' union NUMSA, explains this change, but continues to defend the necessity, in other respects, of a socialist perspective. *South African Labour Bulletin*, number 2, 1989, Johannesburg.

18. The initial positions adopted by the Pan African Congress (PAC) are, from this point of view, ridiculous and dangerously ultra-leftist. A notable example is when its principal leader, Zephania Mothopeng, criticized the big mobilizations of the campaign of defiance in October (see IV, 170, October 2, 1989), claiming that they have been "only of value to the government which gained great political capital from them". It is correct to say that the regime has developed its own strategy of cooptation and negotiation, but it would be a grave error not to understand that the new democratic mobilizations offer important opportunities for political activity, including, ultimately, for those who do not adhere to the dominant Chartist positions. The latter currents run the strong risk of becoming isolated if they do not comprehend the new tasks of the united front and instead pine for the good old days of clandestinity.

19. This conference, initially scheduled for October, has now been put back to 9 December.

20. The ANC is fully conscious of this problem, as is evident when it employs the term "positive action" to designate the elaborate mechanisms needed to correct the disadvantages suffered by black people, particularly in the area of land ownership.

ANC's Constitutional guidelines

WE publish below the Constitutional Guidelines drawn up in 1988 by the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), which have been put forward to be debated by all the mass organizations.

DOCUMENT

THE Freedom Charter remains today unique as the only South African document of its kind that adheres firmly to democratic principles as accepted throughout the world. Amongst South Africans it has become by far the most widely accepted programme for a post-apartheid country.

The stage is now approaching where the Freedom Charter must be converted from a vision of the future into a constitutional reality.

We in the African National Congress submit to the people of South Africa, and all those throughout the world who wish to see an end to apartheid, our basic guidelines for the foundations of government in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Extensive and democratic debate on these guidelines will mobilize the widest sections of our population to achieve agreement on how to put an end to the tyranny and oppression under which our people live, thus enabling them to lead normal decent lives as free citizens in a free country.

The immediate aim is to create a just and democratic society that will sweep away the country's old legacy of colonial conquest and white domination, and abolish all laws imposing racial oppression and discrimination. The removal of discriminatory laws and eradication of the vestiges of the illegitimate regime are, however, not enough. The structures and institutions of apartheid must be dismantled and be replaced by democratic ones. Steps must be taken to ensure that apartheid ideas and practices are not permitted to appear in old or new forms.

In addition, the effects of centuries of racial domination and inequality must be overcome by constitutional visions for collective action which guarantees a rapid and irreversible redistribution of wealth and opening of facilities to all. The consti-

tution must also be such as to promote the habits of non-racial and non-sexist thinking, the practice of anti-racist behaviour and the acquisition of genuinely shared patriotic consciousness.

The constitution must give firm protection to the fundamental human rights of all citizens. There shall be equal rights for all individuals irrespective of race, color, sex or creed. In addition, the constitution must entrench equal cultural, linguistic and religious rights for all.

Under the conditions of contemporary South Africa, 87% of the land and 95% of the instruments of production are in the hands of the ruling class, which is drawn solely from the white community.

It follows, therefore that constitutional protection for group rights would perpetuate the status quo and would mean that the mass of the people continue to be constitutionally trapped in poverty and remain as outsiders in the land of their birth.

Finally, the efficacy of the constitution will, to a large extent, be determined by the degree to which it promotes conditions for the active involvement of all sectors of the population at all levels in government and in the economic and cultural life.

Bearing these fundamental objectives in mind, we declare that the elimination of apartheid and the creation of a truly just and democratic South Africa requires a constitution based on the following principles:

The State

(a) South Africa shall be an independent, unitary, democratic and non-racial state.

(b) Sovereignty shall belong to the people as a whole and shall be exercised through one central legislature, executive, judiciary and administration. Provision shall be made for delegation of the powers of the central authority to subordinate administrative units for purposes of more efficient administration and democratic participation.

(c) The institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs shall be transformed to serve the interests of the people as a whole in conformity with the democratic principles embodied in the constitution.

(d) All organs of government, including justice, security and armed forces, shall be representative of the people as a whole, democratic in their structure and

functioning in accordance with the principles of the constitution.

Franchise

(e) In the exercise of their sovereignty, the people shall have the right to vote under a system of universal suffrage based on the principle of one person, one vote.

(f) Every voter shall have the right to stand for election and to be elected to all representative bodies.

National identity

(g) It shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognize the linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development.

Bill of rights and affirmative action

(h) The constitution shall include a Bill of Rights based on the Freedom Charter. Such a Bill of Rights shall guarantee the fundamental human rights of all citizens, irrespective of race, color, sex or creed, and shall provide appropriate mechanisms for their protection and enforcement.

(i) The state and all social institutions shall be under a constitutional duty to eradicate race discrimination in all its forms.

(j) The state and all social institutions shall be under a constitutional duty to take active steps to eradicate speedily the economic and social inequalities produced by racial discrimination.

(k) The advocacy or practice of racism, fascism, nazism or the incitement of ethnic or regional exclusiveness or hatred shall be outlawed.

(l) Subject to clause (i) and (k) above, the democratic state shall guarantee the basic rights and freedoms, such as freedom of association, though, worship and the press. Furthermore, the state shall have the duty to protect the right to work and guarantee the right to education and social security.

(m) All parties which conform to the provisions of (i) to (k) above shall have the legal right to exist and to take part in the political life of the country.

Economy

(n) The state shall ensure the entire economy serves the interests and well-being of the entire population.

(o) The state shall have the right to determine the general context in which economic life takes place and define and limit the rights and obligations attaching to the ownership and use of productive capacity.

(p) The private sector of the economy shall be obliged to cooperate with the state in realizing the objectives of the Freedom Charter in promoting social well-being.

(q) The economy shall be a mixed one, with a public sector, a private sector, a co-operative sector and a small scale family

sector.

(r) Co-operative forms of economic enterprise, village industries and small scale family activities shall be supported by the state.

(s) The state shall promote the acquisition of managerial, technical and scientific skills among all sections of the population, especially the blacks.

(t) Property for personal use and consumption shall be constitutionally protected.

Land

(u) The state shall devise and implement a land reform programme that will include and address the following issues: abolition of all racial restrictions on ownership and use of land, implementation of land reform in conformity with the principle of affirmative action, taking into account the victims of forced removals.

Workers

(v) A Charter protecting workers' trade union rights, especially the right to strike and collective bargaining, shall be incorporated into the constitution.

Women

(w) Women shall have equal rights in all spheres of public and private life and the state shall take affirmative action to eliminate inequalities and discrimination between the sexes.

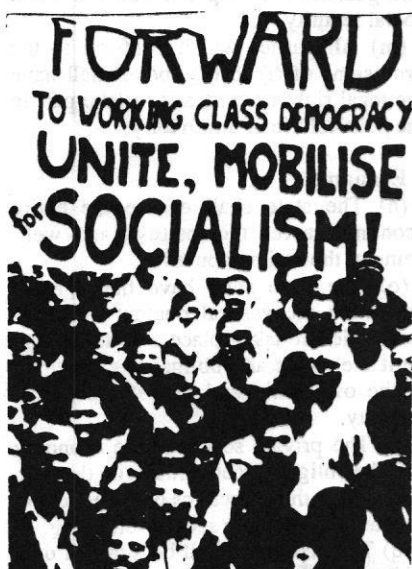
The family

(x) The family, parenthood and childrens' rights shall be protected.

International

(y) South Africa shall be a non-aligned state committed to the principles of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and the Charter of the United Nations and to achievement of national liberation, world peace and disarmament.

★



Socialist trade union conference wins wide support

THE Socialist Movement (originally the Socialist Conference) was formed three years ago from the hard left in the British Labour Party and the trade unions as a reaction against the continued drift to the right and advance of what is known as "new realism". The Socialist Movement has adopted what it calls a "twin-track" approach, working both inside and outside the Labour Party. Its aim is to rebuild the left in both wings of the organized labour movement. Here Alan Thornett reports on an important and successful conference recently organized by the Socialist Movement aimed at strengthening the left in the unions.

ALAN THORNETT

THE Socialist Movement's two-day trade union conference, held on November 11 and 12 in Sheffield, was attended by over 550 trade unionists — the overwhelming majority of them non-aligned militants. This highly successful conference, organized around the theme "The way forward for the left in the unions" represented a significant step forward in the organization of a political fight-back against the domination of right-wing new realism in the British trade union movement.

Comprehensive policy statement adopted

The conference adopted a comprehensive policy statement which pointed to the contradictions in the present political conjuncture in Britain, with the rise in the level of class struggle on the one hand and the continued dominance of new realism on the other. It put it this way:

"On the one hand the five years of retreat which followed the miners' strike has now given way to a more confident mood expressed in this summer's industrial upsurge, with its series of remarkable strike votes expressed in the strength of the strikes that followed....But on the other hand, recent struggles show that many of the features that have been so destructive in the past are still present. The London Underground strike ended in classic fashion with a deal agreed over the heads of the rank-and-file by their leaders. The British Rail strike could have won much more by completely getting rid of the strings attached, and in our view, the defeat of the

dockers was due, in major part, to the failure of the TGWU (Transport and General Workers' Union) leaders to adopt a policy of defiance of the Tory anti-union laws."

Despite this contradiction — with the leadership continuing to move to the right (the clearest expression of which being the adoption of the reactionary Policy Review Document by the Labour Party conference with the backing of the trade union leaders) and the rank-and-file moving towards militant action — there has until now been no initiative at the level of the rank-and-file of the unions to challenge this development and fill the vacuum of leadership created by it.

Movement in opposition to new realism

This is why this conference was long overdue and why the Socialist Movement which grew out of opposition to "new realism" was best placed to organize it. The conference was sponsored by over 40 labour movement organizations — trade unions, Labour Party branches, Trades Councils and political organizations, including the Communist Party of Britain (which controls the old Communist Party daily the *Morning Star*), and its industrial wing, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU). Some 160 trade union branches and nine trades councils sent 250 official delegates. The rest attended as individuals or were sponsored by Labour Party branches, campaigns or disputes.

It was the biggest unofficial rank-and-file gathering of its kind in Britain for over ten

years — showing that despite the damage which has been done by ten years of Thatcherism there is still a keen response to this kind of initiative — and a desire to organize against the right. Many of those attending represented a new generation of trade union militants brought forward by the new mood of militancy at the level of the rank-and-file as expressed in the industrial militancy that has emerged over the last year and a half. At the present time this is expressed most clearly by the ambulance workers' dispute.

The opening plenary on Saturday was chaired by Jeremy Corbyn (MP), and included Tony Benn (MP), Micky Fenn (victimized Tilbury docks' steward), Anne Speed (Irish TGWU), Anne Henderson (NUR Broad Left—railworkers' union), Debbie Epstein (Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and Socialist Teachers' Alliance), Kim Moody (Labor Notes, USA), Rauion Corriz (General Motors, Barcelona) and an ambulance worker involved in the current industrial action. The Sunday plenary included four other current disputes — Pergamon, Essex Chronicle, Sheffield CPSA and Islington NALGO (local government) striking child-carers, and myself moving acceptance of the policy statement on behalf of the conference organizing committee.

But it was not just its size and scope of representation which made the conference important — it was the democratic basis on which it was organized. It represented a sharp break from previous similar initiatives which were rigidly controlled and which discussed short unamendable statements made available on the day.

A break with undemocratic traditions

Each of the previous initiatives in Britain over the past 30 years was controlled in this way. The oldest, the Communist Party based LCDTU, formed in 1965, never achieved any real independence from the left trade union bureaucracy, and has now declined in size. The Broad Left Organizing Committee (BLOC) was always dominated by the Militant Tendency and never gained a real implantation. It has ceased to function on a national level. The various "rank-and-file" initiatives of the British Socialist Workers' Party have long been abandoned as the SWP adopted their "downturn" theory and pulled back from challenging the bureaucracy in the unions.

This conference discussed a comprehensive policy document which was circulated in advance and open to amendment via discussion in the 36 workshops held during the weekend.

The central themes of the conference were: Build a fight-back against new realism; defy the anti-union laws; support those in struggle; and democratize the unions. These were the key lines of divide which the conference sought, with some success, to draw in the trade union movement. The

line of divide between those in favour of a class struggle line in the unions and those who seek to collaborate with the employers and the government. The policy statement went on to address all the traditional "trade union" issues; the employers' offensive, health and safety, new technology, the changing nature of the workforce, privatization, the defence of the NHS, the fight for higher wages and the defence of working conditions. The statement was particularly clear on the anti-union laws — the key issue facing the unions today in Britain and one of the important lines of divide.

"Socialists have to establish 'defiance, not compliance' as the policy of the movement...because the trade unions will continue to be defeated whilst these laws are obeyed. It cannot be credibly argued that a trade union movement of nine million members affiliated to the TUC (Trades Union Congress) has no alternative but to comply with the Tory laws. Every time these laws are complied with, new ones are brought in — new legislation is being introduced in the coming years to challenge unofficial strikes and abolish the closed shop."

And it is clear on the repeal of these laws by a future Labour government: "We cannot accept the continued criminalization of trade union activity. We must campaign for the complete repeal of all anti-union legislation adopted by the Tories since 1980 and for the restoration of trade union immunities."

Self-organization of the oppressed

But the statement went well beyond these issues. For the first time in Britain a conference of this kind attempted to make the issue of women in the unions, black workers in the unions and lesbian and gay workers in the unions central to its agenda. For the first time at such a conference there was an out lesbian speaker on the main platform in the opening plenary. The policy statement had sections on ecology and the unions, the poll tax and the unions, and discussions on international issues such as international links and the effects of 1992 and the single European market on the trade unions in Britain.

John Palmer and Rauion Corriz introduced the workshop on the single European market which developed into a debate between those supporting the policy statement which saw 1992 as a re-organization of capital on a European scale to the detriment of the working class Europe-wide and those who attempted to amend the statement arguing that: "...the concentration and socialization of capital symbolized by the market represents a move forward in the organization of production creating new structures and links across national boundaries which can only be to the ultimate benefit of workers sharing a common class interest."

This key sentence in the amendment was

defeated. There was a third strand to the debate — support for national sovereignty — but few supported it. There was also discussion about building international links and resisting the effects of the big market and the fight for a workers' Europe, East and West.

The workshop on Broad Lefts (left-wing rank-and-file groupings in some unions) adopted an amendment to the policy statement which proposed a list of principles on which such broad lefts should be built. This debate went to the floor of conference.

Noone disagreed with the principles as such, on the contrary, but the extent to which they should be "preconditions" for supporting broad left formations or on the other hand be objectives to be fought for inside the broad lefts themselves was controversial. The conference steering committee supported the latter, seeing the former as too restrictive and requiring broad lefts to be near perfect before they could be supported by the Socialist Movement. This was not cleared up in the debate, since the mover stressed they were not preconditions and the seconder stressed that they were.

It was pointed out that most of the broad lefts which had sponsored the conference fail to meet all the criteria concerned. The amendment was carried against the platform with the ambiguity unresolved.

Labour Briefing largest organized force

Although the Communist Party of Britain sponsored the conference and had a stall at it, they had no serious political intervention and proposed no amendments to the policy statement — which is far to the left of the line they support in the unions.

Nor were the biggest organizations of the far left there either. The Militant does not support the Socialist Movement and was completely absent and the SWP, which does support the Socialist Movement, was only there in small numbers — possibly because they had a national conference. The largest organized far left force was Labour Briefing.

The conference took several important practical initiatives designed to strengthen the work of the Socialist Movement in the unions. A new Socialist Movement Trade Union Steering Committee was elected at the conference from regional meetings of delegates and from caucuses of members of individual unions. This committee was charged with carrying out the decisions of the conference and organizing the trade union work of the Socialist Movement, and organizing solidarity with those in struggle.

Various other practical decisions of the conference will be implemented as well, including caucuses of members of several of the unions present, a conference on the poll tax and the possibility of a conference of the European left. The Socialist Movement plans to publish the policy statement almost immediately as a pamphlet for sale in the trade unions. ★

AROUND
THE
WORLD

HONG KONG

Colonial authorities attack pro-democracy activists

ON September 29, 1989, supporters of the Chinese democracy movement rallied outside the venue of the National Day reception of the New China News Agency in Hong Kong. During the demonstration, police blocked the demonstrators several times from advancing. Four students displaying pictures of the June 4 massacre were arrested. The police also confronted another group of demonstrators and arrested three of them, beating them openly, even after they were handcuffed.

The police later went with warrants to 2 TV stations to take away related video tapes. Subsequently, up to seven people were arrested and charged under the Public Order Ordinance for "illegal assembly" along with other charges. The hearing starts on December 4. If convicted they are liable for heavy jail sentences.

The basic right of every Hong Kong citizen to rally and demonstrate is under threat. Furthermore, the police used open violence to suppress a demonstration and caused permanent injury to the left eye of one of the arrested. The colonial regime has also attacked freedom of the press and effectively threatened citizens participating in future demonstrations. It is also clear that political considerations have interfered with "judicial impartiality", with the democratic rights of Hong Kong citizens and the solidarity movement in support of the Chinese democracy movement, sacrificed for the political interests of both the Hong Kong colonial regime and the Chinese regime.

An urgent appeal has been launched internationally to rally support for human rights in Hong Kong and for the solidarity movement in support of the Chinese democracy movement. The following appeal letter can be sent to the Hong Kong governor, with a copy to *October Review*, GPO Box 10144, Hong Kong:

To: David Wilson
Hong Kong Governor
Governor's House
Hong Kong
Honorable Sir David Wilson,

We are concerned to learn that a number of Hong Kong citizens were severely beat-

en up, arrested and charged by the Hong Kong police while taking part in a demonstration outside the venue of the National day reception of the New China News Agency on September 29, 1989.

We are further appalled that this incident was cited by your political advisor Mr. M. G. Ehrman as an example to show that your government has no intention of allowing Hong Kong to be used as "a base for subversive activities against the People's Republic of China".

We believe that every person has a right to express his/her opinions albeit political, by means of peaceful demonstration. The fact that your police force blocked the demonstrators, beat them up and charged them caused us great concern for the present and future state of human rights in Hong Kong. For the above reasons we call on your government:

1. To drop all the charges against the seven members of the April Fifth Action Group for their participation in the September 29 demonstration;
2. To give compensation for the injuries inflicted by police brutality on April Fifth Action Group members and take action against the police officers responsible for the brutal acts;
3. To repeal all clauses in the Public Order Ordinance that contravene the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. ★

STOP PRESS**Soviet Union**

A GROUP of leading Soviet oppositionists, including Andrei Sakharov, has called for a two-hour general strike on December 11 to demand the suppression of article 6 of the Soviet constitution, which establishes the leading role of the Communist Party in all spheres of social life.

This demand is also being put forward by the striking miners in Siberia's Vorkuta region.

CONCESSIONS have tumbled forth: unpopular leaders have been removed, censorship abolished, rights to organize established, a coalition government, free elections, an end to the Communist Party's political monopoly; and last but not least a recognition that the invasion of August 1968 was a crime...It is almost too good to be true.

Nonetheless it does not seem as if the logic of change can easily be restrained. The coalition government announced on December 3, which contains only five non-communist members and in which party officials retain the defence and interior ministries, is certain to be challenged by a resumption of the mass movement and may not last long in its present form. There are of course, groups who have every reason to feel threatened by the end of the old order. These include the ousted ruling group and lower level party officialdom, numbering some 300,000 people, who will be held responsible for the last 21 years of stagnation, and the estimated 250,000 persons engaged in "work" relating to "security". But they have no social base and are fast losing their grip even on the Communist Party. The forthcoming party congress on January 26 will seal the fate of many of them, at the same time beginning the process of rehabilitating the approximately 500,000 members who were thrown out after the Prague Spring in a purge overseen by ousted leader Milos Jakes himself. It is hard to believe that this congress can avoid receiving popular Prague Spring leader Alexander Dubcek back into the ranks.

Youth not prepared to accept situation

The *glasnost* era in the Soviet Union, the sudden opening of the Berlin Wall, the regime's stupefyingly brutal response to the peaceful demonstration on Friday November 24, and the determination of the youth, especially students, to put up with no more, all came together to crack the hard but brittle surface of Czechoslovak neo-Stalinism.

But what will replace the existing system? The economy is at the forefront of popular concern. Despite the relatively high living standards and a manageable foreign debt, the Czechoslovak economy is in bad shape. Bureaucratic command economies in general can only deal with one problem at a time: thus the "normalizers" under Husak and Jakes did everything they could to maintain a satisfactory supply of consumer goods and foodstuffs to the population but at the cost of a lack of investment and appalling ecological damage.

Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec informed his country's Federal Assembly in June that Czechoslovak industry lagged ten years behind the West, and it

General strike breaks neo-Stalinist stranglehold

"THE REVOLUTION is proceeding much quicker than we expected" remarked leading Czechoslovak opposition activist Jiri Dienstbier after the general strike of Monday 24 that shattered the neo-Stalinist regime put in place after the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968. The general strike itself was a sign of how fast things have moved. The workers — supposedly bought off by relatively good living standards and an easy life — participated in their millions, and visible among the vast crowds on Prague's Wenceslas Square that Monday were many factory and workplace banners.

COLIN MEADE

seems that Czechoslovakia, whose economy is based around engineering and lacks its own sources of raw materials, has been paying off its foreign debt by exports of raw materials rather than engineering goods. The country has also become a victim of the debt crisis in a special way. It has been selling much of its sub-standard industrial produce to the Third World on credit, and it is becoming clear that the receiving countries cannot pay. In an interview on Czechoslovak television, Milos Zeman, an economist at a Prague research institute claimed that "our level of technological and scientific development is today roughly comparable to Algeria and Peru, and far behind Portugal, which is considered one of the most backward countries in Western Europe". Without change, he insisted, the country could face "in the very near future" empty stores, inflation, strikes and demonstrations.

Equally grave is the ecological crisis. Emissions of pollutants, above all from brown-coal burning power stations and heavy industry have damaged 58% of forests in the Czech Lands and 35% in Slovakia. Between a third and a half of the country's rivers can no longer support life. In January 1989, in the worst-hit North Bohemian region concentrations of sulphur dioxide in the air rose to more than 6 times the World Health Organization's limit of acceptability. Officially, all children in the region are to be sent to less polluted areas twice a year. In February 1989 the Czechoslovak Health Ministry revealed that life expectancy for both women and men had fallen to its lowest level since 1960, and was the fourth lowest in Europe after Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union.

The dominant trend amongst the emerging political forces in Czechoslo-

vakia is for a market economy (with social protection) and parliamentary democracy. According to the programme of Civic Forum, the opposition coalition that played a central role in the recent events and in negotiations with the authorities, "We want to create a developed market, not deformed by bureaucratic interference. The condition for its successful functioning is the ending of the monopoly position of the existing big enterprises and the creation of real competition. This can arise only on the basis of different types of property enjoying equal rights and the gradual opening up of our economy to the world." They go on to remark that, "Czechoslovakia must be a land of social justice, in which people receive help in old age, in sickness and in difficult circumstances. An important precondition for all this, however, is a prosperous national economy."

Komarek expresses admiration for Reaganomics

The other major trend in the forthcoming coalition government will be the reform wing of the communist party together with the Dubcekite "communist party in exile" grouped in the association *Obroda* (Renewal). Dubcek explicitly stated his support for the Civic Forum platform in his speech to the Prague crowd on November 24. Valtr Komarek, an economics departmental head at the Czechoslovak Institute of Sciences, widely tipped for an important post in some future coalition acceptable to the masses, expressed his enthusiasm for Milton Friedman and Reaganomics in a polemic on economic policy in May this year.

On the other hand it is obvious that a complete subjection to the laws of the world market will make many of the problems worse. For example, Czechoslovakia has been offered hard currency by some West European countries if it will store their toxic waste—hardly a step towards resolving the ecological crisis. More generally, full-scale marketization will mean an end to the sense of national unity and the democratic atmosphere — the key to the success of all plans for renewal — forged by the recent events, as whole sectors of society are plunged into destitution while others enrich themselves.

The "socialist alternative" to capitalist and bureaucratic tyrannies, however, remains on the drawing board. The impossibility of engaging in a genuine dialogue with those trapped by the bureaucratic system, and the delusion, fostered by carefully constructed bureaucratic lies, that socialism had been, or was in the process of being constructed from above, have been major factors in inhibiting the development of such an alternative. We should rejoice that the lie has lost its credibility, but also recognize that the real work is ahead of us. ★

DNES 27. LISTOPADU: GENERALNI STAVKA!

Podali si ruce...

Svobodné slovo

Chorál přísahy nad Prahou



Chorál přísahy nad Prahou

Podali si ruce...

For a democratic and self-managed socialism

Theses of the Left Alternative/Movement for a Democratic and Self-managed Socialism.

1) The transformation of the capitalist system of production after the second world war was accomplished in Czechoslovakia exclusively under the banner of Stalinism. The existing political system, based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, was abolished without being replaced by new democratic mechanisms. The bourgeoisie was suppressed as a class but the workers, far from being freed from exploitation, were economically enslaved more than ever and deprived of liberties.

2) The political left was not spared by this process. The social democracy was forcibly swallowed by the Communist Party which now became completely bureaucratized. It was transformed from a party of the working class into the basis of a commandist power structure dominating the entire society. This power has systematically persecuted and liquidated all left-wing activities in any way independent of it.

3) Today the Communist Party has a dual nature. The party apparatus is fused with the organs of the state and forms the mechanism of bureaucratic power. The party members are its principal social base. Membership of the party gives access to privileges of varying order and importance. For a long time now, the Communist Party has ceased to be a political force of the left. It is rather a conservative force, opposed to all fundamental social change and accepting reforms only when forced to do so.

4) The antidemocratic and antisocialist system has fettered and regulated political, economic life and every other aspect of life. It has proved itself both inefficient and incapable of permitting — let alone stimulating — a development of the productive forces and of society as a whole. It has also proved itself incapable of creating the conditions for a full development of individual freedom.

In addition to economic stagnation, it has presided over the absence of civic and, more generally, human liberties, profound alienation in the world of work, and a moral crisis of the society. The political and economic system in question — and it matters little whether it is characterized as Stalinism, neo-Stalinism or “actually existing socialism” — has not justified its existence and the need now inevitably arises to go beyond it. However, this system suits the Party and state bureaucracy,

WE PUBLISH below the platform of Left Alternative, a movement for democratic and self-managed socialism which was issued on November 26 in Prague. The best known signatory of the document is Czech human rights activist and revolutionary Marxist Petr Uhl. The supporters of the document are from a number of different democratic socialist and anarchist viewpoints within the democratic movement.

DOCUMENT

which from the beginning has shaped it in its own image and in correspondence with its needs. It also suits other parasitic social groups who have adapted themselves very well to the malfunctionings of the system and draw considerable benefits from it.

5) We are partisans of a socialist social system.

6) We believe that socialism must be based on consistent, and constitutionally

“Socialism must be based on consistent pluralism, including non-socialist parties”

established, political pluralism; that is on the existence of different political parties (including non-socialist parties), social associations, organizations and initiatives. From the viewpoint both of the historic traditions and the current aspirations of Czechoslovak society, we believe that representative democracy will form the basis of the future democratic system. This representative democracy will be of the parliamentary type, characterized at the same time by economic self-management. It is necessary however, given the parliamentary system, to defend against the domination over society of the political parties — that is, of their leaderships. In a representative system, the deputies and representatives make decisions in the name of the citizens and workers who elect them through democratic elections, control them and can recall them at any time. It is necessary to introduce gradually, but in increasingly large measures, elements of direct popular participation in the management of public affairs into this system. Obviously this requires free

speech, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. In modern society, it is necessary to use the possibilities of information technology and other advanced technologies. Given the non-existence of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy or other social groups of a repressive character, the political system could then evolve from a classical parliamentarism towards social self-management. Democracy must also defend the rights of minorities, marginal groups and individuals, so as to guarantee their full self-development. It follows that we also believe it necessary to

combat energetically every manifestation of national, religious or other intolerance, and all forms of racism and chauvinism.

7) For us, socialism can only be based on the principles of justice and social equality. This is why we oppose an economic system in which the owners of capital or those who have the right to dispose of it concentrate economic power in their hands, and thus exclude the workers from any say in decision-making on economic activity and its results. Political power grows out of economic power. Even in those countries which enjoy a real independent democracy in the sense that the politico-economic system is accepted by the majority of the population, power, based on the ownership of capital and the right to dispose of it, is exercised in a highly manipulative fashion.

The rule of money, a one-sided orientation towards individual efficiency and the privatization of society accompanied by exploitation might appear to some more attractive than the current state of affairs in Czechoslovakia; we reject them as a false alternative. Such a system could raise the average standard of living but only at the cost of creating big social inequalities. This “new” consumer society would be shaken by crises of the type already well known in the West. At the heart of the economic self-management that we will propose as a model for the medium and big enterprises lies the democratic elaboration of the plan and the growing participation of the individual workers in the making of decisions concerning their work, its results and its conditions. We believe that the development of the market, that is the rehabilitation of financial and market relations, is an economic necessity. The market must be subject to controls. Powerful groups and individuals (for example foreign groups or monopolies) must not become economic subjects entering into competition on

the market. This role must be played by the actual enterprises, which, in turn, must increasingly be managed by the workers.

In the same way, the central economic decisions must pass progressively from the hands of the centre to the sphere of social self-management. We believe that economic self-management limited to the enterprise will be insufficient. As far as the small enterprises are concerned — all of them, not just those in the service sector or small workshops — we would support their existence in the form of cooperatives. We consider cooperatives to be a higher, more democratic and more human form of relations between human labour power and the means of production. However, these must be genuine cooperatives with internal democracy and a functioning self-management, independent of the state bureaucracy.

“The co-existence of several economic sectors will be inevitable for a certain period”

We would also support individual ownership of the means of production on the condition that these enterprises — including family businesses — be undertaken with the results of the individual's own labour. The coexistence of several sectors within the economy will be, in all probability, inevitable for a certain period. But as socialists we believe that too large a private sector does not correspond to the real interests of society. That is why we oppose the idea of encouraging not only big but also medium and small scale private enterprise. On the other hand, we have nothing against those small entrepreneurs who, by their work, contribute to the satisfaction of citizens' needs and introduce more dynamism into the economy. That said, society must not tolerate the development of exploitative relations.

8) At first, the state will certainly play an essential role in the establishment of the political system sketched out above and in the introduction of the new economic system of financial and market relations. The state must above all minimize, if not prevent, the growth of social inequalities and the resultant tensions. We will endeavor to limit the involvement of the state in the life of the society to a strict minimum. The amount and intensity of its interventions must decline to the extent and measure that the people — as citizens and workers — progress along the road to self-management in a free and harmonious self-managed society. All that has been said about the state goes equally for the law. The perspective of the withering away of its importance must in no case lead to its premature denial or underesti-

mation. The withering away of law must not be confused with arbitrariness.

9) In the interests of the workers, the existence of free, self-managed, militant and non-bureaucratic trade unions is of prime importance. Their existence is decisive, notably at a time of economic reforms. It should go without saying that these trade union organizations must owe no allegiance either to the economic apparatus or to the state or that of the organs of self-management. The trade union movement must return to its natural vocation, that is to say it must turn its activities away from the bureaucratic apparatus and towards the rank and file members. A renewal from below of the trade union movement has become a necessity today. It is up to the workers themselves whether they wish to utilize the existing trade union structures and transform them into an instrument of struggle for the defence of their interests, or, on the contrary, they choose to create new organizations.

10) The ecological situation demands a speedy solution. We envisage such a solution as being based on social self-regulation with effective “feed-back”, via democratic mechanisms, on effective state inspection and regulation, and finally and above all on the availability of all relevant information to the population. This crisis — which also affects the health care system, whose quality is declining uninterruptedly and which discriminates socially according to caste — underlies the rapid and dangerous deterioration of the health of the population. A genuine solution to the ecological crisis is conditional on a change in the political system, through the creation of democracy.

11) The peoples of Eastern Europe have arrived at a crossroads. The existing social order is collapsing. This region of the world finds itself visibly far behind the developed countries of Western Europe and North America. There is a real danger that the countries of the East will slide into a situation of political and economic dependence in relation to the developed capitalist countries, that they will become their underdeveloped periphery, their suppliers of cheap labour and raw materials; that Eastern Europe will become a region where the developed countries can export their outdated and ecologically harmful technologies as well as dangerous waste.

The leaders of the various Eastern European countries, including those of Czechoslovakia, continue to strengthen economic contacts with the West separately and without coordination, as if no such danger existed.

The revolutionary changes, by which the people of this region are shaking off bureaucratic domination, must lead not only to economic reforms which introduce a market and self-managed economy, but also to a closer economic and political integration within this part of Europe. This voluntary integration must

take place on the basis of democratic principles, of mutual economic benefit and under the form of a confederation. We must also learn from the experience acquired during the process of progressive integration in Western Europe.

The evolution of Europe and the entire world is towards a situation where state frontiers will progressively lose their importance.

12) The inequality of world development, expressed in the ever growing chasm between the hyper-developed minority of humanity on the one hand and the suffering underdeveloped world on the other, represents for us in all its aspects — economic, political, moral and ecological — the principal problem on our planet. It is impossible to put up with such a state of affairs. We must always see our national problems in their world context, since humanity and its rights are indivisible. We in Czechoslovakia will endeavor to find means for effective solidarity with

“We will endeavour to find means for effective solidarity with the people of the third world”

the people of the third world, and we will encourage changes in the world economic and political order.

13) The Left Alternative wishes to contribute to the emergence of a powerful political and general social activity from below, involving not only formal organizations, parties and associations, but also informal social groups, movements and initiatives.

This activity will provide feedback, and will be a means of control over the social structures and power centres that will continue to be led from above. They will also be a guarantee against renewed bureaucratization of social life.

14) We consider ourselves to be part of a growing political spectrum in Czechoslovakia. We are ready to work with anybody who is seriously working for a democratic revolution, including the recapture of democracy from the party-state bureaucratic apparatus and the carrying through of political and economic improvements. Anybody who agrees with the main ideas of this text, which are open to further discussion, can take part in the work of Left Alternative.

Involvement in LA does not exclude involvement in other independent initiatives, social movements and organizations, including official ones. Our movement is, however, closed to those who have been responsible for political repression, social oppression and the economic stagnation of our country. ★

Total support for the Salvadoran people

ONLY A FEW months after his becoming President, the government of Cristiani has been so weakened that it is increasingly reliant for its survival on its principal ally, the imperialist government of the United States. The Bush administration, with the corrupt military grouped around the *tandona* (the name given to the military class from which many current leaders of the Salvadoran army emerged), now constitute the sole planks of support for this dying dictatorship. Without the material support and the millions of dollars which U.S. imperialism has supplied to the Salvadoran government to massacre the population, it is clear that the Salvadoran people would already have taken their destiny into their own hands.

The offensive, which has continued since November 11, has refuted the absurd claims of the Cristiani government and the High Command of the Salvadoran armed forces that the FMLN had been decisively weakened on both the political and the military level. On the contrary, if the FMLN could sit on various occasions at the negotiations table, to seek a political solution to the country's long and bloody war, this was due to its force and solidity, as well as its ability to build and project itself as the indisputable representative of the Salvadoran people.

Cristiani defeated at negotiating table

It was precisely at the negotiations table that the FMLN dealt a first defeat to the Cristiani government, in showing clearly that the ARENA government had nothing to propose other than the continuation of the murder of thousands of Salvadorans and the abandonment of the future of the country to the interests of U.S. imperialism.

The FLMN has indicated that this is the final offensive, unless Cristiani is ready to open negotiations on the basis of proposals which can genuinely end the situation of crisis and war in the country. For their part, Cristiani and the *tandona* have responded with bombardment of the civilian population, a veritable massacre which has led to the deaths of more than 3,000 people. Routed on the political front, the Salvadoran government seeks to overcome its isolation with vile and desperate military actions. Thus the assassination of the trade union leaders of the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENESTRAS) and the

ON 11 NOVEMBER, the Salvadoran people and their vanguard, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, began a nationwide offensive which has severely tested the government of the death squads headed by Alfredo Cristiani. Beyond its strategic aspects, this confirms that the FMLN remains profoundly revolutionary and committed to the overthrow of the domination of the oligarchy.

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

repression exercised against the leaders of the mass movement has been followed by the massacre of the Jesuits at the José Simeon Canas University. With this brutal action, the Cristiani government has dropped its civilized mask, showing how far it is prepared to go along with the death squads which control the government and the highest echelons of the army. For them too it is the final struggle.

This situation has clearly been understood by U.S. imperialism. The Bush government has decided to throw all its weight against the Salvadoran people. Accordingly, despite the murders, it seeks to excuse Cristiani and has approved an increase in military aid to the government of the death squads. On this terrain, the Salvadoran people and their vanguard, the FMLN, have scored a great victory in exposing the hypocritical imperialist claim to support the growth of democracy in Eastern Europe, whilst its hands are stained with the blood of thousands of Salvadorans.

The interference and responsibility of the Bush administration are massive. It is known, for example, that U.S. combat pilots have mounted nocturnal bombing raids against El Salvador from the Ilopango base in Honduras. At the same time, five U.S. battleships are now stationed off the Salvadoran coast. Bush, faced with the weakening of the Salvadoran military forces, has given the green light to the Guatemalan government to send to their aid the notorious Caibiles elite force. It is possible that the U.S. is tempted to regionalise the conflict — this manoeuvre must be denounced and fought. The FMLN's troops have shown their strength, not just through the losses they have inflicted on a much better armed and more numerous force, but also through the disorder which has been produced inside the Salvadoran army.

The situation in El Salvador implies urgent tasks for the revolutionary and democratic forces of the entire world, and par-

ticularly the United States. The Salvadoran people and its vanguard, the FMLN, are doing all in their power to ensure victory. They need more than ever mass mobilizations against any U.S. intervention to frustrate the possibility of El Salvador attaining justice, democracy and national sovereignty. Only the mobilization of the greatest possible international solidarity will guarantee the right of the Salvadoran people to freely determine their own future.

The Fourth International appeals for the redoubling of efforts to build a broad and united mass movement to stay the hand of imperialism, and make it aware of the cost of any massive and direct intervention on its part. At the same time, this mass movement must demand the ending of military aid to the Cristiani government, and the immediate departure from El Salvador of all U.S. advisers.

Basing ourselves on the Franco-Mexican declaration of 1981, we demand that the FMLN is recognized by all governments as a belligerent force, that is a force with a legal personality, particularly so that its captured fighters are treated according to the Geneva Convention.

The future of Latin America in the balance

Our international organization appeals to every worker and every democrat to solidarize with the Salvadoran revolution. The future of all the exploited and oppressed peoples of Latin America hangs in the balance in El Salvador now. Today the Salvadoran people need food, medical and financial aid but above all they need our mobilization and our solidarity.

The struggle of the Salvadoran people shows that the revolution remains more than ever on the agenda.

It cannot be stifled by regional accords between East and West, made above the heads of the people concerned. The Salvadoran revolution has shown the unshakable will of the masses to take their destiny into their own hands. Latin America's Pulgarcito (Tom Thumb — nickname given to El Salvador because of its size) has shown us the way.

For the Salvadoran people's right to self-determination!

**Yanqui imperialism out of El Salvador!
For the recognition of the FMLN as a belligerent force!**

Long live the Salvadoran revolution! ★