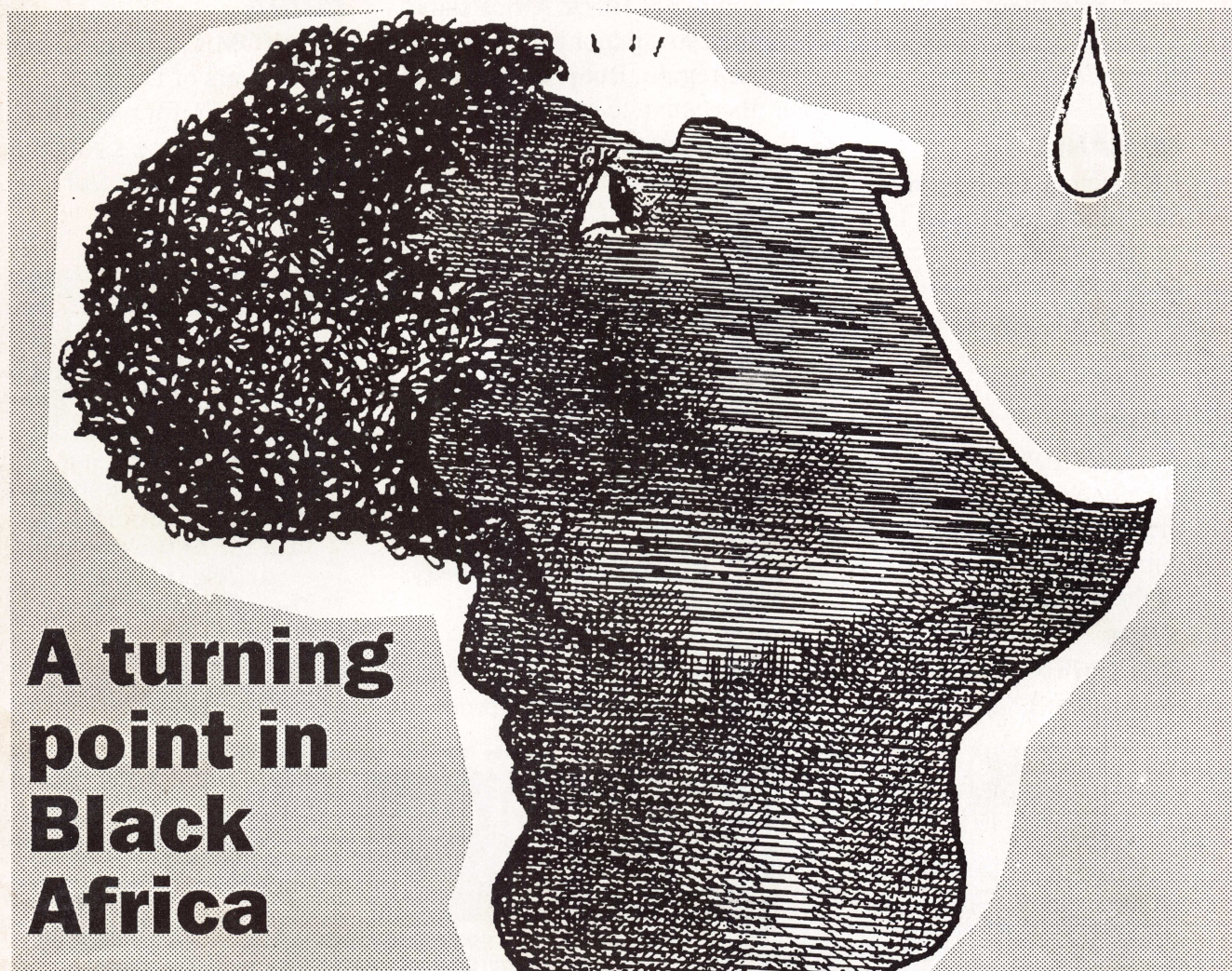


# International VIEWPOINT

Issue 187

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## A turning point in Black Africa

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### Erratum

The article on the East German economy in the last issue of *IV* was by the noted *East German* economist Wolfgang Wolf, rather than the noted *West German* economist and author of the preceding article (on German reunification) Winfried Wolf.

We promise not to make the same mistake again.

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# Growing support for Lithuanian independence movement

I FOUND Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, relaxed and calm in the first days of June. There were no deployments of Soviet troops in the city center area, and the shortages were not notably worse than in the other Baltic capitals, that is, about normal for Soviet conditions, or maybe even a bit better. There seemed to be no shortages of basic foodstuffs, only occasionally of coffee and tea. The main hotel was nearly empty, but tourists are a jittery breed, and the ban on travel to Lithuania had only been lifted a week before.

The attitude of the nationalist Sajudis leaders was confident. At the time they were hosting delegations from the Moscow and Leningrad people's fronts, and their main office was filled with solidarity aid.

GERRY FOLEY

**S**OLIDARITY WITH LITHUANIA has become a mass movement in the Soviet Union. In the other Baltic republics, the governments themselves, representing around two-thirds majorities in parliament, support Lithuania. In other areas, specific solidarity organizations are developing. For example, a representative of Rukh, the Ukrainian national democratic movement, at the congress of the Estonian People's Front told me about a network of solidarity committees across the USSR's second largest republic.

## The Lithuanian model for Russia

It was also seemed that Lithuania had become a magnet for the democratic movements in the USSR. Tamara, a member of the delegation from the Leningrad People's Front in Vilnius, told me that her organization saw Lithuania as the future of Russia as well. She had no hesitations about supporting Lithuanian independence and no fears about the fate of the Russian speaking population.

She stressed that since the Lithuanian people had been forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, they would have to recover their independence before the question of their participating in a "renewed union" could be posed. Her

remarks were seconded by members of the Moscow Popular Front delegation.

Representatives of the whole spectrum of the Lithuanian national-democratic movement told me that they were now relying essentially on the support of the opposition movements in other parts of the Soviet Union, including Russia. In fact, the most outspoken criticism of the attitude of the Western powers toward the Lithuanian struggle came from Antonas Terleckas, leader of the Lithuanian Freedom League, a small hard-line pro-independence party.

## Delusions about attitude of Western governments

Other figures in the Baltic national democratic movements told me that they thought the attitude of the Western governments was changing and becoming more favorable to them. Among such illusions was the idea that although Thatcher received the Lithuanian premier Prunskiene coldly, the iron lady warmed to her as the discussion went on.

However, the fundamental fact is that Sajudis has found its allies among the other mass democratic movements in the Soviet Union, and has moved toward basing itself on an international movement of solidarity initially in the Soviet Union but which could be extended more widely. I

found a general interest in, and sympathy for, the national-liberation movements in Western Europe. ("We understand their aspirations.") They were not seen as being able to offer effective help now, but there was interest on the theoretical level. (I noticed a sticker from a Catalan nationalist group in the Sajudis office.) On the other hand, there seemed to be a general recognition now of the need to appeal directly to popular movements in the capitalist countries and not just to governments.

The mood of the representatives of Rukh and Adradzenie (the Byelorussian national democratic movement) that I spoke to during the congress of the Estonian People's Front was ebullient. From being isolated and persecuted dissidents, they had been catapulted into being members of elected governing bodies. Both were buoyed up also by the continuing growth of their movements. They were confident that Gorbachev's campaign against Lithuania could be defeated, and certain of their ability to defeat their own local neo-Stalinist enemies.

Byelorussia still has a neo-Stalinist administration. And the Ivashko regime in Ukraine, while recently installed by Gorbachev, is not very much reconstructed. In Byelorussia, the national democratic movement has made a breakthrough in some areas, notably the capital, Minsk. In Ukraine, the democratic opposition (of which Rukh was a component) won about a fourth of the seats in the republic's Supreme Soviet, but Rukh made important advances locally, notably in west Ukraine. The representative of Adradzenie said that while national consciousness in Byelorussia had been in fact quite weak, it was now growing very rapidly.

## Circumventing the economic blockade

The various representatives of the Baltic and other democratic movements that I talked to gave an impression of a rapid decay of the Stalinist regime in the USSR. The Balts said that Gorbachev had only managed to impose an effective blockade of shipments to Lithuania by rail and air. Blocking over-the-road shipments would require a huge police and military mobilization, of which the regime seemed incapable. Furthermore, Lithuanian managers told me that they had no difficulty in making individual agreements with enterprise directors in other parts of the USSR, including Russia. These deals are awkward, but they give the Lithuanians maneuvering room.

An enterprising editor of the new private daily in Vilnius, *Respublica*, told me how he travelled to Russia in search of newsprint and managed to buy it at a rate of five kilos for one kilo of meat. The editor of the Sajudis paper, *Asgimimas* told me about making a similar deal, only in return for a chemical product produced in

the republic. The papers are generally running reduced editions, marked "blockade edition."

There is a great hunger for newspapers. The more popular ones are rarely seen in the kiosks. They sell out immediately. Whenever there are independent or opposition newspapers, a long line immediately forms. *Respublica* goes essentially to a list of subscribers closed months ago. It has had to keep its press run at about 75,000 for lack of paper.

One afternoon, after passing line after line at the newsstands in Vilnius, I saw a table heaped with papers, but with no line. It was *Sovetskaya Litva* ("Soviet Lithuania," the organ of the "night party," the Moscow loyalist CP). Those selling it evoked neither enthusiasm or indignation. They were simply ignored.

Lithuania has become a focus for the national democratic movements in general in the USSR. At the congress of the Estonian People's Front, all the representatives of delegations from other national democratic movements got standing ovations as they went to the platform. But the ovation for the representative of Lithuania, the speaker of the Supreme Soviet, a tall dignified figure, was of a different order. A wave of emotion swept through the hall.

Representatives of a gamut of views in the Baltic republics told me that the Lithuanian declaration of independence had given impetus to the struggle for national rights. Sajudis seems to be a center for all the national democratic movements. First of all, it fosters cultural organizations of a whole range of nationalities resident in the republic. I talked to a representative of the Mordvin cultural organization, Danguole Bickauskene, who is married to a Lithuanian. She is a poet in Erza, one of the two literary languages of the Mordvins, a Finno-Ugrian people whose historic homeland lies to the east of the Urals.

### Demands for genuine cultural rights

There are a number of Finno-Ugrian islands in the Russian republic. All of them are small, the largest, including the Mordvins numbering about a million, and have been under Russian rule for many centuries. The Mordvins, in addition, have been largely dispersed. Their language is not used in public life, and school children are taught from the beginning in Russian. Even among this people, a national movement has started to develop, mainly around demands for genuine cultural rights. Bickauskene also told me about a national movement beginning among the Komi, another Finno-Ugrian people.

Politically and culturally the strongest of the Finno-Ugrian peoples in the USSR, the Estonians also maintain contacts with their linguistic relatives in the Russian republics, and are very much aware of the russification of these peoples. The editor

of *Looming*, the principal Estonian literary magazine confirmed Bickauskene's description of languages and cultures on the brink of extinction.

However, a worker in the Sajudis office who keeps in touch with the national movements told me that the Komi people had become a factor in the new labor movement in the Vorkuta area. A small but significant minority of the miners (up to 15%) are Komi, and the new union movement had had to take up some of their demands. The movements that are getting underway among these small peoples will pose a challenge to the new "sovereign" Russian republic, where most of them live.

### Contacts with Caucasus and Central Asia

Sajudis has published a pamphlet in English (*The Lithuanian Way*) that includes addresses for a very wide range of national democratic movements across the Soviet Union. The Sajudis office worker in charge of contacts with other national movements had made trips to the Caucasus and Central Asia, and told me that these movements tended generally to look to the Baltic for their inspiration. That included the progressive sections of the Azerbaijan People's Front and the Uzbek front Birluk. But she stressed that these movements face much more difficult conditions than in the Baltic, in particular a politically more repressive atmosphere maintained by Moscow.

The Russian Supreme Soviet was in session while I was in the Baltic republics and the election of the president of the Russian republic was going on. Everywhere people, in all walks of life, were listening intently to the long and (to me) numbing speeches of delegates.

The election of Boris Yeltsin clearly raised very great hopes. Wherever the *enfant terrible* of the CPSU ends up, his defeat of his conservative rivals has intensified political life in the Soviet Union and thereby increased the possibilities and the challenges for all the democratic movements. Leaders of the Baltic movements that I talked to said it meant a "new situation." ★



ACCORDING to the international observers, the proceedings were more or less fair. Whatever fraud or incompetence there may have been, it was not of such an extent as to invalidate the result. As for the December events, there is not a shadow of a doubt that the media, both in the imperialist countries and in the East European countries engaged in a massive campaign of intoxication and misinformation at the time.<sup>2</sup> It is, furthermore, true that opposition groups existed before the events and, notably, that an appeal for the overthrow of Ceausescu, signed by the National Salvation Front, was distributed on the eve of the Communist Party congress last November.<sup>3</sup> Nor can it be questioned that the decision of the army to let the dictator fall and to fight against his praetorian guard had a big influence on the happy outcome of the clash.

But none of this means that the mass insurrections in Timisoara, Brasov, Bucharest and other cities did not also play an essential role. The overthrow of Ceausescu was the outcome of a movement of broad social layers, especially workers and students,<sup>4</sup> backed up by the going over of the army to the side of the insurrection, and the political initiative of the alternative leadership provided by the National Salvation Front (NSF).

### Cosmetic changes to Securitate

There can be no doubt that the Romanian regime is far more strongly marked by elements of continuity with its predecessor than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The old state apparatus is still in place, the Securitate itself, apart from a reduction in numbers and cosmetic changes, has not disappeared, and the main support of the new leaders is the army. Furthermore no important privatization has been attempted and no steps have been taken towards the formation of joint ventures with foreign capital. Apart from the reforms in the countryside, there has been only a decree recognizing the right to private initiative and the legalization of small enterprises.

In this context, what led Romanians both

1. In his book *Un mensonge gros comme le siècle*, the French journalist Michel Castex has described (and denounced) in great detail the origin and development of the media campaign during the December events in Romania. However his insistence that these events were orchestrated by Gorbachev to get rid of Ceausescu is an example of the conspiracy theory of history.

2. It has now been admitted for example that the figure for those killed was inflated a hundredfold. Unfortunately these corrections are being carried out very discreetly in order not to undermine the intended result — moral revulsion at the exceptional crimes of "communism".

3. In March 1989 an open letter attacking Ceausescu's policies was circulated signed by, among others, the old party leader Gheorge Apostel and Silviu Brucan.

4. The demonstrations of opposition that preceded December 1989 — such as the strike of the miners of the Jiu Valley in August 1977, the 1980 strike wave and the Brasov uprising in November 1987 were eminently working class actions.

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# After the elections

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THE ROMANIAN election results — so different from those in other East European countries — have occasioned many disillusioned comments on the “Stalinist” percentages won by the victorious National Salvation Front. At the same time, the events surrounding the fall of Ceausescu are being looked at again, and a radically revised version is being proposed: rather than an insurrectional mass movement, the story now goes, there was a long-prepared coup d'état with Mikhail Gorbachev pulling the strings in the background<sup>1</sup>.

LIVIO MAITAN

---

to give the NSF its overwhelming electoral victory and support it with massive street mobilizations<sup>5</sup>?

The main reason is that the NSF appears as the political force that led the struggle last December. Its central leader, Ion Iliescu and others such as Peter Roman and Silviu Brucan have been recognized as people who, while belonging to the Communist Party, were also long-standing critics of Ceausescu, for which they had been demoted. It is the NSF that has got the credit for re-establishing basic democratic freedoms<sup>6</sup> and for rapidly taking economic measures to improve, in however slight a way, the living conditions of the masses.

It has also shown that it is capable of tactical flexibility, by setting up a Council of National Salvation open to all political currents, which amounts to a sort of provisional parliament with the right to vote on government proposals for laws. The NSF put forward the idea of a coalition government after the elections. All these operations had the result, among others, of neutralizing the old ruling communist party, which has dissolved itself, with a significant part of its members going over to the NSF and also into other parties (according to some this is infiltration). The massive vote for the NSF, if only, as Silviu Brucan put it, as a necessary passing evil, is thus no mystery.

The objectives set out by the NSF — or at least by some of its leaders — are of a type that is reassuring to large layers of workers. For example, while several times calling for the introduction of a market economy, the NSF's spokesperson made it clear that there was no question of privatizing key sectors of the economy or returning lands to their former owners. The agriculture minister Nicolai Stefan has announced measures concerning the enlargement of the area that peasants can

own around their houses, an increase in the land at the disposal of the cooperatives and the freedom for peasants in the private sector to choose what they grow<sup>7</sup>. “Selling the country” to foreign capital has also been ruled out.

Such affirmations go down well in Romania, a country which had previously been subject to the penetration of foreign capital with all its consequences, and subsequently had to put up with the pressures and demands of the Soviet bureaucracy including at the economic level. Finally the declarations in favour of full employment will also have been favourably received by the workers.<sup>8</sup>

The voters' support for the NSF was also reinforced by the inconsistencies of the three main opposition parties: the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party and the Social Democratic Party<sup>9</sup>. These parties were unable to mount a campaign outside the main urban centres, and they also came across as remnants of a distant past, incapable of understanding or expressing the interests and aspirations of contemporary Romanian society. Their main leaders in particular were perceived as people who had lived comfortably abroad without sharing the sufferings of their people and who had made no con-

5. The vote in the presidential elections was 86% for Iliescu; 10.2% for Campeanu; 3.7% for Ratiu, while in the legislative elections the NSF got 68%; the party of the Hungarian minority 7.4%; the National Liberal party 6%; the Greens 4.3%; the National Peasant Party 2.2% and the Social Democrats 1%.

6. Even before the coming of Antonescu's fascist government, the character of the Romanian regime was hardly democratic.

7. Before 1985, agricultural land in Romania was mostly in the hands of the public sector. State farms owned 13.6% of the agricultural land and cooperatives 60%.

The private sector was made up of private plots (6.3%) and individual farms (15.7%). Thus the private sector was more significant in Romania than anywhere else in Eastern Europe outside Poland (*Courier des pays*



tribution to the defeat of the dictatorship.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the National Liberal presidential candidate, Radu Campeanu left the country in 1973 (according to some rumours with the tacit agreement of the Securitate) and only came back on January 5 this year. The most traditional of the three parties, the National Peasant Party — whose democratic credentials before the coming of the “People's Democracy” were not exactly impeccable — suffered from the drastic decline in the proportion of the peasantry in the country's population, from 80% pre-war to 25 to 30% now. Their candidate, Ion Ratiu, could not even put himself forward as a personality representing the pre-Communist system: he went into exile in 1940 in Great Britain, where he considerably increased his wealth by his activities as a shipowner. A lot of people suggested that Ratiu got the candidacy thanks to his wealth (for example the *Financial Times* on May 3). His campaign was centred on the demand for the restitution of land to its former owners.

Besides the electoral fronts, the most serious opposition came from groups of intellectuals, such as the Group for Social Dialogue, and important parts of the student movement. These groups are inspired by legitimate concerns, insofar as they demand a more consistent democratization and direct their fire at the continuity

*de l'Est* no. 342 February 1990).

8. The NSF leaders openly expressed their concern about the consequence of the measures taken in Poland and Hungary, talking of the “terrible inflation” and “very significant unemployment” (Interview with Silviu Brucan in *l'Unita*, January 4, 1990).

9. More than 70 parties took part in the elections, mostly wholly insubstantial.

10. Journalists from several papers reported hostile reactions in the course of demonstrations to people who left for abroad and had not shared the life of the people during the dictatorship.

A report in *l'Unita* on May 18 describes the difference in the final pre-electoral rallies of the NSF and the opposition. At the former were workers, adults and many women, on the latter, young students, teachers, intellectuals.

between the old and new state apparatuses, as well as at the opportunist transformations of the recycled supporters of the old regime. But their violent attacks on the NSF and its representatives, denounced one and all as camouflaged and unrepentant "Communists" shows a very schematic and narrowly sectarian approach that could not have the hoped-for resonance among the population. Far worse, this approach has led them to put forward demands which are hardly democratic, such as the banning of the Communist Party and the ousting of all its ex-members. They ended up looking like supporters of the most conservative opposition parties.

For the moment the regime seems to have achieved a certain solidity. Furthermore, unlike in Poland or Hungary for example, the plans of the Romanian leaders, at least in the short and medium term, correspond to an extent with the largely unchanged socio-economic structures. Nonetheless there are areas of instability. The economic problems are enormous. The effect of the measures adopted, that have until now ensured some improvements in the living conditions of the masses, will not last — we only have to think of their impact on the trade balance — while the costs of any plans for industrial renewal will be very high.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, it is highly likely that social conflicts are going to erupt at every level — there have already been many strikes in the recent months.

### Important splits in Salvation Front leadership

Finally, the NSF, despite its success, is far from being internally united, as has been shown by the splits that have already appeared in its leading group. Two of the NSF's main leaders have left the leadership. The first was Demitru Mazilu, who was responsible for declaring to a noisy demonstration in Bucharest's Victory Square in December that the NSF should outlaw the Communist Party and bring back the death penalty. The other is Silviu Brucan, who is much more strongly in favour of privatizations and the involvement of foreign capital than the others.

The balance sheet of both the NSF and the existing opposition suggests that if there is to be a solution to the social and political crisis that is favourable to the workers, these latter will have to build their own independent organizations. Such organizations will enable the workers to play their role in the battle for socialist democracy and against capitalist restoration. ★

11. In relation to other East European countries, Romania has the advantage of having hardly any foreign debt — at what cost to its people is another question.

# "We must return to the best traditions of the 1920s"

Interview with Alexander Buzghalin



ALREADY it is clear from the pre-Congress discussions for the up-coming 28th Congress of the CPSU, and the evidence of political clashes going on inside the party, that this Congress will be unlike any other since the victory of Stalinism. For the first time since the 1920s competing platforms have been formed — the most prominent being the Democratic Platform, which was drawn up in January and published in *Pravda* in early March. Since that time another platform in opposition to the viewpoint of the Central Committee, the Marxist Platform, has been launched by a group of party members, primarily from Moscow.

The declaration of this Marxist Platform was first published in the influential Moscow newspaper *Moskovskaya Pravda* on March 31 and later also in *Pravda*. The current around the platform took on an organized form at a nationwide conference in mid-April, which also formulated a new version of the declaration. Now in the run-up to the 28th Congress of the CPSU the Platform will convene its second conference on June 16-17. Here its supporters will, among other things, discuss the outcome of the elections of delegates for the Congress and the future of the Marxist Platform as an organized current.

The following interview was given in Moscow at the beginning of May by Alexander Buzghalin, who is an economist and one of the leaders of the Marxist Platform in the CPSU. The questions were asked by Poul Funder Larsen.

**W**HAT was the background to the setting up of the "Marxist Platform"?

Faced with the formation of the Democratic Platform of the CPSU we were a group of Communists, who found that we disagreed with the main, strategic objectives of the central leaders of this platform — people like Afanasiev and others<sup>2</sup>. The main subjects of discussion were the questions of a socialist perspective for our country and the place of Marxism in ideology and science. We decided to organize an ideological current — a platform, not a faction — inside the CPSU. Five party-clubs from Moscow and its surroundings began to work out the declaration of the platform, and it was published in *Moskovskaya Pravda* at the end of March.

This newspaper also published the announcement of our conference, which was held on April 14-15. Representatives from party organizations in 54 of the biggest cities of the Union, from 22 of the 24 cities in the surroundings of Moscow, and from Moscow party clubs, participated in this conference. Here we adopted some documents including a new edition of our platform and a resolution concerning the open letter of the Central Committee to the Democratic Platform. So the history of our organization is only one month so far.

■ **What is your attitude to the left wing of the Democratic Platform? Are you trying to cooperate with them?**

There are two currents in the Democratic Platform. The social democratic, or perhaps even liberal, tendency — and the left wing. Their ideas center around the democratization of party and society, that is political democratization. They have no consistent economic programme. The majority of the supporters of the Democratic Platform think that democracy is in itself the central question in the Soviet Union today, but still a large number of these people disagree with the ideas of Afanasiev and others.

One of the leaders of the left wing is Mikhail Malyutin, who is a member of the Organizing Committee of the Democratic Platform<sup>3</sup>. We have links to this left wing and to the New Socialists — in which Malyutin is involved — because our programmatic announcements in the economic and political sphere are quite similar.

Concerning the Afanasiev wing — we have very strong disagreements with these leaders. But if I am not mistaken they are now deciding to organize a new party — it may be called Democratic Russia or the Peoples Party.

I think these two wings will split and after the 28th Congress there will be two parties.

■ **How do you view the situation in**

the movements outside the CPSU, for example the many emerging independent workers organizations?

We try to establish strong links with workers organizations. But most of these informal organizations — perhaps 70% or 80% — are orientated towards social democratic thought, or perhaps trade-unionist ideas dating from the 19th century. However there are Marxist organizations — or rather Marxist representatives in workers' organizations, in the strike committees and workers clubs.

Politically, and this is the main point, we try to establish a united struggle for self-management, the defense of workers rights and for the freedom of labour — against serfdom. The workers organizations should struggle together for these ideas, and we will aid them.

Secondly, in a more general context, we want to help build a broad bloc of the democratic, non-political movements in the Soviet Union — consumer groups, ecological groups and so on.

And thirdly we want to build an alliance of democratic left-organizations with socialist ideas. This could include the New Socialists — with people like Kagarlitsky and Malyutin — representatives of the Anarcho-Communist current and perhaps even members of the Marxist Workers Party - Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, who also have constructive ideas on self-management<sup>4</sup>. It could also include the left wing of the Democratic Platform, because in this movement you meet many different Communists.

■ **It is today a fairly widespread idea among left groups in the Soviet Union that the Communist Party should be fought with all possible means — some even suggest banning the party. I have heard a lot of people arguing that the workers or the progressive members should leave the CPSU as soon as possible. How do you view this proposal?**

Today the CPSU is an empire in decline. The reason for this is the bureaucratic and totalitarian policy led by our Central Committee for perhaps 50 years. It is no wonder that most workers now only perceive one type of representative for the Communists — an "apparatchik" (bureaucrat). This "apparatchik" has struggled all his life against labour interests. The strong sentiment against the CPSU today is a reaction to this.

But we shall not forget that the Marxist movement was established 150 years ago. It exists all over the world and it will also exist in the Soviet Union. Our task now is to help the workers to understand the difference between bureaucratic organization, which we had in the past and still have, and the real Marxist and communist ideas about freedom of labour and the free association of the producers. These ideas stand in absolute contradiction to bureau-

cratic organization. They are the ideas of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci and so on.

■ **So you are building your platform inside the CPSU. But by doing so, aren't you giving legitimacy to this bureaucratized party and its whole Stalinist tradition?**

It is a difficult question for us. The reason for our decision to fight the bureaucratic base of the CPSU and its bureaucratic leaders from within the party is understandable if you look at the genesis of our organization. The leaders of the organizing committee of the Marxist Platform are all members of the CPSU — so that is where we begin our struggle.

Another important reason is the fight for the good name of the communist movement in the Soviet Union. Because today the CPSU is the symbol of the bureaucratic organization of society. But the other side of the coin is the remarkable tradition of the communist movement in our country in the framework of the Third International. It is very important for us to follow the path of these great traditions of the communist movement in the Soviet Union.

It is absolutely necessary to distinguish the totalitarian principles of the CPSU from the best traditions of the Communists in Russia and the Soviet Union in the early 20s and perhaps even the 30s, when a part of the communist movement became Stalinist while others tried to develop thoughts and foundations of a socialist economy and social structure.

■ **What has been the reaction so far from the leadership of the CPSU to the proclamation of the Marxist Platform?**

We do not know the official reaction of the leaders of the CPSU. There has been no official statement. In one of his speeches during his visit to the Urals Gorbachev mentioned our platform — saying "now there is a Marxist party in the CPSU"<sup>5</sup>. However, we don't see our platform as a party. During the *Pravda* festival here in Moscow there was a short discussion between Andrei Kolganov from our platform and Ligachev<sup>6</sup>. Ligachev presented the platform of the Central Committee and

1. *Pravda*, April 16, 1990.

2. Yuri Afanasiev, a historian and Peoples Deputy, is a central leader of the social democratic wing of the Democratic Platform.

3. See the interview with Mikhail Malyutin, who is also connected to the preparatory committee of the New Socialist Party, in *IV*183.

4. This group held its first conference in March this year with around 90 participants. It has groups of supporters in the Urals, the main industrial centre of the Soviet Union. It bases itself on a very "strict" interpretation of Leninism, but seems to have a rather sectarian attitude to other groups on the left.

5. In late April Gorbachev visited some of the main cities in the Urals and delivered a series of speeches characterized by hard-line rhetoric.

6. *Pravda* held a festival at the exhibition-park VDNH in Moscow May 5-6.

Andrei Kolganov made a speech about the Marxist Platform.

Now the Coordinating Committee of our platform has decided to make a statement concerning the discussions before this 28th Congress of the CPSU. In the resolution we demand equal rights for all three platforms — the Central Committee, the Democratic Platform and the Marxist Platform — to publish articles and statements. *Pravda* and other newspapers are printing documents supporting the CPSU leadership or perhaps some articles with the ideas of the Democratic Platform, but even now it is difficult for us to get our material published in the official press.

**■ One of the basic concepts of the Marxist Platform is the idea of self-management in all spheres of social and political life. How do you envisage this?**

The main idea in the political sphere is the organization of democratic self-management at all levels of the society. In the factories and plants this means workers self-management. Self-management organs should be organized in the local communities, where people live, and also at the level of the cities and the regions — as an organization of soviets made out of peoples deputies.

These bodies should manage and decide all questions concerning the social infrastructure of society — housing, health service, education, culture, sport and leisure and so on.

The second important aspect is the destruction of the monopolistic structures of the state management — like for example the ministries. Now these structures distribute all goods and services in a system of closed distribution. This is the antithesis to the social regulation of this distribution under the control of the soviet organizations.

It is necessary to create a new model of political organization at the state level and at the level of the republics. This implies broad rights for the all-union Soviet and the Congress of Peoples Deputies. We support all the broad popular organizations and the democratic movements such as consumer organizations, trade unions, ecological movements and cultural organizations. We think that the main laws and decisions, particularly in the social field, should be made in cooperation with these democratic movements and not in the ministries or other official organizations.

Today the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Peoples Deputies do not possess the real power — this belongs to the ministries and bureaucratic organizations, because they draft and execute all decisions, while the soviet organs only vote about them. We think that the preparation of the major decisions should be transferred to the scientific centres of the popular organizations and brought to public discussion.

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To make the first steps in the sphere of

self-management we think it is necessary to create links between all democratic organizations, to win the real political power for this democratic bloc and to destroy the power of the bureaucratic structure. This could give ordinary people in the Soviet Union the possibility to take part in the management of society at all levels — in their workplace, in the local community, in the consumer organizations, in their trade union and so on.

**■ How does this idea relate to the discussion about the introduction of market relations in the Soviet economy? Do you see self-management as opposed to market reforms?**

The market is not in itself a strong determinant of the democratic political organization of society. In Chile the market economy under the supervision of neo-classical economists was very closely connected to the dictatorship of Pinochet. In the Soviet Union market organization of the economy can be connected with different types of political structure. It may be very difficult to create a genuine democracy in the Soviet Union, because power belongs to the bureaucratic structure and to strata such as the "bandokratia", where parts of the state and party bureaucracy unite with organized crime<sup>7</sup>.

Market economy in society can be closely linked to the dictatorship of these strata. So they proclaim a free market but the reality will be a dictatorship of the monopolistic structures in production and the bureaucratic ways of distribution. The market will be an imbalanced one, where the main type of business is speculation.

**■ What changes do you imagine in the political landscape after the 28th congress?**

I think the conservatives will hold the majority, and therefore the decisions of the congress will be quite unclear. After the congress there will emerge some new parties or maybe factions inside the CPSU.

It is likely that we will see a unity process among some of the liberal parties — the Democratic Union, the Constitutional Democrats and other groups — they will organize an alliance of some kind in the near future, perhaps already this summer. This will probably also happen among the social democratic forces — like the Social Democratic Association and the Democratic Platform. Then I think we may try to establish a socialist bloc including forces from the workers movement, the New Socialists, the Marxist Platform in the CPSU and maybe even some democratic, internationalist forces from the UFT current<sup>8</sup>.

The leaders of this current, like Sergeev and Yarin, put forward chauvinistic ideas and we want to have no links with these; but there are activists, young people, in this front, who are democratic in their orientation and in opposition to these

leaders.

So there will be three main political forces — the liberals, the social democrats and the socialists — and of course the bureaucratic apparatus and the conformist majority of the membership of the CPSU will remain an important fourth force.

**■ How is the election of delegates for the 28th congress taking place? Are there any democratic changes in the procedure?**

These elections are being organized in a formally democratic, but essentially undemocratic, way, because there is not election on the basis of the platforms. And in almost every district (okrug) and every party organization the majority belongs to the conservative wing of the CPSU. So the majority of delegates will support the conservative leaders. In some organizations leaders of the Democratic Platform or leaders with a social democratic orientation were elected. We will have only a few delegates who stand on the Marxist Platform. We have asked the Central Committee to give a representative of the Marxist Platform the right to make a speech at the 28th congress, but we do not know the result of this yet.

**■ You will arrange the second conference of the Marxist Platform in June, what is the purpose of this conference?**

There are two main points on the agenda. The first is a discussion of the political situation in society and the tasks of the Marxist Platform. This is a debate on the tactical perspectives of the platform. Are we going to build a new party or a faction within the CPSU? What relations should we have to the Democratic Platform and to the social democratic movement? The second point is questions of organization. This includes evaluation of the work of our coordinating committee during these first months. We have to find the representatives of our platform in the different cities and also to estimate the number of supporters of the Marxist Platform. Maybe we will discuss some resolutions as well — about Lithuania and other questions. ★



7. An example is the scandal around the ANT-company. See David Seppo's article in *IV182*.

8. The United Front of Toilers was originally set up in Leningrad in the summer of 1989, but has expanded to the whole of the Russian republic. It is a current that combines workerist and anti-market rhetoric with chauvinist and Great Russian attitudes. Its leader Venyamin Yarin was appointed to Gorbachev's presidential council together with other conservative figures, such as the author Valentin Rasputin.



# Towards capitalism or socialism?

WE publish below extracts from the draft "Marxist Platform in the CPSU" prepared by the Federation of Marxist Party Clubs (see preceding interview). The text appeared in the Soviet Communist Party daily *Pravda* on April 16, 1990

## DOCUMENT

**T**HE country is at a cross roads. The objective impossibility of ensuring effective social development by a partial reform of the previous system leaves only two roads for getting out of the crisis that is hitting all aspects of our life. The first is a more or less consistent repeat of the centuries-long formation of contemporary capitalism. The second road is to democracy and socialism. The struggle to resolve this question is reaching a critical phase.

The crisis of the social model called socialist has led to a discrediting of the socialist ideal. Marxism has been gravely weakened as a result of the fact that for many years the label of Marxism has been applied to over-simplified concepts, and the betrayal of those who have found it more profitable to join those who overthrew Marxism. We are for a return to classical Marxism, which means a critical attitude to the theoretical legacy of its founders and their followers, and a constant revolutionizing of the theoretical bases of scientific socialism in accordance with a changing world. It is from this point of view that we are trying to offer answers to the challenges of life today.

- The breakdown of authoritarian bureaucratic society is releasing social forces oriented both to the restoration of a capitalist or semi-capitalist mixed economy and to a rebirth of a genuinely socialist perspective....

The first tendency is reflected by lead-

ers of a bourgeois liberal inclination. Those layers that by virtue of their position in the social division of labor could occupy a privileged position in the market have an interest in the introduction of market economic structures of the capitalist type. They include small sections of the technocracy and the bureaucracy, the specialists holding administrative posts in the financial and economic bodies, and the economic units that occupy a monopoly position in the national economy. They also include the private entrepreneurs both inside and outside of the law, who are looking forward to being able to use their capital freely. Finally, we find analogous interests amongst the intelligentsia who are looking forward to market relations to capitalize on their monopoly of qualifications or talents.

In attacking revolutionary ideology, this tendency calls for a radical breakup of the established social system. Building capitalism here in the foreseeable future could only bring benefits for a handful of *nouveaux riches* and the top layer of "professionals" and cannot assure a thoroughgoing modernization of the economy.

- The so-called social democratic current takes a two-sided position. While not explicitly rejecting socialism, the social democrats reduce it to a collection of humanitarian moral and legal values, and in their practical program put the emphasis on a mechanical borrowing of the socio-economic structures of the most developed industrial countries.

This current includes that part of the working people, and especially of the intelligentsia, that sees the social democratic mass movement as capable of becoming a real alternative to the bureaucracy. This layer forms the left wing of the social democracy, which is oriented toward a socialist option, but for whom the transition to a market economy is to be complemented by the creation of a system of social guarantees blocking a complete shift to private enterprise.

The right-wing of the social democracy is more organized, and by virtue of this partially determines the political line of this movement. It is based fundamentally on technocratic circles and takes essentially liberal positions, considering that the harsh conditions of a system of free enterprise are the unavoidable price of continued progress.

The positions of the social democratic current might be supported by a part of the peasantry, oriented toward a private farm system.

The social democratic current in the USSR, in contrast to the Western social democracy, which is oriented toward the democratization and humanization of capitalist society, considers capitalism rather as a goal, and only to the extent

that this is achieved, as a field of struggle for a better future.

- Any attempt to implement the social democratic movement's platform in practice will inevitably lead to its having to choose between one of the poles between which it is now oscillating — either taking the right-liberal direction, *de facto* and *de jure* dismantling the system of social guarantees; or developing and strengthening social security, promoting social self-realization and the activity of individuals, taking on in essence a socialist character.

- We consider that a democratic movement which is Marxist in ideology and oriented toward a socialist option corresponds to the fundamental interests of the society. The social base for a Marxist movement arises from the contradictions of the whole preceding development. On the one hand,



the majority of working people cannot solve their material and social problems without an improvement in the life of the society as a whole. On the other, there continues to be alienation of human beings from the function of master of the economy and society, acting as a brake on the possibilities for self-realization within the collective....

A solution for people caught in the jaws of this contradiction is possible either through private enterprise (that is, in the final analysis, at the expense of others) or through the creation for the majority of the people of free collective labor. The achievement of the latter task is also the most important for supporters of the Marxist Platform....

- Those socio-political movements that share illusions about the possibility of reviving the old model of socialism in a somewhat "humanized" and democratized form stand somewhat apart. These movements are based on the section of the working people which fears, and not without reason, that the development of the market and the liberalization of the

economy and the society, will mean hardship for the ordinary citizens of the country. These movements are attracting people by proclaiming loyalty to socialism and its principles and ideals and by promises of broadening social guarantees for working people. While recognizing the abstract truth of these positions, we have to note that the mere repetition even of once true slogans does not solve today's problems.

The disagreement of the leaders of this movement with attempts at reform in violation of "principles" is leading them to bloc with the section of the bureaucracy that sees an unavoidable need for social maneuver. The unnatural combination of conservative and democratic tendencies in the workers movement gives rise to a disparate current, which in the final analysis will have to choose between a democratic struggle for socialism or defense of a renewed authoritarian bureaucratic system.

● The conservative bureaucratic tendency is based on the bureaucracy, the civil servants that follow its lead and conformist declassed strata in the cities and countryside. It does not have an openly proclaimed program or a political movement reflecting its interests. But it is trying to oppose the restructuring of Soviet society by exploiting its position in the state apparatus.

● National movements have gained a significant influence in the country's political life. They differ in their social and political nature. One tendency in them is a democratic one seeking the restoration of the legal rights of nations and nationalities in the economic, political and cultural spheres. At the same time, a bourgeois liberal current has a strong influence in the national movements. It identifies its own goals with national ones, presenting its class opponents as opponents of the national interest, who at bottom reject the equal rights of nations. Such agitation particularly attracts lumpen elements, who are inclined to seek the roots of their problems anywhere but with themselves. Against this background, extreme nationalist and chauvinist movements are growing, basing themselves in part on the corrupt bureaucracy, shadow-economy businessmen, declassed and outright criminal elements.

Russian nationalist movements have also begun to organize, representing both tendencies oriented to raising the level of national culture and consciousness, and chauvinist groups, which divide into two currents — separatist ones and great-state ones. These tendencies threaten to give rise to a new nationalistic version of the totalitarian system.

● Since the leadership of the CPSU and of the Soviet state is not ideologically united, it seeks today to maintain the for-

mal unity of the party and the society at any cost, to avoid political upsets and to pursue the reform policy by means of maneuvering among all the social layers and political movements. This is leading to an eclectic, inconsistent position, to a loss of political initiative and to the deepening of the crisis in the country. With the movement of events, this position is gradually evolving from a bureaucratic-conservative to a social democratic one.

● The starting point for finding a way out of the crisis must be political changes....The political system of socialism cannot be reduced to a multi-party, parliamentary democracy nor even to a system of soviets. It requires genuine popular power that guarantees to each individual the possibility of directly participating in the solution of social problems on any level....

The transition to such a system requires:

— On the basis of a broad mass movement, the gradual peaceful transition of power from the hands of the bureaucracy to the bloc of democratic forces of socialist orientation, while guaranteeing the constitutional rights of other political and social movements that respect the laws of the Soviet Union and its republics, as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Man....

— the gradual transfer of power to the local Soviets, and to the organs of self-management that are their base of support in managing the social infrastructure of the regions.

— The transformation of national social movements and organizations — worker, trade union, consumer, ecological — into the working democratic foundation of the Supreme Soviet, whose discussions and legislative decisions must be prepared by the committees and commissions of the Supreme Soviet with the mandatory participation of these movements.

● The Soviet Union, as a socialist state, can only be a voluntary union of free and sovereign states based upon internationalist principles.

In order to renew the functioning of the USSR, it is necessary to propose to all the republics to carry out referenda on self-determination and to decide the question of participation in a new Union agreement. After these referenda, a new Union agreement should be concluded on the principles of sovereignty, and the equality of rights and obligations of its member states. On this basis, the unity of all republican movements of socialist orientation should be brought about....

● The progress of the scientific-technical revolution and of all civilization in the twentieth century has moved to the fore the necessity of developing economic relations that will permit the elimination

of the alienation of the worker from the means of production, the liberation of the creative initiative of the individual and a high level of social and labour activism....

The transition to such an economy requires:

— Changes in property relations:

— The key economic branches and raw material sectors should remain exclusively national property with maximum democratization of their management.

— Regional property at all levels should be widely developed: full power in management of the social infrastructure should be transferred to the local soviets and organs of self-management.

— The collective property of the workers in enterprises and cooperative property should exist mainly in the spheres of small and medium industry and services; hired labour in these spheres should be limited to the transitional period.

— During this transitional period, private property in the means of production should be allowed, in a limited framework and under strict state control, with full social protection for the workers.

● The transformation of the management system involves:

— The decentralization of rights, responsibility and resources at all levels of management and in all forms of property.

— Limitation of national and branch organs to decisions of a strategic nature for the development of the branches and national economy as a whole.

— The development of a system of self-management from top to bottom; from Soviets of work collectives and worker committees to their unions on the level of branches, regions and inter-branch complexes.

— A gradual, consistent shift to a market in the means of production following the elimination of shortages in this area; economic regulation of this market through agreements between state organs, voluntary production associations and individual enterprises.

— The neutralization of the dictatorial power of the branches and enterprises by associations of work collectives and citizens....

● We propose the following fundamental measures to transform the CPSU:

— It must abandon all its direct management functions in the economy which are alien to it. All power must pass to the state and soviet organs;

— The ideological basis of the party must be clarified; there must be ideological differentiation of party members through the formation of different ideological-political platforms.

— All those whose abuses have discredited the party must be purged, along with those responsible for the crisis and the social stagnation....★

# Workers of the USSR — Unite!

**A**FTER the strikes ended the strike committees were transformed into more permanent structures, such as workers' committees, and a workers' political organization, the Union of Toilers of Kusbass (STK) was set up at a conference in November 1989. This organization displays both features of a political party and of a trade union.

Since the strikes there have been permanent tensions between the workers committees and the Communist Party apparatus in Kusbass, which has tried to block the workers' activities. There are different assessments of the relationship of forces in this struggle, but during the Congress a worker from Kusbass expressed his view of the situation after the elections to the Soviets in March: "For 9 months we have been co-existing with the local Soviets. For a period there were two powers in Kusbass — but now we are in opposition. However we have wide popular support."

In any case it was the workers' committees of Kusbass that were the driving force in setting up the Congress and it was the workers from this area that dominated the proceedings — at least numerically, with slightly more than 50% of the more than 300 delegates.

## Official press covers conference

The Congress gathered in the centre of heavily polluted Novokuznetsk, which is dominated by two huge metallurgical combines, in a conference hall hitherto devoted primarily to party meetings. A large part of the Soviet press was present at the Congress — with *Pravda*, *Trud* and *Argumenti i Fakti* on the front benches — and parts of the proceedings were broadcast live to the whole of Kusbass.

Besides the participants from Kusbass there were groups from the other main mining (and striking) areas, in Donbass, Karaganda and Vorkuta. There were also delegations from the big industrial centres in the Urals and Western Siberia (Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Novosibirsk and so on), different groups from Moscow, Leningrad, Gorky and Kiev as well as from the Baltic and Azerbaijan.<sup>1</sup>

Almost 70% of the participants were workers. The overwhelming majority of these were male, and the average age was surprisingly high, with 81% being older than 30 and most between 35 and 45. Already during the constitution of the

**AT THE beginning of May, Novokuznetsk, the largest city in the highly industrialized Kusbass mining area, hosted the first union wide Congress of independent workers' organizations. Novokuznetsk and the whole of Kusbass (almost 4000 kilometres from Moscow) established itself as a central region for the workers' movement in the USSR when tens of thousands of workers from mines and metallurgical factories went on strike in July 1989 — a strike which also involved the other mining areas of the Soviet Union.**

## POUL FUNDER LARSEN

Congress the first discussions erupted, concerning the election of an editing commission with the task of rewriting and drafting resolutions. The proposal made by the chair, composed of two leaders of the STK, Vyacheslav Golikov and Mikhail Kisljuk, plus a representative of the Donetsk miners, meant the domination of Moscow intellectuals. Several speakers criticized this and demanded that more workers should be included, while others complained about one of the members, a Kusbass professor, and allegedly a strong apologist for the CPSU. Finally, however, the proposal was carried with about a quarter of the delegates voting against.

## "The question of unity is essential"

In his speech opening the formal discussions Vyacheslav Gorlikov stressed the prominent position of the working class in the struggle for reform and the need for working class unity: "The command-administrative system is a source of bureaucracy, social inequality and crime. In the struggle against this, the workers' committees are a step forward. We have come from groups of intellectuals to a real labour movement. These committees can facilitate a genuine reform. But it is necessary to unite our forces. The question of unity is essential. We must intervene in both the economic and political debates. We can't change economic life without taking part in politics."

Golikov also touched upon the issue of the market reform, coming out in favour of freedom for the enterprises and a mar-

ket economy combined with social guarantees, though he didn't elaborate much on this topic. Regarding the aims of the Congress both Golikov and Natalya Kotikova, a leader of the Moscow Workers' Club and co-organizer of the congress, emphasized the need for a confederation uniting all the, very heterogeneous, independent workers' organizations on an all-union basis. That is, a movement of workers' organizations rather than a free trade union or a political party.

The general debate following the speeches of Golikov and Kotikova gave an indication of the different political ideas present in the emerging workers' movement — but also a picture of the diversity of struggles and experiences

of these groups scattered over a vast area. Most of the contributions were characterized by a very strong anti-bureaucratic sentiment against both the party bureaucrats and the bureaucrats of the official trade unions (with, by the way, the central trade union confederation being one of the "sponsors" of the congress).

## Bureaucrats try to block independent organization

A delegate from Novosibirsk opened with a strong attack on the central TUs: "All the bureaucrats in the unions must be purged. We must expose their methods and condemn them in public." Among many others a representative of the Workers' Political Club in Gorky told of the local bureaucrats trying to prevent the formation of their club "In Defence of Perestroika"! He pointed to the United Front of Toilers, which is supported by parts of the trade union bureaucracy, as a dangerous opponent of the democratic workers' movement, and called for all workers to leave the CPSU.

The aversion to the CPSU was a guiding thread in many of the speeches — even in some by the 22% of delegates who were still keeping their party membership card. A series of demands against its privileges were put forward, for example that the party apparatchiks should account for their savings and all party pensions should be abolished. So the meeting was suspicious when Alexander Yevladov, from the CPSU Central Committee mounted the podium to greet the

1. The delegates from Moscow made up 7.2% of the congress, the Donetsk delegation 4.8%, with the rest of the delegations being smaller.

congress. In his short speech he struck a cautious and conciliatory chord: "I am not here to defend the CPSU. The party is going to be rebuilt....Lech Walesa has voiced a very good idea: we have to balance our policy. The CPSU is being altered; we must follow a left-centre course."

At a press conference after his speech, Yevladov developed his ideas on the attitude of the CPSU to the new organizations: "I don't consider opposition like this: one party in government, and one party in prison. Of course there are extremists in all movements, but the real question is: what is the essence of the organization? I think we need an organization like this. It is natural to unite one's forces."

### Abolition of all kinds of privilege

In the present political conjuncture the CPSU is obviously still the main political force in the Soviet Union, due to its huge apparatus and dominant influence in all spheres of social life. A representative of the Marxist Platform in the CPSU, a left opposition inside the party, tried to address this fact in one of his contributions: "We shall not hand over the party to Ligachev. There are many good Communists in the CPSU....But the abolition of all kinds of privileges for the party bosses is a precondition for change." He also pointed to another differentiation inside the independent workers' movement, as important as the one between the CPSU and the opposition: "Today there are two main tendencies in the workers' movement: a social democratic and a Marxist one."

This was particularly clear in the parts of the discussion dealing with the role of the market and the question of workers' self-management in the factories. In a very popular intervention a delegate from Kusbass put forward a line of reasoning typical of many of the participants: "We need economic independence for the regions. This should be combined with a market reform after a transition period. It is true that the political and economic struggle is linked together, but for some time we must give priority to the economy, that is a reform of the price system. This reform of prices must not lead to impoverishment." At the same time he put forward some highly popular political demands including genuine public control of the KGB, dissolution of the party schools and taxation of the institutions of the CPSU.

Other speakers — including a representative of the Anarcho-Communists — supported the call for free market reforms but the discussion on the character and consequences of these reforms was never very specific and the content of the term "market reform" was never clarified. In the absence of a real discussion on the

market economy and other lines of economic development a representative of the central trade unions had good reason to ask: "Will this new organization be able to solve the problems connected with the market reform? I doubt any organization will be able to do so."

Anyway, references to a "market economy" were included in the final version of the, rather vague, declaration on the new organization (the main resolution): "The 'Confederation of Labour' speaks for the economic self-government of the enterprises and for the development of regulated market-relations, together with the implementation of broad social programmes for defending and improving the lives of working people." According to leaders of the left at the congress, passages of a more liberal orientation were removed from the document because of pressure from delegates.

A recurrent theme in almost every intervention of the debate was the question as to what type of organization should be set up. A representative of Polish Solidarnosc in his speech of greetings, was clearly trying to encourage those forces among the delegates who were looking towards the creation of an independent trade union. But given the obvious heterogeneity of the forces present — as well as from a geographical, professional and organizational point of view — most of the delegates supported the concept of a confederation of workers' organizations.

### Urals delegation takes different position

In this respect, the delegation from the Urals seemed to express views that were not in tune with those of the majority. In a very lucid contribution a representative of the Chelyabinsk People's Front addressed the question of organization in a thoroughly political way: "The Russian Revolution was a historical step forward, but the bureaucrats usurped the power. We are now on the threshold of a new political revolution. But this will not succeed without the working class as its guiding force.

"During the strike last year the workers had control, but now the power has returned to the bureaucrats. To put an end to this we need a workers' movement. We must unite the forces that are in favour of socialism." Other speakers from the Urals supported this position. One proposed: "We should form a workers' party. We also need an organ for this, a daily paper." And another added: "What we have got today is minor concessions. But our fight is directed against the whole system. This organization should be a political party waging that fight."

The social and political background of these radical attitudes is the severe crisis that the Ural region, the main industrial

centre of the Soviet Union, is facing. A participant from Chelyabinsk explained at a press conference: "In the Urals the workers are not as strong as here in the Kusbass. This is partly because of the many military enterprises in the region. They are imposing very strict rules on the workers, and people are afraid of losing their jobs because it will mean a loss of social privileges. The Ural region is in a very bad ecological state, even worse than here. There is no democracy in the Urals today — the struggle for democracy has hardly started there. We didn't like Gorbachev's attitude when he visited the region recently — his speeches only expressed dictatorship. The situation in the whole region is extremely tense."<sup>2</sup>

### Social democrats call for broad organization

At the other end of the political spectrum were the representatives of the Social Democratic Association, who called for as broad an organization as possible. One of them even tried to water down the concept of a workers' organization: "The task of this new organization is to facilitate a democratic revolution. It should be broad with other social organizations as its members. The peasants and intellectuals should also be included in its declaration."

These ideas fitted nicely into the purely democratic orientation which a part of the speakers proposed for the new organization. Gleb Yakunin, a priest and a People's Deputy, who mounted the platform in vestments, expressed this clearly: "We need a mass democratic movement....the bloc 'Democratic Russia' is trying to unite all democratic forces. You should affiliate to this....The idea of organizing a party will only lead to splits."

It was evident at the Congress that the *de facto* abolition of the sixth clause of the Soviet constitution affirming the leading role of the Communist Party has altered the whole political scene. At the founding conference of the Union of Workers of Kusbass last autumn, the delegates were still spending much time discussing whether they could use the term "political" without running the risk of being outlawed. Now these kinds of considerations are almost forgotten. At this congress a handful of new parties or preparatory committees for parties were represented, including social democrats, anarchists and different kinds of Marxists.

Among the odder creatures one could find Siberian anarcho-syndicalists under the slogan "For a free Siberia and independent trade unions" and the newly formed Marxist Workers Party — Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

But it was another proposal for the formation of a party that led to the most heated discussion. Nikolai Travkin, a People's Deputy and former CPSU member was given 20 minutes by the chair —

as opposed to 7 minutes for delegates — to promote his idea of a new People's Party. In a calculated speech with strong populist appeal Travkin attacked the ideology of the system — “the communist monster” — which according to him was blocking every possibility of change because of its “socialist” and “egalitarian” rhetoric. He then dismissed the different solutions put forward so far — the ideas that the new deputies or a strong president or the market as such could cure the problems of society. Seemingly only Travkin's own project could do the trick! He therefore called on people to withdraw from the CPSU and invited the congress to affiliate to his new party that will be set up in the near future.

### Populist project causes controversy

The presentation of Travkin's project provoked strong reactions from the delegates. A lot of different, and mostly justified, criticisms were voiced about the idea of a People's Party. “It is absurd to create a People's Party — a party must defend a certain social class”; “Travkin used to be in the CPSU, now he is searching for a new career”; “We don't need a political party because trade unions can give workers what they want”; “we shall not give up the struggle in the CPSU, when we don't even know what party we are creating”. So in the end Travkin's proposal was voted down. Even so, this populist project with no visible content was able to attract much interest and exercise considerable influence on the discussion.

On the second day of its work, the congress carried the declaration of the new organization, its main resolution. This resolution was clearly moulded by the strongest political forces in the majority, notably a group of intellectuals of a social democratic colouring from Moscow.

Significantly it was a leader of the Social Democratic Association, Galina Rakitskaya, who presented the final version of the new declaration. But it was another leader of this new social democratic organization, who in his contribution to the congress most graphically stated the attitude of this current. He urged the participants to get rid of all Bolshevik ideas and return to Plekhanov. And then he went on: “We must build a coalition”. This was a particularly popular concept among the *realpolitiker* present at the congress. The pragmatic CPSU representative Yevladov returned to this idea at his press conference, stating: “The future is with the coalitions.”

It was clear that this group of Moscow intellectuals with reformist leanings — some of them organized social democrats, others members of the CPSU — played



an important ideological role in the congress. Inside this group many would have preferred to end the congress after the adoption of the main resolution. They explained that any further discussion on more specific resolutions would be “counter-productive” as were, in their opinion, the discussions on the first day. Their objective was clearly to limit the debate and avoid the adoption of more radical resolutions. They were not able to push through this idea, but the fact that they managed to dominate the majority of the congress ideologically points to two things: firstly that many of the new workers' groups are politically quite weak. And secondly that in the unfolding political situation the social democratic currents — in possible coalition with parts of the apparatus — have some obvious possibilities to win influence over many of these groups.

### Delegations present from seven republics

The debates were of course influenced by the ever more burning question of the national struggle and the mass movements in the Baltic area and Transcaucasia. The congress was attended by delegations from seven republics — the Russian Republic (RSFSR), Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Latvia and Lithuania (the last two now being independent nations).

In general the discussions and decisions of the congress were characterized by an internationalist approach to the national question, and not flawed by Great Russian chauvinism. However each time the

discussion of the nationalities surfaced, the tension in the atmosphere in the hall rose rapidly. Several times during the proceedings delegates from the floor demanded that the chair bring forward the resolution on Lithuania calling for an end to the blockade (see IV186). When the chair refused to do so “because there are more important questions on the agenda” there was a wave of protests including shouts that “you are against Lithuania”.<sup>3</sup>

During the discussion and vote on resolutions on the last day of the congress, a heated exchange of views on the national question erupted more than once. When a resolution saying that the leadership of the CPSU committed a crime by invading Azerbaijan and demanding the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Baku was drafted, an excited dispute took place. Some delegates advised the congress to abstain from what they saw as “premature judgements” (four months after the intervention!) but a large majority rejected this view and carried the resolution. In this connection one can mention another resolution drawn up by, among others, the Shield, a trade union for Red Army officers. This text demanded the resignation of the Minister of Defence Yasov, because of the massacres in Tbilisi and Baku. The resolution also attacked the military-industrial complex as one of the main sources of poverty in Soviet society, and called for the right to strike to be extended to workers in military enter-

2. Gorbachev visited the Urals at the end of April.

3. The resolution on Lithuania was re-drafted by the editing commission more than once, and it seems, finally carried, though I missed the vote.

prises.

The chairman of the Latvian Workers Union introduced one further aspect of the national question in his first intervention at the congress. "When we are organizing our confederation we have to take into account in the regulations that the Baltic republics are claiming independence. Therefore we have to give the confederation an international status, so that the organizations from, for example, the Baltic states can affiliate." A Lithuanian speaker, greeted with applause, developed this point: "The conservatives think that the links with the Baltic states will now be broken. But they are wrong: our liberation will not mean a break with the movements in Russia." This was also the position of the Russian delegates, and the amendment about international membership was carried without much difficulty.

All motions had to pass the editing commission, and during this process many amendments and, apparently, whole resolutions were removed. Still the congress, during its last session, had to vote on more than 15 resolutions many of them addressing, in a very lucid manner, central political questions in the Soviet Union today.<sup>4</sup> Some resolutions dealt with "local" subjects — for example, one expressing solidarity with workers on strike in kindergartens in the Kusbass area and another stating support for the independent Siberian newspaper *Sibirskaya Gazeta* threatened with closure by the local bureaucrats.

### Delegates commemorate Novochoerkassk massacre

In a resolution with historic significance the delegates remembered the victims of the Novochoerkassk massacre in 1962, in Khrushchev's time, when participants in a workers' demonstration were slaughtered by troops. The resolution compared this episode to the 1905 massacre and called for the immediate rehabilitation of the victims.

A resolution concerning the Chernobyl disaster, and the criminal conduct of the government in dealing with it, sparked a short and emotional discussion on nuclear power. Speakers from the floor put forward radical amendments to the rather moderate resolution, demanding a stop to the building of new nuclear power stations and a referendum on the future of nuclear power in the USSR.

Other resolutions centred on the origins and consequences of the economic crisis in the country, attacking different aspects of the party and state leadership's policies. Some of these documents contained interesting anti-bureaucratic demands; for example a call for abolishing the party-structures in all factories and condemnation of the whole system of privileges and secret supplies for the bureaucracy. One could also find a few hints on the economic ideas at large in the new organiza-

tion, such as the demand put forward in the resolution on agriculture that the resources now monopolized by the Agroprom agro-industrial complex should be transferred to the local soviets.

But there was no attempt made by the majority to create the foundations of an economic and social programme for the new organization. The question of self-management in the factories and in society was hardly touched upon in any concrete fashion and the idea of support for struggles in the face of a market reform was largely absent. This will inevitably retard the organization seriously, as the issue of the market and its social effects is becoming an unavoidable challenge for all workers' organizations in the Soviet Union.

A politically very interesting and revealing debate took place around a draft resolution on the defence of workers' rights, supported by the left wing at the congress.

### Resolution calls for working class independence

The resolution started with a description of the conditions facing workers today, as their rights are being attacked and the possibility of electing managers turns out to be fraud. It also proclaimed the principle that the workers' movement must be independent inside the democratic movement. Finally it tried to connect its analysis with suggestions of activity at the factory level (a point scarcely touched upon in the other resolutions) urging the workers' clubs to arrange meetings and demonstrations and stating that is necessary to build strike and workers' committees in the factories. This resolution created outrage among the authors of the declaration. For example the social democrat Rakitskaya argued that "it differs from the main resolution". Maybe so — in any case it was rejected by a majority of the delegates.

At the congress there was a left current consisting of groups and individuals from the left-wing in Moscow, the delegation from the Urals and some of the representatives from the mining districts. Generally speaking this current, numbering perhaps 25% of the delegates, did not stand out as a well-defined alternative to the majority, but more as a loose conglomerate of related political views. This is hardly surprising given the short span of time since the emergence and formation of many of these groups and the huge distances that separate many of them from each other, which makes common discussions a matter of great difficulty.

The assessment of the discussions and decisions of the congress also differed among the delegates from this current. A left wing leader from Moscow drew quite a negative balance-sheet of the congress: "What we have seen is a very strange alliance between parts of the local nomen-

clatura here in Kusbass, with people like Golikov and Kisljuk, and right-wing intellectuals from Moscow. It is actually damaging for the workers' movement. Our resolution on self-management and against privatizations was suppressed. We managed to avoid some of the most ultra-liberal phrases in the declaration but there has been no genuine political discussion here."

However the general mood at the congress was far more favourable to the outcome of the proceedings. Among the organizers from Kusbass and also at the grass-roots level, there was satisfaction and relief because the congress had produced some results, namely the formation of the new trade union — the Confederation of Labour (*Konfederatsia Truda*).

The Confederation of Labour is based on the principle of collective membership. Any type of political group that supports the declaration of the organization can affiliate to it. The congress elected a council of 58 people representing the organizations present at this first congress (of whom perhaps three support the views of the left wing). This body is going to convene approximately three times a year and will elect a coordinating committee and a president at its first meeting in Donbass in June. Until then four coordinators — in Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Kusbass and Donetsk — will be in charge of this new organization.

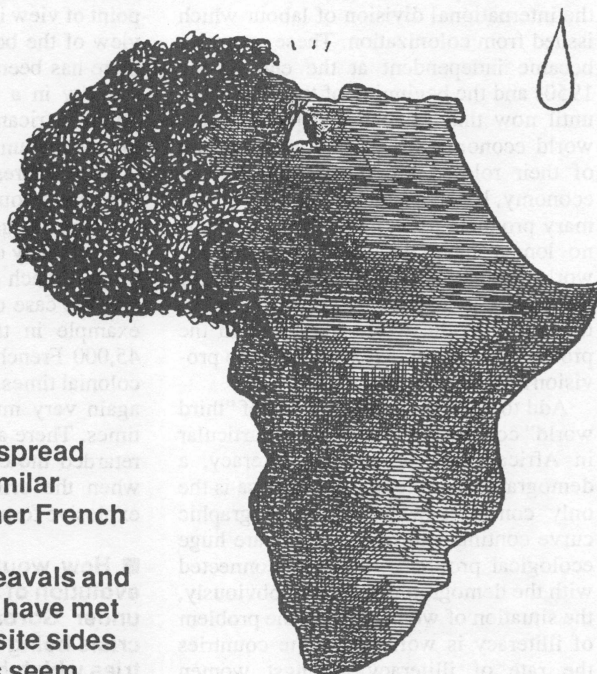
### Varying assessments of congress

While the assessments of the congress went from enthusiasm and optimism to outright scepticism, a more balanced view was put forward by another delegate from the left: "With the organizations involved, and the relationship of forces among them, the outcome of the congress was predictable. The groups attending were extremely heterogeneous with both workers' organizations, like the strike committees, and intellectual 'debating societies' involved. The single most important decision was the launching of the Confederation of Labour. But the most positive aspect was clearly that we were able to make a lot of new contacts and to form a left current during the congress."

So if the Novokuznetsk Congress was perhaps only a small step forward for the workers' movement as a whole, it could give the process of mutual discussion and cooperation among the Marxists on the Soviet left a significant push in the right direction. ★

4. Of all the resolutions only the declaration was distributed to the participants during the congress. The rest were only read out by the chair and were not available in print. Thus the outlines here are based on the author's notes.

# A turning point in Black Africa



THE CRISIS sweeping over the African continent provides an eloquent refutation of the "triumph of capitalism" currently being celebrated by Western bourgeois ideologues. In Gabon, West Africa's richest French-speaking state, the mysterious death of an opposition leader has led to widespread rioting and a French military intervention. This follows similar unrest over the past few months in a whole series of former French colonies.

At the same time, Nigeria has experienced popular upheavals and an attempted coup. In Zaire, large-scale student protests have met with brutal repression from the Mobutu regime. On opposite sides of the continent, both the Ethiopian and Liberian regimes seem doomed in the face of rebel insurrections. *International Viewpoint* asked Claude Gabriel from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, who has written extensively on African politics, for his assessment of recent developments on the continent. The interview was conducted by Bernard Gibbons in Paris on June 1, 1990.

**H**OW do you assess the importance of the events of the past few months in black Africa? Does the widespread unrest open up revolutionary possibilities?

There is a very sharp acceleration of the elements of political and social crisis on the African continent today, in black Africa — I leave aside southern Africa — in its totality. There have been very important demonstrations, riots and strikes in countries like Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria as well as in a whole series of former French colonies — Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Gabon, the Cameroon, and Benin. To this list we must now add Zaire, a former Belgian colony which has traditionally played an important role in imperialist strategy in central Africa.

There is then obviously a general change. Despite the poverty and misery that exists on the African continent, despite the application of the austerity plans dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank over the past ten years, we have not until now seen popular revolts on the scale of those which have taken place in countries like Morocco, Argentina, Brazil or Venezuela. There has been a political delay in the revolt of the masses. Today it is clear that in these countries there is a kind of power vacuum, a decomposition of the state apparatus, for example in the Ivory Coast

where the soldiers are on strike, the customs workers are on strike, the taxi drivers are on strike, the firemen are on strike, and so on. In the face of this these unsophisticated and very personalized state apparatuses — the apparatus of the state is identified with the presidency of the republic — are extremely fragile. This is a turning point, but it does not mean we are witnessing a revolutionary upsurge in Africa.

The big problem is whether political and social forces exist which can represent an alternative. The twenty years old strategic debate on whether the social conditions exist to establish a bourgeois democratic order in Africa, the debate we had with the Maoist and nationalist currents, is again on the order of the day. For the danger is that there could be, under the effects of the crisis, an implosion, a collapse of the state apparatus, in the context of a popular revolt, hunger riots, strikes even — but in the absence of, not simply a political, but a social alternative which is capable of proposing an alternative project of society, a new state apparatus, a new form of economic development, and so on.

And there is a very great risk that these social forces do not exist, precisely because of the depth of the crisis and the weight of imperialist domination which has limited and hindered the development of these forces. Obviously this pos-

es the problem of whether bourgeois democratic forces exist. Then for us there is another problem; whether a genuine workers movement exists, if a class consciousness exists, even in the reformist sense — I do not necessarily mean the revolutionary sense — which can transform these riots into a class confrontation. There the debate remains open between optimism and pessimism. It is necessary to be perceptive and pragmatic, it is necessary to try to develop such a force but at the same time not to be over-optimistic on this question.

■ **Apart from the political fragility of the regimes, what are the economic and social factors underlying the current explosions? Why have so many black African countries experienced mass upheavals almost simultaneously?**

Firstly, there are those elements which are the consequence of the global capitalist crisis of the world market in raw materials. This market has been thrown into turmoil not simply by the conjunctural crisis of the price of raw materials, but by drastic changes in the world economy and its needs — crises of sugar, cocoa, coffee, and petrol production which are due not only to conjunctural modifications of world demand but also to a modification of structural demand. That is, there is a problem of product substitution, a problem of competition between countries of the third world — there is a tendency today to buy Central American rather than African coffee — and there is obviously the problem of overproduction and the profitability of production. I think that we are witnessing in Africa today something

"revolutionary" — the transformation of the international division of labour which issued from colonization. These countries became independent at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, but until now they have had a place in the world economy which was an extension of their role in the traditional colonial economy, based on the production of primary products for export. These products no longer have the same place in the world economy. Consequently, thirty years after independence, Africa's objective place in the world market is in the process of being transformed, and no provision has been made for this.

Add to this the classic features of "third world" countries which apply in particular in Africa. You have mass illiteracy, a demographic acceleration — Africa is the only continent where the demographic curve continues to rise — there are huge ecological problems, there is, connected with the demographic problem obviously, the situation of women where the problem of illiteracy is worse. In some countries the rate of illiteracy amongst women reaches 85% and this affects the access women have to birth control and control over their lives. Africa is the only continent where there has been in the past ten years a fall in agricultural productivity; this is linked to demographic pressure, debt, urban drift, and so on, as well as to the collapse of the system of exportation of raw materials. To this must be added the problem of AIDS in a number of countries. The African continent is affected to a greater degree than any other by the generalized crisis today. These are the factors which explain the simultaneous nature of all these current explosions.

■ **What have been the specificities of French imperialist domination in Africa, and why is it that the crisis of the neo-colonial regimes seems to be especially sharp in the former French colonies?**

There is a particularity in the form of domination of French imperialism, and thus a particularity also in the crisis of this domination. First it is necessary to understand that the African continent is very fragile from the institutional and state point of view, a factor which all the European countries must take account of in their relations with black Africa.

France has maintained a very close, very constrictive monetary, institutional and military relationship with its former colonies in Africa over 20 to 30 years. In a certain sense these countries have profited from this. For example the "Franc Zone", to which 14 African countries belong, is supposed to be a means of stabilizing these economies, of protecting them against monetary risk. The French military presence was supposed to protect these countries against the great instability affecting other African countries, which did not have this kind of access to

external military aid. I think from one point of view it was true, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, the imperialists, there has been a relative, a very relative, stability in a certain number of Francophone African countries, compared with the other countries on the continent. What is very interesting is that today, despite this, these countries have gone into crisis in a specific and violent manner.

Very many of these countries have very large French communities, larger than was the case during the colonial era. For example in the Ivory Coast, there are 45,000 French, very much more than in colonial times. In Gabon there are 20,000, again very much more than in colonial times. There are then factors which have retarded the crisis, but at the same time when the crisis comes it takes a very explosive form.

■ **How would you characterize the evolution of Soviet strategy in Africa under Gorbachev, and how is the crisis being reflected in those countries which have been allied in some form with the Soviet Union? The western press has made much of the abandonment of "Marxism-Leninism" by a number of regimes. In Ethiopia, the regime seems on the verge of collapse, whilst the Eritrean and Tigrayan resistance movements also seem to be reevaluating their ideological commitments.**

On the Soviet presence, it is necessary to be extremely prudent, because the international media have made a lot of froth about this over the past 20 years. The Soviets have attempted to stabilize political, military and diplomatic relationships with a certain number of African regimes which have claimed to be progressive, Marxist-Leninist or socialist. You have to study the situation case by case.

In Ethiopia there was a specific situation. There was a revolution, not a socialist or proletarian revolution, but a revolution nonetheless. The regime needed political, economic and military support. Most important, it was incapable of resolving the national question in the country. So it had to rely on a Stalinist model of centralization, and the denial of national rights. For all these reasons, it was not for us a revolutionary regime.

Fidel Castro said in the 1970s, when the Cuban troops were in Ethiopia, that in Ethiopia there were aspects of the French revolution and aspects of the Bolshevik revolution. I think he was right.

However we are not at the end of the 18th century but at the end of the 20th. This means that the place of Ethiopia in the world economy is posed. How to tackle the problem of under-development in this context? The second problem is that the Ethiopian leadership has the attitude to the national question of the Jacobins. They have tried to construct a centralized

nation by force, starting from an abstraction of the Ethiopian nation that didn't in fact exist. If Castro had followed through his thoughts he might have arrived at Lenin's conclusions. Unable to answer either of these two questions, the Ethiopian situation has degenerated. The regime is more isolated than ever. The Eritreans may be close to victory. The empire is exploding everywhere, with the resistance in Tigray and in the South, and I think the regime's days are numbered.

Despite what the Soviet Union used to claim, the Derg did not result from a socialist revolution. Now what is on the cards is a pro-imperialist counter-revolution. The nature of the regime is highlighted by the way Israeli military advisers have replaced Soviet ones.

The main Tigrayan organization is of pro-Albanian origin. It seems that it is very rapidly moving towards ideological "new realism" insofar as the possibility of power and the international situation pose the problem of a real balance-sheet of Stalinism. The Eritrean leadership considered itself socialist. It has shown great political astuteness over a long period of time. It denounced the Soviet role in Ethiopia, and criticized the Cuban attitude without ruling out the possibility of dialogue and Soviet or Cuban mediation. Eritrea is a case where it is necessary to demand and win national independence. The leadership there has evolved to a sort of radical nationalism, more realistic than the professions of faith of the past.

Angola is also a specific case. The Angolan regime originated in an armed struggle for national liberation. It was a very fragile regime, confronting not simply a South African military intervention, but also a regional ethnic problem, which it did not have the capacity to resolve in social, economic or political terms. Consequently it searched for a military response. This is what happened with the Cuban intervention.

Now, in the context of the South African intervention, we have never demanded the





withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, but the Cuban leadership did not understand that it had engaged in this struggle on behalf of an Angolan government that had no revolutionary response on the social and economic level to the Angolan crisis, only a military response — and which consequently was unable to resolve this crisis.

Obviously, it is a completely different affair if one turns to the “pro-Soviet” nature of the regimes in Congo-Brazzaville, Benin or Madagascar. There one is dealing with a farce, these are regimes which remain absolutely neo-colonial, linked to French imperialism. Congo-Brazzaville and Benin are members of the Franc Zone, and there have always been French soldiers in Congo. The diplomatic and political game over 15-20 years with the Soviet Union did not mean integration into COMECON or economic or military integration with the Soviet Union, it was very much more contradictory than that. Moreover with the beginning of the fall in the price of petrol a certain political realism became necessary, and the Brazzaville regime, for example, has retreated from its “Marxism-Leninism”. There is very much noise about this, for reasons of imperialist propaganda, obviously, but in reality there has never really been a Soviet capacity in these countries. There has been a Soviet political intervention, yes, if completely derisory, and Gorbachev has really put things back in place from a certain point of view, he has said that it is necessary to finish with this kind of artificial and costly framework in Africa.

#### ■ On a related point, what has been the impact in black Africa of the events of the past year in Eastern Europe?

I am a bit cautious about this. I think that the events in Eastern Europe have had an effect at two levels. Firstly the imperialist powers, particularly the French Socialist government, have understood that there are problems posed at the moment in supporting single party governments, whilst celebrating the events in Eastern Europe. It is noticeable that the French secret service, for example, has begun to work in a certain number of countries, within the regime but also within the clandestine opposition, to begin to resolve the problem of multi-partyism. Secondly, the little opposition parties, essentially composed of intellectuals, liberal professionals, students, teachers, and so on, are with good reason using the events in Eastern Europe in their propaganda. However I do not think that it has much influence with the broad masses who do not have access to very much information about what has happened in Eastern Europe. From the point of view of political propaganda and anti-imperialist propaganda in Europe, it is a completely valid argument. In a country like France it is very interesting to



show the contradiction between the demagoguery of the French Socialist Party on the struggle against all dictatorship and tyranny and the manner in which it bails out and supports the African dictatorships.

I would like to add an important point. Today the debate in Paris and London or in the African capitals is a debate on multi-partyism. Obviously we must support every struggle for the satisfaction of elementary democratic rights, the right to form parties or trade unions, the right to strike, for a free press, and so on. But it is necessary to pay attention to two things. Multi-partyism in itself does not have the same revolutionary dynamic in Africa that it could have elsewhere. For several reasons. First, because we already have an experience of multi-partyism in Africa. In Senegal, there is a formal multi-partyism, where there are some 15 legal organizations, but all strikes and demonstrations are repressed and you can't have a meeting in Dakar without the police intervening. The state apparatus remains under the control of one all-powerful party. Secondly, multi-partyism presents us with another problem: what type of party and what social force is capable of establishing real parties of opposition to imperialism?

You can say that elementary democracy is needed in these countries. But if you look at the Ivory Coast for example, small opposition parties exist, but they have not supported any of the strikes that have been multiplying. There is a vast gulf between the potential for the development of social movements and the opposition parties who have a very narrow world view. They aim for elementary democracy but without a grasp of strategic problems or the question of social base. At the same time the workers' movement is too weak to exert any pressure on the formation of political organizations. In Senegal, where real revolutionary organizations exist, it has taken 10 or 15 years to reach a point where a convergence between these organizations and the first stirrings of an

independent workers' movement is possible. The process is only in its initial stages.

#### ■ The existence of single party systems in black Africa has often been justified as the sole means of controlling in some way the problem of tribalism. Do you think that there is any validity in that argument?

The term tribalism is pejorative and shouldn't be used; in any case it doesn't correspond to the situation. In all these countries there are a large number of ethnic groups, that can vary in size from thousands to hundreds of thousands to millions of individuals that have a language, often economic and social specificities, cultural forms, property laws and village organizations and so on. It is a question of ethnicity. The imperialists and their client regimes have spent 30 years attempting to stabilize themselves by seeking a social base through clientelism and corruption, using family and ethnic networks. One result of this is that opposition movements take the form of revolts against regional or ethnic oppression because the regime appears to be the monopoly of a particular region or ethnic group. Imperialism has manipulated this phenomenon. It would be wrong for us to see in every ethnic group a nation in the process of formation. This is never the case. There is a real theoretical problem in Africa concerning the relations between the ethnic and national questions.

These countries do not have a national consciousness; the regime has tried to impose one. We have viewed the ethnic issues from a democratic point of view, involving the right to linguistic self-expression and self-determination, peasant self-organization, local and regional self-government. All these things also raise questions of mass democracy and direct democracy. We have talked of such things as bilingualism and literacy in the official and local languages, of equality between regions and their populations.

The only way to overcome these problems is a revolution that would be capable of really giving opportunities for the self-organization of both the urban and rural masses. This is something more than a strictly bourgeois democratic revolution.

■ **So you would have in mind some kind of autonomy on the lines of what has been attempted in Nicaragua with the Miskito people, rather than a model of "national self-determination" mechanically transposed from European conditions?**

Not all national questions in Africa imply state independence. There are of course exceptions, such as Eritrea. Thirty years of independence have created a new institutional, economic and social context. Although you can hardly talk about these countries having a national consciousness, there is a consciousness of living in a specific national state which is the context for all political struggles. This raises the question of how in a revolutionary crisis, with a rise in mass struggles, notably in the countryside, can every guarantee be given regarding ethnic rights — including rights to self-organization, the right to use their language. The ability to speak English, French or Portuguese is a basic factor in social selection in these countries, where knowledge of one of these languages is a requirement for education beyond the lower levels, thus excluding 80% of the population. What is needed is real bilingualism, which requires literacy in (and therefore the writing down of) the local language. Only a real revolution made by the rural and worker masses would be able to impose such measures.

■ **Given the objective weakness of the socialist and workers' movement in black Africa, what kind of contribution can socialists in the imperialist West make to the development of the current struggles?**

Revolutionaries in the imperialist countries most directly connected with Africa — such as France, Britain or Belgium have a number of tasks. The first is to break the wall of silence concerning the nature of imperialist domination in these countries and all its dirty secrets. In France it is necessary to denounce the policy of the Socialist Party and government in defending the interests of the French state in Africa. This is very difficult, since there is a consensus in these imperialist countries on Africa, including a certain paternalism. The campaign for the cancellation of the debt can make a contribution to breaking the wall of silence.

Secondly, we must, work, think, write about the mechanisms of this domination. Really understanding how these things work is an element of solidarity. We also have to participate in concrete political aid for the revolutionary current which is beginning to appear in these countries. ★

## No honeymoon for Chamorro

**THIRTY** days have been enough for the government of the National Union of the Opposition (UNO) to drop its mask and throw Nicaragua into turmoil. Giving way to UNO's most reactionary wing, Violeta Chamorro has launched an offensive against the gains of the revolution through the declaration of a series of anti-worker measures. In three days prices have gone up by 200%. The reply has not been slow in coming — a fortnight of social movements and a general strike in the civil service.

CECILIA GARMENDIA

**T**HE NATIONAL UNION of the Opposition (UNO) has been in government since April 25, 1990. Since then, tension has grown unceasingly because of the measures announced by Violeta Chamorro and ever growing demands of the Contras.

After having negotiated the terms and the time period of their demobilization, the Contras have demanded new guarantees. Not accepting the retention of comandante Humberto Ortega as head of the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), they wished to continue to exert pressure for the removal of all power from the Sandinistas and a share of the cake for themselves.

The most reactionary sectors of UNO, led by vice-president Virgilio Godoy, have encouraged the Contras in this attitude and have drawn closer to them with the aim of increasingly provoking the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) — they hope thus to catch the Sandinistas off guard, and make them pay the price for their electoral defeat. The Contras have made considerable demands; they have demanded that a territory is "ceded" to them where their men can install themselves and "work". The government has offered a zone of 16,000 square kilometers in the region of San Juan, on the frontier with Costa Rica, where the FSLN is dominant — the latter, obviously, has rejected this proposal.

At Managua's Intercontinental Hotel, the luxurious residence of US "tourists" in the time of Somoza, meetings between the Contra chiefs and the new men in government have become increasingly frequent. Emissaries of Violeta Chamorro, such as the new minister of the interior, travel frequently to the Contra camps. The Contras, and above all their leaders, moreover, are travelling throughout Nicaragua, under the pretext of visiting their

families, alone and without authorization or even legally, under the protection of the United Nations (UN) mission, which is verifying the implementation of the accords. These intrigues are making tensions mount.

The mercenaries continue to pillage the countryside, to menace, attack, confiscate or kill, targeting Sandinista militants in particular. A peasant leader from the Crazo region, Paulino Umana, has been decapitated; another Sandinista militant, Noel Antonio Murillo has been assassinated; a former Somoza national guard has stabbed two people. Local offices of the FSLN are regularly looted and the emblem of the "Mano Negra" (the Black Hand) continues to appear on the walls of the houses of known militants. It is not known if these attacks and provocations are the work of the Contras themselves, of groups of delinquents or of hired men from the most rightist sectors of UNO.

### Contra leadership reneges on agreement

Officially, the Contras should have begun to give back their arms to the UN representatives before April 25, but they have done so very slowly. According to the accords, 4,000 weapons should have been recovered and destroyed by May 14, but, by that date, only some 300 Contras — a dozen a day! — had given back some old rifles and no ammunition. On May 18, the Contra leadership publicly reneged on the accord signed with the new government and it has put into question its demobilization for June 10, citing the "social instability" of the country and a so-called EPS offensive. The EPS has, on the other hand, begun to disarm the cooperatives of the security zones where the Contras are to regroup, complying with the accords signed. This is not happening without

problems — the peasants are not returning their rifles with any lightness of heart and are often resisting.

The attitude of the Contras, like the declarations from the most right wing sectors of the UNO, speak volumes about their intentions — judging the Sandinistas to be in a position of weakness after the election of February 25, they aim to provoke them into reacting as soon as possible.

The agreement for the transfer of power signed on March 25 by the FSLN and UNO, like the speeches of the president and her entourage on the eve of April 25, invoked a "national reconciliation"; certain sectors of the bourgeoisie wished to avoid frontal attacks on the FSLN and to calm social tensions. The leadership of the FSLN, for its part, responded in a conciliatory tone to this initial moderation. However, the tactics of the UNO have changed from the time of Chamorro's assumption of presidential power.

The government immediately took a series of economic measures which directly hit wage earners and small agricultural production. Four devaluations have already taken place since April 25 (100% at the official exchange rate and 180% at the black market rate), without any equivalent increase in wages, reducing still more the standard of living of a population already hit hard by the crisis. Increases in charges for public services have been announced, as well as in the price of certain food products.

The minister of the economy, Silvio de Franco, has explained that he wishes to proceed to an "industrial reconversion", under the pretext of technological improvement, with a "very aggressive policy of foreign investments"; he has said that national industry must show its competitiveness in order to survive (on May 25, some nationalized shoe and textile factories had already put their workers in technical unemployment). This plan also envisages the restoration of a free industrial zone through the aid of "Nicaraguans living abroad", with the aim of developing new exports. The new minister of agriculture is concerned very much more with the big landowners of rice or cotton plantations than with the small producers, who furnish 60% of the national product.

The decree on the leasing out of the nationalized sector (APP), which envisages privatizations at a quicker pace than predicted, has sparked a big reaction. It was announced, with other equally unpopular measures, on May 11, 1990. Former landowners in the sector affected by the agrarian reform could henceforth reclaim — with or without justification — their

former landholdings. So far as the nationalized sector is concerned, with the exception of those lands confiscated from the Somoza dynasty by decree number 3 of 1979, the old latifundaristas can hire the land, whether or not it is being used, by payment in "cordobas-oro" (a new currency in parity with the dollar). If they can prove that they have worked these lands efficiently they can reclaim the payment after a short period. The old landowners can also reclaim the land redistributed to the cooperatives or to the peasants by the

Land and housing distributed in the towns are also challenged by another decree. Finally, the president has issued an order to change the "civil service law" — which prevents, amongst other things, the dismissal of civil servants for political reasons — and cancelled the collective agreements made (dismissals for political reasons which have already taken place since April 25 have nearly all been blocked by mobilizations in the ministries); 6000 state employees immediately organized a demonstration before the seat of government. The UNO wants to quickly purge the administration of Sandinistas and replace them with "its" people, particularly those who return from exile. For the moment in any case, it faces a sizeable response.

Finally, under the pressure of the sectors of UNO which are closest to the Contras, the amnesty law adopted by the old assembly (which protects the former high civil servants and ministers — see IV 184) will also be reviewed to lift the immunity of the former leaders and above all to be extended to former Somozistas. Moises Hassan, deputy of the Movement of Revolutionary Unity (MUR), former FSLN militant and mayor of Managua, has voted for this law with UNO.

All these measures contradict the populist discourse of Violeta Chamorro, who promised an improvement in the social situation; they constitute a veritable declaration of war against the FSLN and the gains of the revolution. It adds up to a "counter-reform" as the Sandinistas put it; the new government has pushed its provocations so far as to announce these decrees whilst in full conflict with the civil service, threatening to declare the strike illegal and dismiss the strikers. The very violent attacks which the pro-UNO press and media have launched against the former administration, accused of diversion of funds and bad management, seek to justify these measures and to legitimize the dismantling of the revolutionary state. Moreover, in issuing these decrees, the president has encroached on those areas inscribed in the constitution which can only be modified by a vote of parliament.

The Harvard educated technocrats of Chamorro's governmental team, representing the big financial interests, seek to prove the suitability of a neo-liberal model for a country like Nicaragua (the ministers have awarded themselves salaries going up to \$5,500 a month; the minister of the economy requires \$12,000, while an average technician in Nicaragua earns \$48, and the minimum salary being demanded is \$150).

But these measures show the true nature



agrarian reform; if these lands cannot be returned to them for "reasons of agrarian reform or if they are occupied by small peasant landowners or by cooperatives which fulfil social and economic functions" they will be compensated.

Bearing in mind that the bourgeoisie does not recognize the usefulness of small peasant production and that the rate of interest on bank credits for producers today is running at 15% (one of the highest in the world), endangering the next agricultural cycle — notably for food cultivation — the door is obviously wide open to the reconcentration of land. The peasants and cooperatives' organization (UNAG) and the trade union of the agricultural workers (ATC) are preparing a march of peasants on Managua to protest against these measures and some lands in the nationalized sector, threatened with reprivatization, have been occupied by their agricultural workers.

of the government. The FSLN can point this out to all those who voted for the UNO, in the hope of better living conditions and to give a warning to the Sandinista leadership.

The test of forces is happening on a local level also. The installation of the new UNO mayors has often involved violent altercations with the Sandinista councillors and numerous civil servants have been dismissed in municipalities taken by the right. UNO wish to make a clean sweep and install a counterpower, relying on its majority in the municipalities and the regional governments. In this area, the FSLN has been using a carrot and stick approach in an attempt to play on the contradictions of UNO. Thus, the municipal deputies of the FSLN have voted for the new mayor of Managua, Aleman, a big coffee planter. Some days later, he announced his intention to revoke the allocations of housing and land made by the Sandinistas, and to dismiss employees of a municipality which, according to him, was on the verge of bankruptcy.

**Sandinista's tactics hard to understand**

At the same time Aleman has been squandering his budget in organizing little celebrations (one of which, with the cream of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and Cuban exiles, the "gusanos", who have announced that Nicaragua will be their trampoline to crush the Cuban revolution, cost him \$8000). Faced with such behaviour from the bourgeoisie, the FSLN's tactic of trying to divide UNO, in a climate of social tension, is difficult to understand for the majority of the population which is the victim of the government's attacks.

In this context, the response of the trade unions was not slow in coming. On Wednesday May 12, 1990, a National Front of Workers (FNT) was established, comprising the principal trade unions; general (CST), agricultural workers (ATC), health (FETSALUD), technicians (CONAPRO), journalists (UPN), and administrative employees (UNE), and discussions are in progress with the Workers' Front, the trade union of the Popular Action Movement (MAP, of Maoist origin) over its participation.

On May 1, the trade union organizations demonstrated in support of a 100% wage increase. The minister of labour responded by offering 60%. Following the devaluations, the trade unions increased their demand to 200%. Unrest has continued to grow in the civil service, leading to the general strike of May 14 which demanded a 100% wage increase and the promise of a revision of the measures concerning the right of dismissal in the administration by the government. Despite the threats of the authorities, the strikers occupied public buildings and even held the minister of foreign affairs prisoner for some hours.

The strike spread throughout the admin-

istration, as well as national education, telecommunications, the water service, health, and so on. Chamorro threatened to use force to dislodge the workers, but in the end she negotiated. She knows well that the use of the police (a body formed by the Sandinistas, which she has not yet been able to touch) intimidates few people. The government would find it hard to make it apply orders of ferocious repression.

Finally, the economic situation could get worse. The US aid demanded by UNO and approved by Congress (\$300 million) is coming through an eyedropper. To this day, only a donation of food aid worth \$12.5 million has arrived from the US, which was moreover conditional; the benefits of the sale of these products must go towards privatization.

The trade unions are not demanding the fall of the government, seeking instead to oblige it to negotiate and to put a brake on its attacks. This is also the line of the FSLN which unambiguously supports the movement.

We are witnessing an acceleration of the response of the FSLN, provoked by the attitude of UNO and also reinforced by the breadth of the resistance to the

attacks. The bourgeoisie, for its part, under the pressure of its most reactionary wing — to which Violeta Chamorro is obliged to make concessions after having ceded the leadership of the army to the FSLN — wants to go quickly to work. It hopes to strike a mortal blow to the FSLN before it regains the social base alienated by the war and the economic crisis it had to preside over. But these oscillations prove the weakness and the heterogeneity of the UNO government and indicate that the situation will remain very unstable.

The attitude of the FSLN leadership which, before April 25, launched appeals for social calm, has changed radically; they now propose a "plan of struggle" to the workers and call for mobilization against "the danger of a return to Somozism". The pro-FSLN media have hardened their tone and are issuing threats — it is true that the FSLN could, if it wishes, paralyze the country. The FSLN is opposing the attacks that the government wishes to make against the revolution, and is seeking to reestablish its place in the popular and trade union movement in the current confrontation with the bourgeoisie; it is conscious that this will be the sole fashion of countering these attacks. ★

**Towards a "social democratic" capitalism?**

**WE REPRODUCE** below large extracts from a contribution which appeared in the Nicaraguan daily *El Nuevo Diario* on May 23 and 24, 1990. This text is a good illustration of the debates going on inside the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), as much on the question of what social and economic model to follow, as on the situation today and the attitude to adopt to it.

**PEDRO ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ**

**H**ISTORY teaches us, above all with regard to the spectacular events we are living through, that when the revolutionary movement suffers defeats which appear decisive, and capitalism, for its part, seems to be passing through an ascendant phase, it is normal that voices will be raised amongst the revolutionaries saying that it is senseless to attempt to skip stages and launch into premature social revolutions.

In explaining that it is necessary to leave the field open to capitalism to develop itself, these same comrades think that, in today's conditions, revolutionar-

ies can only struggle for the least "savage" form of capitalism. According to them, it would be necessary to struggle so that the benefits of the system do not remain in the hands of the "high-ups" and that, partially at least or under the form of social benefits, they are shared with those "at the bottom". In this case, the comrades argue, it would be unnecessary then to struggle against capitalism and for a premature and inopportune social revolution, but for social reforms, to achieve a certain "democratization of wealth" in the context of this system.

Faced with such opinions, those who persist in continuing to argue for revolu-

tionary ideas find themselves marginalized by a majority of comrades who rejoin the euphoric current of the vacillating petit-bourgeois middle layers, the same who, at other times, have been seduced by dreams of revolution, but who today are impatient to "share" the promised riches. They want to find themselves a stabilizing role in the dominant system; in extreme situations, these middle classes are even capable of accusing their former comrades — who do not wish to see the popular movement stagnate — of being "adventurers", "radicals" or "subjectivists", and apostles of a revolutionary future which exists only in their fevered heads. So far as concerns me, my character places me *a priori* — and perhaps also for "sentimental" reasons — amongst the minority of radical Don Quixotes, devotees of Sandino who was ready to die alone in hurling himself against the Empire (...)

They even maintain that opposition to privatizations signifies opposition to a global tendency. Concretely, in conditions such as those of Nicaragua, can capitalism develop in a "non-savage" fashion? Is a "social democratic capitalism" possible?

Yes, on the condition that the new regime obtains each year a sum of around 800 to 1200 million dollars; otherwise, it would be obliged to accept the savage recipes of the "Blue and White Plan"<sup>1</sup>, of the employers' organization (COSEP) which — according to a European social democratic leader — symbolize a backward, primitive and "neanderthal", indeed "savage" capitalism.

In the absence of foreign subsidies, capitalism in our country — and it is not a question of ill will or of cruelty, but of necessity — must develop in a savage fashion; this is an inherent trait of primitive accumulation.

### Dependent, backward and deformed capitalism

The capitalism which has developed in Nicaragua, dependent, backward and deformed, does not lead to the "blossoming" of the productive forces; it can only survive through thoroughly indebting itself to compensate for its meagre capacities of accumulation. When the credit is exhausted, it can find a way out only by exerting a growing pressure on the labour force. This capitalism has no aptitude of its own to encourage, through accumulation, the productive forces of social labour which it could exploit in increasing productivity and then with a relative surplus value which would be compatible with increasing the real wages and the "social gains" of the workers. Its lateness, its lack of competitiveness and its obsolete structure place it at the back of the line for the international market; it can then subsist only by putting pressure on absolute surplus value and increasing super exploitation.

Faced with the contempt these asser-

tions will be treated with by some, who will explain that my argument is "theoretical" and no more than "dogmatic chatter", I point out to readers the sad reality of Latin America. Dependent capitalism, under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has a free hand; it no longer hides its reality; the regime of an unprecedented deterioration of real wages, of the growth of unemployment, of enormous flights of capital... all the elements which concretely provoke social explosions.

In sum, I am of the opinion that a dependent capitalism can only survive on the back of a growing depression of wages — even the terrible inroads on wages that we ourselves (the FSLN) made to finance the defence of the revolution and the policy of national unity, would not be enough for it. In political economy this is called super exploitation, and not "the growth of productivity and efficiency" (...)

Some of our comrades who — with the best intentions in the world — dream of a "social-democratic capitalism" only reinforce the illusions of the masses and their demobilization, instead of preparing them, with correct revolutionary slogans, for the ferocious confrontations which approach (...)

The big bourgeoisie knows very well that a social democratic compact is not viable in Nicaragua; the Lacayos or the Cesars, who preach this model, are using it to mollify Sandinism, to neutralize it and allow it to win time. The bourgeoisie hopes that the people, momentarily stunned by the positive effects of US aid, will allow the pro-capitalist regime to reinforce itself and will at the same time forget Sandinista "dreams".

The moment will come when it will have a better hold on the economic reins and the ideological apparatus, and in the absence of a combative movement, it will take steps towards the control of society. It would like to make itself stronger, absolute even, to reestablish Somozism totally, under a regime without sharing of capital; that is its dream... And that is what menaces us if the mass movement does not immediately struggle(...) ★



1. The "Blue and White Plan" (named after the colours of the Nicaraguan national flag) was an economic program in the pure IMF tradition, which was supported by the most right wing sectors of UNO; it was counterposed to the "Mayorga Plan" - named after the counselor of Chamorro, today president of the Central Bank, which adopted a more "social democratic" framework.
2. Antonio Lacayo and Alfredo Cesar, leaders of the Social Democratic Party (after having been allies of the Contras) are technocrats who have a great influence over Violeta Chamorro. They were charged with negotiating the governmental transition with the FSLN.

## A declaration of war

ON May 31 the UNO government and the Contras signed a new agreement concerning the demobilization of the latter, which proposes among other things:

- The creation of "a police to maintain internal order with the participation of ex-combatants [Contras] whose aim is to safeguard the life and physical integrity of citizens living in these zones [of Contra regroupment]... This police force will form part of the structures of the Interior Ministry."

Thus, the UNO, despite its promises, is creating a parallel police. The recent social conflicts have shown the limits of its power, given that the FSLN retains the army and police. The UNO is trying to create a parallel state.

- "The demilitarization of the zones of conflict". The UNO wants to forbid the presence of the Sandinista army in zones where the Contras are at work.

- "The pursuit of civilian disarmament [in these zones]; meaning the disarmament of the self-defence cooperatives and the militia, notably in areas where there are Contras.

- The government undertakes to name a representative of those demobilized, designated by the Resistance, in the ministries who will concern themselves with the affairs of the ex-combatants and their families in areas such as health, agrarian reform, work and so on." The Contras will thus take part in the government and will have its ear on all the sensitive questions, such as land and work conflicts.

This accord proposes the installation of Contras in zones where land will be given to them (perhaps taken back from the peasants who have benefited from the Sandinista agrarian reform...); the Contras will receive urban and agricultural property titles (the same, perhaps, that the present government wants to seize back from those who received them after 1979...)

This accord is a declaration of war on the FSLN. The UNO is trying to speed up the counter-revolution. ★

# Railway workers challenge Mazowiecki

AT THE END of May the Polish government received two serious warnings. The turnout for the local elections on May 27 was only 42.1%, even though Solidarnosc won 80% of the seats. Before and during the elections the North East of the country was paralyzed by the railway workers' strike — the first major strike since the Solidarnosc-supported government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki took office in September 1989. Lech Walesa finally managed to convince the strikers to suspend their action — but only after 17 days of sharp conflict. In fact, despite the use of the entire arsenal of propaganda by the government, supported by the main trade union confederation, the movement of the Pomeranian railway workers was tending to spread.

CYRIL SMUGA

**T**HE origins of the strike lay in the failure of the government to keep to an agreement made on October 20 last year by the management of the Polish state railways (PKP) and the union concerning, among other things, wages (Both Solidarnosc and the sectoral unions connected with the OPZZ (ex-official unions) were involved in this agreement). But above all there was the increasing frustration, apparent throughout the country, of all those poorly paid wage owners who are suffering the effects of the government's IMF dictated stabilization plan.

In the first four months of 1990 prices rose by nearly 260%, although the upward thrust of inflation slowed in March and April. Industrial production fell in the same period by an average of 30%; in some sectors, such as light industry, by over 40%. Unemployment, a previously unknown phenomenon, has already affected 400,000 workers. And all this time nominal wages, held back by a fiscal mechanism inherited from preceding governments, have only risen by a few percent.

The movement was started by a group of railway workers who were Solidarnosc militants in the Slupsk region. After some warning actions that the authorities ignored, on May 10 nine railway workers began a hunger strike in the railway's regional offices in Slupsk. On May 19, the strike committee decided to prevent trains from leaving the Slupsk marshalling yard. This sparked off a broader movement. Delegations of railway workers from Gdynia, Radomsko, Poznan, Szczecin and Inowroclaw joined the

Slupsk hunger strikes. Other hunger strikes began in Torun and Miastko.

The railway workers — following the tradition of 1980-81 — seized the PKP's means of communication and organized conferences by telephone link-ups. A central strike committee was established, based in Slupsk and putting forward 12 demands (see box).

The Solidarnosc leadership was quick to react to the spread of the strike, distancing themselves from it at the same time as criticizing the government. On May 22, the union's national presidium stated: "The Slupsk railway workers' strike is neither organized nor supported by Solidarnosc....However, our critical judgement of the strike does not mean that we do not see the reasons that have provoked it."<sup>1</sup> The immediate result of this declaration was the spread of the strike to other centres. At Gdynia the strikers considered turning their strike into an active strike.

The government spokesperson, Malgorzata Niezabitowska declared: "A hunger strike is a form of struggle against a totalitarian state. Poland is a democratic country." An official from the finance ministry went further: "The strikers demands are very far reaching....Such a concession by the government could unleash a series of demands and strikes, the return of inflation and the return to production that does not correspond to the needs of the market. This would mean the failure of the government's economic programme and the end of foreign aid, which is very often conditional on the realization of this programme."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore since the strike was not formally

organized by a union, the suggestion was made that it was illegal.

Faced with this reaction the strike committee invited the leaders of the three union confederations, Lech Walesa of Solidarnosc, Alfred Miodowicz of the OPZZ and Marian Jurczyk for Solidarnosc '80 (a split off from Solidarnosc in Western Pomerania) to come and discuss with the strikers. While the latter two accepted, Walesa replied: "I think that your strike is justified, but I cannot reject the just arguments of the government....Your protest is taking place outside all the union structures. This road leads in a bad direction....I am asking you to halt the strike through mediation and an agreement that will not call into question your pride and dignity."<sup>3</sup>

To defend themselves from accusations of illegality, the strikers formed a national protest committee (KKP), inside which, for the first time, were found representatives of the OPZZ-affiliated union alongside the strike committee. The hunger strike was suspended, but the blockade of the trains continued. The strikers decided that if the negotiations were to be democratic, they should take place in their presence.

## Government seizes on a pretext

The strike committee refused to go to Warsaw to meet a government delegation led by labour minister Jacek Kuron. Miodowicz and Jurczyk were mandated to put this position at the meeting in the capital. Miodowicz, ex-member of the politburo of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP, the Polish communist party), mandated by the strikers! This gave the government a splendid pretext for ignoring the substance of the strike, while presenting it as manipulated by the old ruling elite.

As a journalist on the Solidarnosc daily remarked after the strike: "It was a good thing that Miodowicz and Jurczyk got involved in the railway strike. Faced with their old enemy Miodowicz, the railworkers' Solidarnosc organization, Walesa, the government and without doubt even some of the strikers, felt themselves once again in the same camp. The OPZZ-Solidarnosc division became superimposed on the original conflict between the workers and the government. It was this that saved us."<sup>4</sup>

*Gazeta Wyborcza* published an instant poll which found that only 16% supported the strike and 62% condemned it<sup>5</sup>. Appeals from various Solidarnosc structures multiplied, and were reproduced in the press and quoted in the media. One example was from the Solidarnosc leadership in Gdansk: "At the crucial moment

1. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no.118, May 23, 1990.

2. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no.119, May 24, 1990.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no. 126, June 1, 1990.

### The railway workers' demands

1. That the transport minister presents urgently a clear and coherent programme for the restructuring of the PKP (Polish state railways), leading to a radical transfer of administrative jobs to the operational side, taking into account the ideas developed by the railway workers' union commission of Solidarnosc in Slupsk. The representatives of this commission must take part in the development of the programme.
2. That the minimum levels of wages, pensions and family benefits should be such as to ensure decent living conditions.
3. That point 6 of the protocol of agreement from made in Warsaw on October 20, 1989 should be implemented, and in particular (a) that 90% of the wage is fixed; (b) that the variable part of the wage corresponds to 20% of previous salary; (c) that price rises are automatically compensated by a wage rise. The average wage must be 110% of the national average wage, thanks to an across the board increase to compensate for the rise in prices since April 1. This last point must be dealt with immediately.
4. That a new salary scale should be presented to the unions before June 15, 1990.
5. We demand payment for waiting time at the station at the the same rate for operational time.
6. We demand the suspension until September 1, 1990 of the rise in train fares both for people and goods.
7. We demand a rapid change in the PKP's economic system.
8. We demand the sacking of the PKP's director general, Janusz Glowacki.
9. The sacking of the PKP's regional director in Pomerania, Stefan Maksymov.
10. Payment for days on strike, and a guarantee for the organizers of the strike, the hunger strikers and those who have taken part in the warning strikes, that there will be no repression against them.
11. A guarantee that the hunger strikers will be kept under medical observation at the expense of the enterprises and will be treated in a sanatorium.
12. The possibility to keep our colleagues informed through the intermediary of the national media during the negotiations and at their conclusion. ★

for the country, those who over the years supported the communist dictatorship now dare to place themselves at the head of the workers, and, profiting from the political and economic situation in the country, speak in their name....Comrade railway workers, despite the justice of your demands, halt the strike!"<sup>6</sup>

Different reactions from other Solidarnosc union structures were passed over. The strike of railway workers in Bialograd for example was only mentioned when it was finished: "We, Solidarnosc members and non-organized workers from Bialograd station, reject the position taken by the leadership of the Solidarnosc railway workers' union, which was not discussed with the workers. We demand that misinformation published in the press is corrected in the television news."<sup>7</sup>

Lech Walesa finally arrived in Slupsk on the night of May 26-27 to convince the workers to call off the strike. He explained his failure to do so on the TV: "When one is building democracy, when we are in the middle of the reform, at such a moment strikes, that type of solution to real problems, are against the reform and against

democracy. In a word — this is leading to the destruction of the reform.

Logical arguments had reached the majority. Almost everyone was in agreement with me and we were getting to the point of bringing the strike to an end. Then three people got up on the podium. One of them said: 'If you stop the strike, then Czeslaw, who was on hunger strike with us, will immediately kill himself!' Another type from Slupsk said: 'If you stop the strike, Slupsk will continue it anyway.' This blackmail was effective, because the people were determined, since nobody had talked to them and they have been manipulated in this difficult situation. We cannot allow a few irresponsible elements to destroy our social gains. It is necessary either to give them what they want or put a stop to this strike immediately and in a decisive manner."<sup>8</sup>

The KKP threatened to call for a general strike on the railways starting at midnight on May 29. Walesa came back to Slupsk on the night of Sunday May 27 to again try to stop the strike. He discussed with the president and vice-president of the strike committee — both Solidarnosc

militants — with whom he reached an agreement. Then he confronted the general assembly. The Solidarnosc daily paper reported these events: "The leaders of the union confederations excluded from the negotiations attacked the agreement....'That's demagogy', Walesa interrupted them — 'It is useless to demand guarantees from this government, this government is not going to lie to us as your government did. It is going to realize all your demands but not in the way you propose: this government will sort everything out, for it is our government'.

Someone in the hall cried out: 'On TV you proposed the intervention of the police' 'Yes, the ZOMO (police) should have thrown you out, just as they used to throw me out under your government. Then you would discuss in another way. Let us get this finished, I don't have much time. Your methods are criminal. But this time it is finished once and for all. In fact everyone who has supported this strike should be tried. Only a union has the right to begin a strike and we have to start constructing the law and not making a mockery of it.'

### Solidarnosc supporters pushed to the limit

"Shouts in the hall: 'But, Mr. Walesa, this strike was started by Solidarnosc supporters pushed to the limit.' 'You are right, we did not pay attention to you. But we cannot lead Poland to ruin. What can you lose? Some honour, because the government did not come to you on its knees? Is that what you want? You have given a lesson both to the government, to Walesa, to the unions and to the types who have gone along with you. But do not destroy our country which is so poor. Do not ask the new Poland after nine months to have good, ready made solutions for everything. Let us put aside our ambitions. Let each return to their place.'"

Walesa and the strike committee published a communiqué announcing the ending of the strike: "We will advance together to the realization of the 12 demands and we are going to inform the prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki that the whole of society must bear the burden of the crisis equally."<sup>9</sup>

But on May 31 Jacek Kuron announced in the name of the government that while wage rises were on the way in the public sector, the demand for the raising of the average national wage by 110% was not feasible. ★

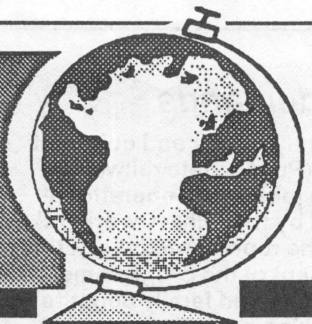
5. Such polls leave much to be desired — another forecast saw a 61.5% turnout in the elections.

6. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no. 121, May 26-27, 1990.

7. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no. 122, May 28, 1990.

8. According to the account in *Gazeta Wyborcza* no. 122, May 28, 1990.

9. *Gazeta Wyborcza* no. 123, May 29, 1990.

AROUND  
THE  
WORLD

## ISRAELI STATE

**Appeal for international solidarity**

*International Viewpoint* has received the following statement from the Revolutionary Communist League, section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state:

"The heroic uprising of the Palestinian people in its struggle for independence stands in the middle of its third year. Every day the Palestinian people sacrifices the best of its daughters and sons in the struggle against the colonial regime, the regime of occupation, exploitation, expulsion and murder, a regime which enjoys massive support by imperialism and a supportive international system of propaganda.

"The popular movement in the occupied territories deserves every possible support, irrespective of the character of its leadership. It is one of the few liberation movements in the world which still finds itself under a regime of direct colonialism.

"We call on all revolutionary and progressive forces worldwide to take urgent action on the following axes:

1. Participation in forums and congresses organized by various bodies supporting the Palestinian struggle while paying special attention to aspects of class and nationality in the Palestinian liberation struggle.
2. Struggle for the Palestinians' and the expelled Palestinians' right to return, and struggle against the migration of Jews to Palestine — a migration which comes to continue the exploitation of the Palestinian people.
3. Organizing consignments of help and support to the occupied territories.
4. Organization of activity in the fields of information, solidarity and protest outside the Middle East in order to expose the racist, repressive and inhuman character of Zionism.
5. Organization of a campaign on university campuses protesting against the destruction of Palestinian education and demanding the reopening of all educational institutions in the occupied territories.
6. Calling professional unions to solidarity activity in support of the freedom of organization of the Palestinian unions.
7. Application of pressure on municipal

representatives of the left to act towards the adoption of Palestinian cities and villages in the framework of twinning.

8. Activity within feminist and women's organizations to promote solidarity with women's organizations in the occupied territories.

9. Struggle for the exclusion of Israeli representatives as representatives of an apartheid state from all international forums and congresses dealing with human rights, law, education or any other issue. It has to be stressed that representatives of a state which is consistently disregarding the rights of a whole people has no place in these forums." ★

## EAST GERMANY

**Debate on future of socialism**

Over a thousand people attended a debate in East Berlin on May 25 between Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International, and Gregor Gysi, leader of the East German PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism). The meeting was jointly organized by the PDS and East German Trotskyists. The subject of the debate was; "Does socialism still have a future?"

Mandel explained the historic roots of the crisis and collapse of Stalinism in the GDR and several other Eastern European countries.

He insisted that, although the immediate political conjuncture today might be unfavourable for the working class, there is no reason to doubt that socialism has a future, particularly if the Soviet working class, the largest in the world, can reforge its socialist traditions. Finally, he warned the PDS that there would be no political space in a united Germany for a socialist current which did not situate itself clearly to the left of the SPD and the Greens.

Gysi argued that, as the restoration of capitalism in the GDR was now practically inevitable, a defensive fight was necessary to ensure that the German working class did not pay the bill for this; like Mandel, he stressed the importance of the struggle for the demilitarization of Germany and the dismantling of the repressive apparatuses.

Contrary to Mandel, Gysi argued that socialists must base their strategy on the global menaces which exist to humanity rather than the internal contradictions of capitalism, and claimed that it was necessary to reassess the role of social democracy, given that revolution was practically excluded for a long period in the principal countries of the world and the struggle for reforms would be paramount.

The meeting concluded with the singing of the "Internationale". The next day, *Neues Deutschland*, the daily newspaper of the PDS, carried a report of the debate on its front page, as well as a long interview with Mandel on the origins, politics and current implantation of the Fourth International. ★

FOURTH  
INTERNATIONAL**International youth summer camp**

The seventh international camp organized by youth organizations in political solidarity with the Fourth International will take place at Louvain in Belgium from July 22-29, 1990.

The camp will take place in the aftermath of the historic events of the past year in Eastern Europe, in which youth have played a massive and dynamic role. But it takes place also in the context of the mobilizations of Italian students against a project to "reform" the universities in the interests of capitalism; the anti-militarist struggles being led by youth in the Spanish state, Portugal and Switzerland; the need to build a massive and unitary opposition to racism and fascism in countries like France and Belgium; and a general situation in Western Europe where youth remain hardest hit by unemployment, lack of housing and all the other aspects of the capitalist crisis.

This year's youth camp will attempt to reflect all these struggles, and for the first time significant numbers of youth from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia will be able to attend the camp.

Throughout the week forums will take place on such themes as the events in the East, the struggle against the capitalist project for European "unification", the international fight for women's liberation, the need for a European-wide response against militarism and NATO, and the campaign for the cancellation of the third world debt.

A series of "Marxism for Beginners" educational discussions will also be organized. Finally, the camp will climax with a forum on the future of socialism — speakers will include Ernest Mandel, from the Fourth International, Thomas Klein, of the East German United Left, Angela Klein, of the West German United Socialist Party, and a representative of the Sandinista Youth from Nicaragua. ★



# Recession in China

**I**N THE REPORTS on the national economic plan and government budget by the Chinese State Department in March 1990, the economic situation was described as "relatively good", even though they also mentioned briefly that there were still some difficulties. However, the real situation, especially since the second half of the year, is much more serious than the picture painted, and can even be described as crisis-ridden.

The causes of this situation clearly include the impact of the 1989 democracy movement, but the deeper reasons lie within the ten years of economic reforms and with the rule of the bureaucracy. The effects of the economic crisis on the society and the lives of the people are now even more serious, and are directly threatening the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime.

The way the CCP regime has guarded Tiananmen Square since April this year reflects its feeling of sitting on a volcano that can burst at any time.

The official reports said that the Gross National Product in 1989 was 1567.7 billion yuan (Renminbi), a growth of 3.9% over 1988, while the National Income, Gross Agricultural Product and Gross Industrial Product grew by 3.7%, 3.3%, and 8.3% respectively; the foreign trade deficit has decreased, the foreign currency reserve has increased by \$2.2 billion; the economic rectification process was said to have achieved results; fixed capital investments have decreased, the rise in prices was less than in 1988, and social consumption demands were under effective control.

## Regime boosted by good grain harvest

Presumably, the result that the CCP regime is most happy about is the good grain harvest, the gross amount being slightly above the historic peak in 1984, even though the per capita grain production is still lower than 1984 because of population growth. Moreover, production of vegetables, fruits, meats and aquatic products has increased. However, the downward trend in the production of cotton, oil seeds and sugar products has not been reversed.

To deal with the so-called overheated economy, the CCP has continued the rectification policy started in the fourth quarter of 1988, and achieved some apparent results. The industrial growth rate that has been too high for several years has begun to come down, from 20.7% in 1988 to 8.3% in 1989. The severely unbalanced industrial production structure has improved slightly; the production of energy, important raw materials, electricity

**ONE YEAR after the Tiananmen Square massacre, the crisis of the Chinese economy, a key detonator of the pro-democracy revolt, remains profound. The article published below analyzes the economic problems underlying the continuing instability of the Beijing regime. It first appeared in the March/April 1990 edition of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong.**

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and transportation of goods has increased by between 3% and 7.2%, although still lower than the average industrial growth rate. The value of completed fixed capital investments has fallen by 11% compared to 1988, although this is still less than the reduction requested by the plan. Non-productive construction investments have also decreased, and the construction of luxury houses and apartments has been restrained. Prices still rose very sharply in the first half of 1989, but slowed off in the second half; the annual inflation rate was still a high 17.8%, only slightly lower than the 22.2% in 1988.

At the same time as the so-called overheated economy cools off, problems that have accumulated over the years have broken out, accompanied by the impact of the 1989 democracy movement, causing severe and contradictory economic difficulties. While huge demand still exists, the market has gone very weak, industrial production has decreased and economic efficiency has dropped massively.

Starting from May 1989, consumer spending has fallen, and sales figures have continuously dropped; since August, the growth rate has become negative. The total social goods retail sales volume has actually decreased by 7.6% compared to 1988, after taking inflation into account. The weak market situation has continued into the first quarter of this year. As a result of this, unsold goods have begun to massively accumulate, resulting in a huge increase in industrial and commercial

stocks of over 100 billion yuan in 1989. Industrial and commercial enterprises have thus experienced problems in circulation funds, and there is a severe problem of debts between various enterprises.

Industrial production has also started to slow down since May 1989, and in October had dropped by 2.1% compared to October 1988. Starting in May, light industrial production began to fall, and since September, has repeatedly been lower than the production for the same months in 1988. The drop in demand for productive goods from light industry, together with the squeeze in fixed capital investments and other factors, has begun to affect heavy industrial production; starting in September, heavy industrial production has decreased in individual months, although the scale of decrease has not been as severe as in light industry.

## CCP tries to arrest fall in industrial production

In order to turn around the fall in industrial production, the CCP has released massive loans in the fourth quarter of 1989 to the amount of 120 billion yuan, twice the total for the previous three quarters. But it could only barely arrest the falling trend. In January and February this year, industrial production dropped again by 0.9%, with the daily production for February dropping by 6.5% compared to January and by 5.7% compared to February of last year. Therefore, the CCP has resorted to relaxing the "buying power of social groups" and other methods so as to stimulate production, especially light industrial production; as a result, industrial production in March increased by 1.4% compared to March 1989.

There are many reasons for the sluggish market and the fall in industrial production and economic efficiency. The 1989 democracy movement and the June 4 massacre have in several ways accelerated and aggravated the outbreak of these problems. The 1989 democracy movement has shaken the entire CCP bureaucracy. The people generally feel extremely dissatisfied with the speculation, corruption and grandiose consumption by bureaucrats, forcing the CCP leadership to order the bureaucrats, big and small, to reduce somewhat their conspicuous consumption, control the so-called buying power of local "social" [bureaucratic] groups, and restrain the construction of luxury houses. Since June 1989, retail sales to "social groups" dropped, especially in August, September and October. However, the sales amount for the year still totalled 69.3 billion yuan, an increase of 4.2% over 1989 (a decrease of about 11% after

accounting for inflation), still very much higher than requested by the CCP leadership.

Furthermore, the CCP has intensified the crackdown on bureaucratic speculation companies after June, closing down over 70,000 companies, about a quarter of the total. It has also increased taxes or monopolized the sale of some speculated goods, restraining to a certain extent the speculation, and the income and consumption resulting from it.

On the other hand, the CCP has intensified its control and tax collection on individual businesses and the overhauling of rural enterprises. Under the pressure of tightening up, many people, especially those who have enriched themselves during ten years of reforms, have reduced consumption, especially luxury consumption.

Under the influence of several factors, the sale of high grade consumer goods has dropped severely, especially cars, color TVs and refrigerators; the production of these three products in the first quarter of this year has consequently dropped by 34%, 32% and 49% respectively, compared to the first quarter of 1989.

As for the general masses, several factors affect their consumption power or propensity to consume. It was apparent that after June 4, the morale of citizens suffered a heavy blow, and their consumption was reduced. Since 1988, the introduction by the banks of inflation-linked savings has absorbed some of the consumption power. Under the austerity measures of the CCP, the wages and bonuses of workers have been restrained; the reduction or even stoppages in production in factories, as well as the forced subscription to state bonds by the workers because of the financial difficulties of the government, have also seriously affected the income of workers.

### Passive resistance in factories

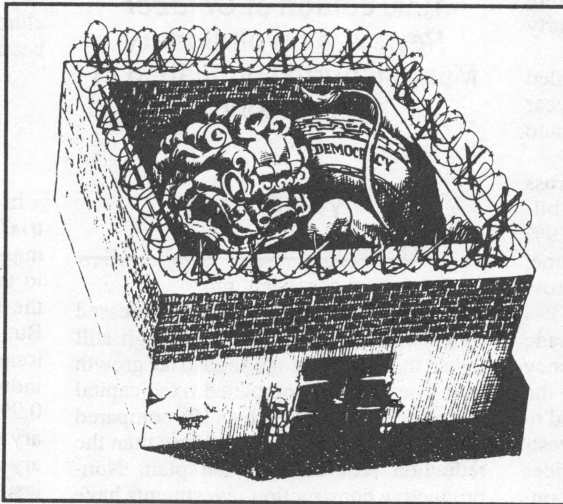
What is more difficult to estimate, is the effect of the passive resistance in the factories by the people, especially the workers in big cities like Beijing, to the CCP regime after the blow of June 4. In the official figures for 1989, the overall labour productivity in industry only increased by 1.6% over 1988, compared to a growth of 9.3% in 1988, while the overall labour productivity in construction has actually dropped by 1.5%, compared to a rise of 1.8% in 1988. Together with the massive increase in enterprise losses and the fall in economic efficiency, these figures might reveal, besides falling or stopped production and other factors, the effect of a further drop in work enthusiasm of workers.

Under the impact of June 4, income

from tourism has dropped significantly, official figures indicate a decrease of \$410 million compared to 1988, or a drop of 19.6%. However, compared to a projected continuation of the 20% growth in 1988, the loss in income would amount to \$0.8-1 billion.

Moreover, foreign government and bank loans to China have virtually stopped since June 4 and sanctions only began to be relaxed at the beginning of this year. Figures from the state budget report indicate that "income" from foreign loans last year fell short of budget by 3 billion yuan, a drop of 18.3%, but figures released by the Foreign Economic and Trade Ministry revealed a much more serious effect; total agreed loans last year were \$4.8 billion, a drop of over 50% from 1988, and actually used loans were \$5.9 billion, a drop of nearly 10%.

In view of the instability of the rule of the CCP regime, most foreign capitalists



have taken a hesitant attitude towards expanding investments in China. Official figures show that "actual foreign business investments" have only grown by 4.1% in 1989. As a close comparison, the "actual amount of foreign investments used" in 1988 grew by 16.4% over 1987. Had there not been a massive increase in investments in China from Taiwan capitalists looking for opportunities to invest outside of Taiwan, the situation would have been much worse.

A deeper cause of the weak market and fall in production lies in the change in industrial structure as a result of ten years of economic reforms.

In recent years, all over China, many production lines for high grade consumer products have been imported and are producing on a massive scale cars, color TVs, refrigerators, high grade drinks and so on, to supply the consumption of bureaucrats and those who have enriched themselves during the reforms. Now a serious excess has appeared in productive capacity for these products. For example, it was reported that total productive capacity for color TVs in China is now 16

million sets per year. Last year 7.89 million sets were produced and 7.03 million sets sold; this year the plan is to produce 6 million sets, that is, at only 37.5% of total productive capacity. The distorted development of consumer goods production has become a heavy burden for the economy.

Moreover, the CCP central government has for years practised a policy of granting power and the right to profits to the provinces and enterprises. To promote regionalism and to satisfy the huge demand for light industrial consumer goods neglected for decades, regional bureaucracies have blindly developed light industry, resulting in excess productive capacity and low efficiency.

### Neglect of larger scale Industry

At the same time, traditional large scale light industry and heavy industry have been neglected; machinery and technology have become worn out and obsolete, production efficiency has dropped. Basic production infrastructure has also become seriously unbalanced; the production of raw material and energy, transport and road facilities and so on, are seriously inadequate. This is the situation behind the so-called overheated economy. It also reveals that the apparent boom brought about by ten years of economic reform is actually financed to a very large extent by massive internal and foreign loans, with distorted development fostered by the high grade consumption of the bureaucrats and the nouveau riche, and whose effects and influence are clearly shown now.

In reality, the basic needs of the people are far from being satisfied. At the same time as the market becomes weaker and some stocks increase massively, people's savings in urban and rural areas have increased by 35%, reaching 513.5 billion yuan, the equivalent of three quarters of the annual social consumer goods retail sales.

Ten years of economic reforms have also made the Chinese economy, especially in the coastal provinces and the processing industry, rather dependent on the capitalist world market. At the current regulated foreign exchange rate of about \$1 to 6 yuan (not just the official exchange rate of 4.73), the total import and export trade amounts to an equivalent of over 40% of the Gross National Product. Last year's restriction of imports has not only affected domestic production but also restricted the capacity to increase exports; the slowing down in the US economy in the second half of last year has undoubtedly also had an effect on the slowing down of Chinese exports.

All these transformations were not made overnight, nor can they be changed easily.

And the entire process of change has resulted in heavy internal and external debt burdens. A great mass of workers and rural labourers have come to depend on the new economic structure for their living, and any adjustments or economic crisis will have very significant consequences.

The weak market and the fall in industrial production and economic efficiency, combined with the changes after ten years of economic reforms, have caused extremely severe pressure on the finances of the Chinese government, especially on the central government. Not only was the government unable to get more income from tax and profits from the enterprises, it had to greatly increase its subsidies to cover enterprise losses to 60 billion yuan last year. Together with 37 billion yuan of price subsidies, they use up one third of the government's financial income. Moreover, the military and special administrative cost in repressing the 1989 democracy movement, along with the reduced income because of foreign sanctions, have altogether caused the government deficit to reach 37 billion yuan (not counting the money raised from debts as "income" as the CCP used to do) which amounts to over 10% of government income and an increase of 8.2% from 1988.

### Government debts soar

The huge increase in the deficit and the halting of foreign loans have forced the CCP to raise internal debts by every means, resulting in an increase of 26.2% above budget in 1989. Total government internal debts have now reached 80 billion yuan, excluding the debts raised by banks and enterprises. The official foreign debt is over \$40 billion, which does not include the reported \$70 billion foreign loans made by companies and enterprises and guaranteed by the Chinese government.

This year, the financial situation of the government is even more gloomy.

Besides the economic difficulties affecting income and expenditure, military and administrative expenditure have to be maintained at a high level, and China has entered into the peak period for repayment of internal debts this year. Reportedly, the government has to repay 26 billion yuan of loan and interest this year, but the government budget intends only to repay 12.4 billion yuan of state bonds sold to individuals, while postponing the repayment of bonds sold to enterprises, units and banks. Even so, the government budget deficit for 1990 is 42.3 billion yuan, 14.5% more than the 1989 high.

This year, the government will also have to massively borrow to repay old loans. The budgeted new internal loans will be 17 billion yuan, 21.3% more than the 1989 high.

What makes the CCP central government feel powerless is also the fact that its

### Czechoslovak left honours Tiananmen victims

ON JUNE 3, 1990, some 3,000 demonstrators gathered in Prague's Old Town Square, responding to a call from anarchist groups and Left Alternative to commemorate the anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre. The marchers went to the Chinese embassy where they vainly asked to be allowed to hand in a statement of protest about the massacre.

A speaker from Left Alternative, Vratislav Votava, had this to say to the demonstrators:

"We are today commemorating the anniversary of what happened last year in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. This was a demonstration of the brutal and violent methods used by totalitarian regimes against their own peoples. It is necessary to go beyond partial measures which liberalize these tyrannies without destroying the bureaucratic structures that form the backbones of these regimes. After the years of the terrible Stalino-Maoist dictatorship, a partial liberalization took place in China, described at the time as the four modernizations of opening to the world. This means that there was both an internal and external liberalization; but this liberalization was unsatisfactory and everyone knew that retrogression to the old order was always possible.

When last year intellectuals, students and workers confronted Deng Xiaoping's gerontocracy, a type of insurrection took place. The Chinese government intervened, using the methods proper to Stalinist-Communist totalitarian regimes.

From the point of view of Left Alternative-Movement for Independent and Self-Managing Socialism, the Chinese regime has nothing in common with a socialist or Marxist regime, even with a "Chinese Marxism", as the Chinese leaders tried to pretend. What you have there is Chinese Stalinism.

We have assembled here to remember, but also to make sure that the old bureaucratic structures that sustained the old regime here do not survive after the elections. These structures must be dismantled to prevent any return to the past. We are on the side of the Chinese students and workers, on the side of the Paris Commune and democracy."

control over financial income and material resources has been greatly reduced during the ten years of reforms. Income from the central government is now less than half of the total state financial income, while all local difficulties end up as problems for the central government eventually.

Over the last year the fall in production, the government financial crisis and other economic problems have seriously affected the lives of the broad masses.

Because many factories have reduced or even stopped production, the incomes of many urban workers have been reduced significantly; workers in factories that have stopped production receive only 70% of their wage, not to mention any bonuses. The situation in rural industries and individual businesses is even worse. It can be calculated from official figures that the real income of the urban masses has dropped by 4.7% on average, while the real income of the average peasant has dropped by 8.3%. Total sales of consumer goods have dropped in real terms by 9.4%, falling back to the level of 1987.

The government financial crisis has also hit the standard of living of the broad masses. On the one hand, the government has to raise more loans from the people, even using forced subscription to state bonds; on the other hand, price subsidies of many important daily necessities such as meat, cotton wadding, soap oil, coal for civilian use and so on, have begun to be reduced or even removed, adding hardship to people already living on a

reduced income.

The problem of unemployment has become more serious, causing great concern within the CCP regime, since it would seriously threaten social stability and the rule of the bureaucracy.

The number of unemployed and partially unemployed urban citizens has grown significantly. In February this year, some Chinese newspapers estimated that about 6% of state enterprises have stopped or partially stopped production, affecting over 4 million workers already; in the coastal provinces it is worse, with the ratio reaching over 10% in some provinces. Other reports talked about 80% of enterprises in Guangdong province as not having enough work and an unemployment rate of over 10%. Official estimates say this year's "waiting-for-employment" rate in urban areas will grow from 2% to 4-5%, that is, from over 3 million to 6-7 million people or more.

### Rural labourers return to countryside

Because of a serious drop in urban employment opportunities, especially because the construction industry has been under serious pressure, many rural labourers have returned to the countryside or moved around throughout the country, forming "blind flows". Moreover, about 15% of rural enterprises have gone bankrupt or merged, and of the 95 million rural labourers employed by them, over 3 million have lost their jobs. About 15% of rural and urban individual businesses have



also closed, reducing 3.6 million jobs out of 20 million. Rural unemployment is thus especially serious. In Sichuan province with a population of 100 million, 15 million are reportedly "waiting for employment", and several other provinces are in a similar situation.

The 1989 democracy movement and the June 4 massacre have enabled the people to see clearly the true face of the CCP bureaucracy, thus laying a more solid foundation for the next wave of the democratic movement. The crisis brought about by ten years of reforms has deepened the difficulties of CCP rule and forced it to shift the cost of the crisis onto the workers and peasants, causing even greater pressure on people's living standards. The struggle of the people for democracy and the struggle to defend their living standards have become the two main motive forces for the overthrow of the rule of the CCP bureaucracy. Since June 4 relations between the people and the bureaucracy and the army have been very tense. News of people passively resisting the bureaucracy is frequently reported, for example, the boycotting of the CCP campaign to investigate participants in the democracy movement, Beijing citizens refusing to buy "patriotic cabbages" last winter, and so on. The success of Chai Ling and other democracy movement activists in hiding all over China for ten months, receiving broad protection from the people, and finally arriving safely in France and the USA, shows clearly the general attitude of the people. News about underground organizations that include, students, workers, intellectuals, party members and soldiers is also often reported.

Moreover, news of soldiers and their families being insulted, attacked or even killed is often heard; the army even complains to the government about these

attacks and has requested the government to step up security.

The fear of the CCP bureaucracy about the sharpening crisis, the bitterness of the people and the unstable situation can be clearly shown by all the nervous measures to guard Tiananmen Square and Beijing, Guangdong and other big cities since April this year. Various signs also indicate that there are many internal conflicts inside the bureaucracy; the Party rectification campaign fizzled out, no common position or final judgement on the question of [demoted "liberal" Communist Party leader] Zhao Ziyang has emerged, and so on. In the intensified economic and social crises, the conflicts between central and regional bureaucracies, especially those in the coastal provinces and special economic zones, will only become more serious.

There are also signs of instability inside the army, to the extent that the Party bureaucracy has had to appeal many times in the newspapers for increasing discipline in the army, for maintaining unity, for the Party to direct the army, and so on.

### National question breaks out again

On the other hand, the national question has broken out on a larger scale. Demonstrations and bloody repression broke out in Xinjiang on April 5 this year, Xizang (Tibet) can still explode at any time, and there are also signs of instability in Inner Mongolia. Besides the Han chauvinism of the CCP bureaucratic rule leading to national oppression and hard conditions for the national minorities, the situation there could also be a result of the encouragement from democratic and national movements in Eastern Europe,

the Soviet Union and Mongolia. The national question may even be the trigger for the entire Chinese people to rise up against the rule of the bureaucracy.

Another serious potential threat to the Chinese economy and CCP rule is the probability of recession or even depression in the world capitalist economy. Because of the degree of dependence of the Chinese economy on the world capitalist market today, a world-wide recession would seriously affect production inside China, especially the processing industries, and employment and entire societies in coastal provinces would be most affected.

The CCP regime is already forced into a corner by economic, social and political crises. Facing the fall in industrial production and its consequences, the CCP has even had to resort to encouraging "consumption of social groups", using feasts and grandiose consumption to stimulate demand, thus risking the danger of deepening the hatred by the people of the bureaucracy. The CCP certainly knows the danger and therefore constantly increases its work inside the army, because the army is now the only pillar left for the bureaucracy.

Last year's good grain harvest is indeed the only consolation for the CCP. With its control and influence in the countryside greatly weakened by ten years of reforms, the CCP can only continue to look to the sky this year, praying that at least the question of food can be solved. Thus, the CCP central government has "greatly" increased its basic investment in agriculture by 30%, an increase that turns out to be only 1 billion yuan, as compared to 69.3 billion yuan of "social group consumption" in 1989! The contradiction, crisis and instability of the CCP regime are certainly revealed by this trifle. ★