

International VIEWPOINT

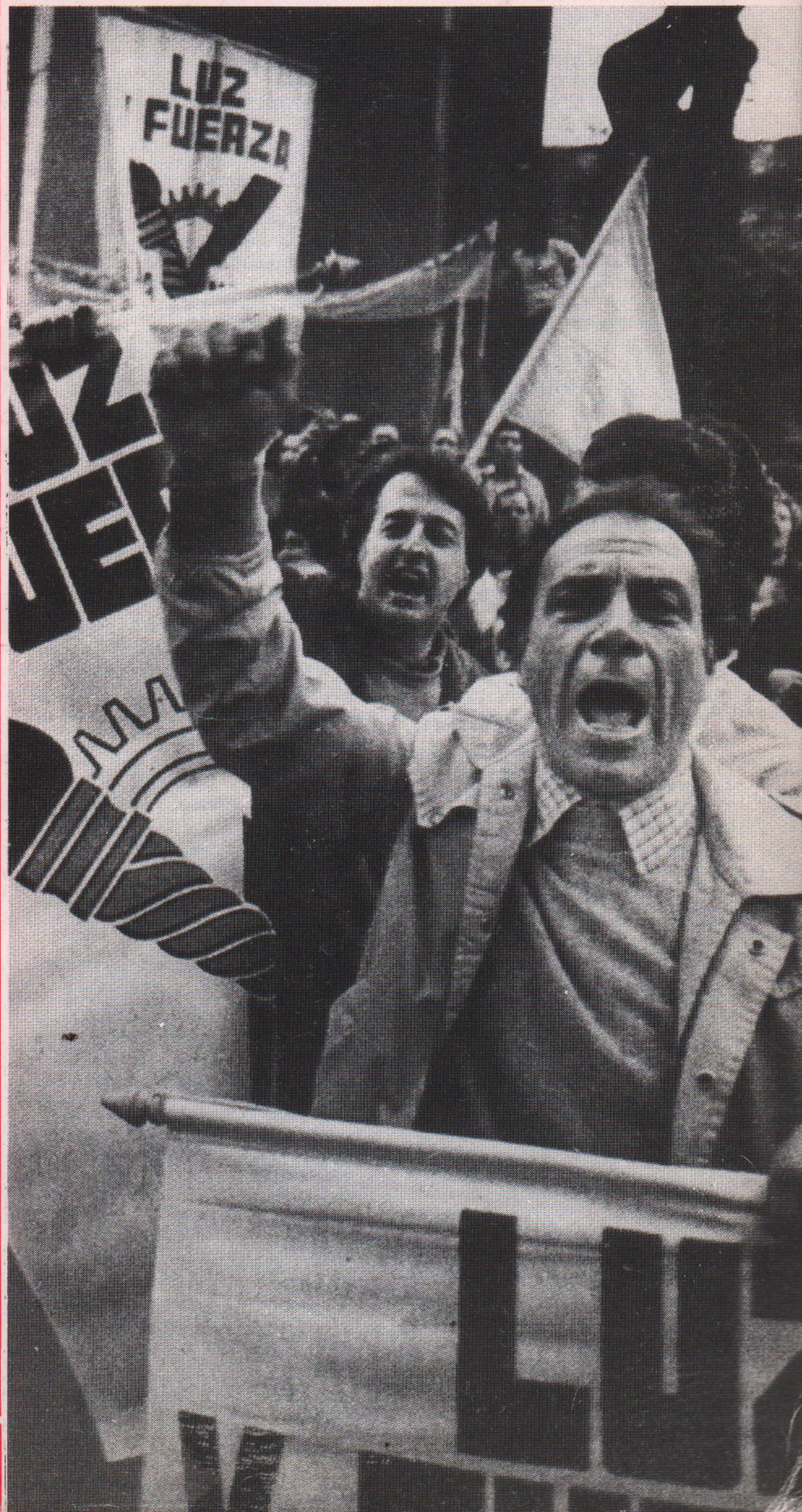
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Ring of juntas crumbles

- Opening in
Bolivia
- Uruguayan
vote

The U.S. war on
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International Viewpoint

Fortnightly Review of News and Analysis Published Under the Auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

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The Bolivian cauldron —radicalization deepens

When the Bolivian junta agreed to relinquish power to a civilian government on September 17, it was standing on the brink of an abyss.

The workers movement had reorganized and carried out a vast general strike against the regime. So, the military withdrawal was something between a retreat and a headlong flight. It left the instruments of bourgeois rule in Bolivia extremely weakened, and opened the way for a new rise of mass movement that could lead in the relatively near future to a fundamental social confrontation.

Bolivia is a small country, but the implications of the process that has begun go far beyond its frontiers. The Bolivian junta was a key part of the system of military dictatorships that was built up in the entire southern part of South America, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay — the decisive region of the continent.

In fact, the Brazilian and Argentine dictatorships were directly involved in building the military regime in Bolivia.

Thus, in many respects, Bolivia was the weakest link in a chain of dictatorships that were a vital bulwark of imperialist and capitalist domination in Latin America. It was the first to break, the others are beginning to crack. This is most evident in

Argentina, where the dictatorship is on the ropes. But it is also happening in Uruguay and Chile, where the mass movement is reviving after years of savage repression, as well as in Brazil.

The debacle of the military dictatorship in Bolivia came in the context of the growing crisis of U.S. imperialist domination of Latin America, in which the immediate flashpoint is in Central America. The opening up of the way for a mass radicalization in Bolivia must certainly be an encouragement to revolutionaries in Central America, and in fact it objectively weakens imperialism.

Conversely, the new international context is having a major effect on the consciousness and confidence of the left and revolutionaries in Bolivia. They see the dictatorships around them cracking, and they know that the Brazilian and Argentine military can no longer intervene against them as they did in the past. The advances of the fighters in Central America are a beacon.

Likewise, the struggle of the Indian people in Guatemala is an encouragement to the most advanced elements of radicalizing peasant movement, which is mainly Indian.

Thus, in a sense, Bolivia has become the front line in the second front that is opening up in the fight against imperialism and capitalism in Latin America.

S. ROMANDE

LA PAZ — The resignation from the new cabinet January 9 of the MIR ministers is an indication of the pressures on the government that came into office here in October in the wake of mass mobilizations, which forced the military to relinquish power.

The MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario—Movement of the Revolutionary Left), although it traces its origins from pro-Cuban guerrillas, is now a conservative formation. It stands on the right wing of bourgeois nationalism.

The resignation of the MIR ministers was part of moves to rebuild a bourgeois government more stable than the present UDP (Union Democratica Popular), which is a coalition of the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB) and the two offshoots of the old bourgeois nationalist party, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR).

The MNR was the party that came to power on the back of the revolution of 1952, which it progressively liquidated. As it moved to the right, opening the way for a new cycle of military dictatorships, the party split.

The MNR-Historico, led by Victor Paz Estenssoro, represents the sections that openly collaborated with the dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer at the beginning of the 1970s. The MNR-Izquierda (Left), led by the new president, Hernan Siles Suazo, represents those sectors that remained attached to the old popul-

ism, generally under the pressure of a more radical traditional base.

What the leading bourgeois politicians now see as necessary to build a stable capitalist government is a so-called reunification of the MNR, which would mean a split in the MNR-I. The MNR-I parliamentary faction, led by Alvarez Plata, favors such a "unification." But it is opposed by the party apparatus and the left.

This "historic reconciliation" would then be beefed up with an alliance with the ADN of Banzer, the strongest right-wing bourgeois party, in the framework

of a government of national unity. Since the MIR is a newcomer and relative outsider in the conservative camp, it plays the more adventurous game. It could expect a bigger role in a broader coalition.

THE SITUATION REMAINS UNSTABLE

The reason that such maneuvers have begun so early and are being pursued with such haste — even at the risk of rocking a precariously stabilized situation — is that the Bolivian bourgeoisie and its

UDP/MIR demonstration September 1982 (DR)



representatives are well aware that the present balance cannot last very long. They are already preparing an alternative to the UDP government.

Parallel to these party-political maneuvers, the representatives of the Bolivian bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism are trying to rebuild the unity and credibility of the armed forces. On December 28, the director general of the customs service, Carlos Montana, announced that the former head of the junta, General Garcia Meza, who was stripped of his military rank and fled to Argentina, would be charged with smuggling.

In an apartment belonging to the fugitive general, government agents found a stock of TV sets and electrical appliances worth 200,000 dollars. According to Montana, in 1980-81, about 60% of such imports passed through the hands of "leaders of the previous government."

The transfer to the reserve of the other three heads of the last junta, Celso Terrelío, Guido Vildoso, and Alberto Natush, was announced on December 28.

About 14 former officers have been purged from the military. This is no more than prettying-up operation, since it is well known that the military was up to its neck in the cocaine traffic. The Bolivian military had reached a stage of corruption heretofore unknown even in the long and sordid history of Latin American uniformed gangsterism. It has now to be reorganized and have its image refurbished. That is essential for maintaining capitalist rule in Bolivia.

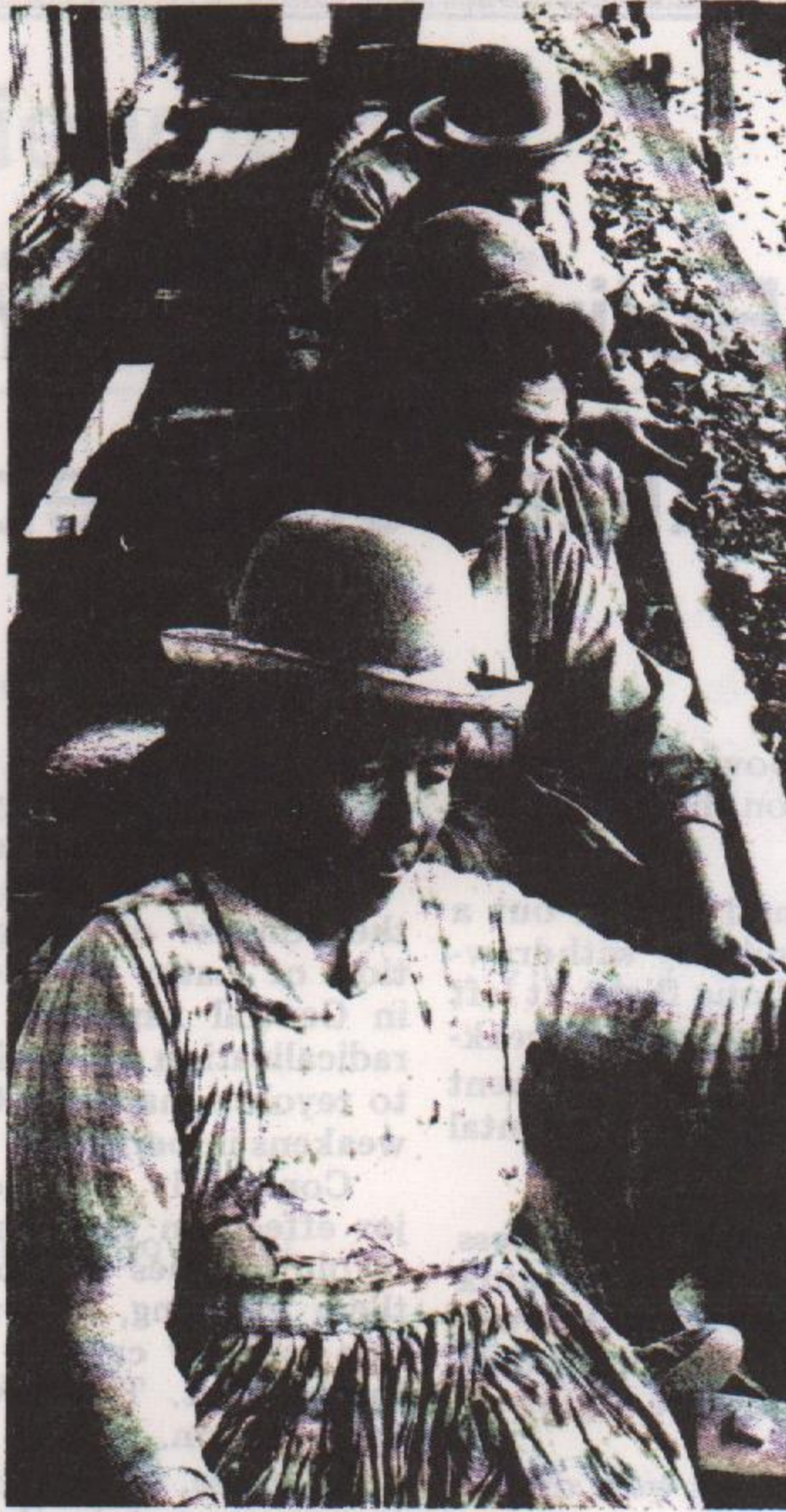
The U.S. embassy is openly involved in this operation, publicly pressing for a purge of the officer corps. The U.S. ambassador meets at least once a week with the chief of staff of the military and the chief of police.

UDP LAUNCHES AUSTERITY PROGRAM

Nonetheless, there is no serious effort to attack military corruption. What the imperialists and the bourgeoisie are interested in is a little image renovation and reorganization of the military commands. This is an essential counterpiece to the political maneuvers because restabilization would undoubtedly involve a new coup, and Washington wants some sort of political cover for it.

The response to the MIR withdrawal from the cabinet revealed quite clearly the political situation of the government. The move was seen by the masses as an attempt from the right to destabilize the UDP government, and there was a strong reaction to it, especially from the union.

It is not that the masses regard the UDP cabinet as *their* government. But they do see it as the result of their struggles, and, to a certain extent, as the guarantor of their democratic rights. Needless to say, the UDP is playing this card for all it is worth, warning the masses not to put too much pressure on it because this could help prepare the way for a coup.



Bolivian women mineworkers (DR)

Nonetheless, the tension between the government and the people sharpened notably when the new cabinet announced its first series of economic measures on November 6. These are entirely in accord with the demands of the International Monetary Fund, to such an extent that Juan Lechin, head of the Bolivian Labor Confederation (COB) proclaimed that the government was following the line of the IMF.

However, the COB leadership is leaving the ball in the government's hands, doing nothing to propose alternatives or to actually mobilize the workers.

The policy the government adopted was to grant subsidies to the big exporting sectors, that is, the private sector of mining (the so-called middle-sized mines), which is more profitable than the nationalized sector; agribusiness; and petroleum and gas, which is a mixed sector. There is a state oil company, but imperialist concerns have a major weight, both in extraction and exploration.

At the same time, the government's measures amounted to an austerity program for the masses. The minimum wage was set at 8,490 pesos. However, one of the key demands of the movement that forced the military to relinquish power was for a minimum living wage and the miners union estimates this to be around 40,000 pesos for a family of five. Not one of the unions demands a minimum wage less than 23-25,000 pesos.

The government froze wages, calling for a "social truce" for 100 working days. But at the same time, it increased the charges of vital services, such as transport and electricity, which make up a big chunk of the workers' unavoidable expen-

ses. The cost of electricity was hiked from two to three times, depending on the incomes of the users.

The higher costs of electricity were particularly resented. In fact, this touched a number of sensitive nerves. The government has recently nationalized the Bolivian Power Company. This is a typical example of a Bolivian concern. For fifty years, its owners put scarcely any money in it. Now, in order to develop it, the government is upping the charges to acquire funds for investment.

Typically the Bolivian bourgeoisie does not invest its own money in the country; it invests only when it gets subsidies. And then the profits of public corporations are siphoned off to build the private sector.

So, protests developed against the electricity price hikes in both the neighborhoods and unions, involving, in particular, petition campaigns.

Actually so long as the government accepts the structural context in which it finds itself — the rules of the market and capitalism in general, the existence of an unrepresentative right-wing majority in parliament — it has very little room for maneuver.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The foreign debt stands at 3.8 billion dollars, a huge sum for one of the poorest countries in the world, with a population of only about 4 million. It is estimated that in the coming year, payment on this debt will absorb more than 80% of foreign currency income.

The Bolivian national bank estimated in early December that the great majority of enterprises in the country are working at about 47% of capacity, which represents economic collapse comparable to the crash of 1929. The official unemployment rate is 30%, and this is to say nothing of the unregistered unemployed and the underemployed, who make up a large percentage of the potential workforce in all underdeveloped countries, and particularly in Bolivia.

The prices of consumer goods, according to the government itself, have skyrocketed by 1,300% in the last year. At the start of 1982, some 25 Bolivian pesos bought one U.S. dollar. In March it took 44. Today, the subsidized export sector is allowed to buy dollars for 200 pesos. The official rate is 211 pesos to the dollar. And the black market rate is 300 to 330 to the dollar.

Its attempts to obey the laws of capitalist economy are bringing the UDP government into conflict even with its own bourgeois supporters. It is the sections of the Bolivian bourgeoisie dependent on the internal market that support the UDP. And the November 6 measures mean a continuing disastrous drop in the buying power of the Bolivian people, a corresponding contraction of the internal market, and hence dismal prospects for the capitalists who are trying to enrich themselves from it.

In this situation, the support of the Bolivian Communist Party is crucial for the government. It is the only way the workers movement can be kept in line.

The PCB holds the key lever in the trade-union movement, since it controls the miners union, the organization of the most advanced and economically decisive section of the working class.

The game this party is playing is a classical Stalinist one, combining support in practice for the government's austerity policies with demagogic left language and gestures.

Unfortunately, the Cuban leadership is reinforcing the PCB operation by uncritically boosting the UDP government, despite the Fidelistas' historic differences with the Bolivian CP. On the other hand, the guerrilla organizations linked to the Cubans have degenerated or withered away.

The UDP reemerged as the leadership of the opposition to the dictatorship when military rule was clearly on the way out. It did not in fact give leadership to the resistance during the years of army rule. But in the absence of a general political alternative, it regained its position of dominance, based on the two previous elections in which it established its position in the electoral arena. It has hegemony, therefore, not a real grip on the masses. And most importantly, it is not in a position to offer any material concessions to any major sector of the population.

The government in fact finds itself already being outflanked by the rightist majority in parliament. The UDP has agreed to keep the parliament elected before the coup, although it and the left would certainly win overwhelmingly in new elections. Obviously the rightist majority is a guarantee to the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. The government also finds it useful as a scapegoat for its failure to meet the expectations of the workers and the people. However, this has not kept the right from opening up a propaganda campaign in its newspapers and through its radio stations against the government precisely because of this failure.

For example the rightists denounced the increase in electricity prices with the most touching display of concern for the empty pockets of the poor.

In parliament itself, the right sabotages even small attempts by the government to do positive things. For example, it blocked the purchase of penicillin from Hungary, which offered to sell it to Bolivia at eight pesos a unit, far below the world price. In February, there will be no more penicillin, and the right will be able to argue that under this government even essential medicines have become unavailable.

Nor is the right appreciative of the PCB's role in holding back the workers movement. It has started a campaign to get the CP out of the government. In fact, this serves a dual purpose, to put pressure on the party to be even more

cooperative, and to prepare the way for a more right-wing regime.

THE ROLE OF THE BOLIVIAN CP

The influence of the Partido Socialista-Uno, the party to the left of the UDP in parliament, is increasing rapidly. It is not much of an organizing force but it established a presence on the parliamentary level before the coup, and now serves as a rallying ground for the growing mass impatience with the government, and thus as a key barometer.

The expanding influence of the PS-Uno also reflects the failure of the UDP government to carry through even a serious program of dismantling the dictatorship. The PS-Uno's platform is essentially one of pressing for democratization, in particular for a thorough cleaning out of the military.

Another key gauge of the radicalization of the masses are the elections held recently in the trade unions. In every case, the left has made a very strong showing, and in important cases won the majority. At the Huanuni mine, for example, one of the most important working-class centers, the POR-Combate (Partido Obrero Revolucionario, Revolutionary Workers Party, Bolivian section of the Fourth International) ran a slate together with militants coming from a Maoist background. It got 707 votes as against around 400 for the CP one.

Militant slates including the POR-C have also won in the health workers union and the teachers union. The POR-C played an important role in leading the strike of the La Paz health workers, who were demanding the right to organize, which the government wanted to deny public workers. The strike was essentially victorious, although there are still restrictions on public-worker unions.

The POR is campaigning for the immediate granting of a 23,000 pesos minimum wage. It opposes the government's demand for a 100 day social truce under the slogan "People who are hungry cannot wait 100 days." It is pressing for the COB to draw up a workers and peasants plan for dealing with the crisis. In fact, faced with the passivity of the Lechin leadership, local unions have been demanding that the COB call a meeting to discuss program.

The POR-C is putting forward a program of democratic rights, for the right to organize for public workers, the right to criticize parliament, the right to demonstrate, and for the organization of workers self-defense by the COB to prevent any future coup. In fact, representatives of the paramilitary groups organized by the dictatorship are still everywhere in public life — to such an extent that in his year-end speech the president himself felt compelled to bewail this "disgrace."

The POR-C argues, along with other forces in the labor movement, that either Siles Suazo is serious about getting rid of the paramilitaries, in which case the COB should help; or, if he is not, the COB



'Long live the people's resistance' (DR)

should do it.

In answer to the government's proposal for parity comanagement boards to supervise the nationalized industries, the POR-C and the left wing of the labor movement calls for a workers majority in all organs of nationalized industry.

Notably, the workers reaction to the proposal for parity boards has been cool. This shows how far the consciousness of the workers has moved since the nationalizations of the 1950s. They have had extensive experience with the bureaucracy that runs the state companies and with the way these companies divert profits to private firms.

At the same time, the POR-C is calling for workers control in the private sector. This has become a traditional demand of the Bolivian labor movement, owing to the major Trotskyist influence that existed in the formative period after World War II.

The government has made some noises about setting up Committees to Defend the People's Economy (CODEPs). The POR-C seized on this to start a campaign for forming such bodies and making them into effective means of controlling the economy.

In general, the POR-C is actively working to build joint action with as broad a spectrum of forces in the labor movement as possible on every issue where there are opportunities for concrete struggles. Openings have appeared for such common action not only with local forces in the unions but with PCP activists in various areas who are more militant in practice than the line of their party.

An extremely important political process is opening up in Bolivia, which will have an important impact on the other, much larger, countries in the Andes and in southern Latin America, where the workers movement is reviving.

The struggle in the workplaces in besieged Nicaragua

Recently Heinz Liechti toured Nicaragua visiting factories, agricultural cooperatives, and unions and discussing with many workers, peasants as well as trade-union activists and leaders. In the following article, he points up some of the problems of the Sandinista unions in the present stage, as imperialist pressures increase.

MANAGUA — The San Antonio sugar mill in Chichigalpa, the largest in Central America, has a permanent workforce of 1,000. During the harvest, it takes on an additional 5,000 seasonal workers. The mill belongs to the Pellas family who thus own the biggest private enterprise in Nicaragua.

The Pellas family controls 35% of the national sugar production. The other 65% is in the state sector. The San Antonio workers are among the most conscious and militant in Nicaragua. So, it might be expected that nothing could happen in the mill without the agreement of the Sandinista union, the Ronaldi Altamirano CST, which won its authority during the Sandinista insurrection.

THE BOSSES HAVE NOT GIVEN UP

However, since one of the foremost goals of the revolution is to raise production, the bosses have been able to block many moves by the union to improve working conditions. So, the CST cannot show that it has won new material gains for the workers.

One of the objectives of the bourgeoisie is to divide the union movement. It managed to accomplish this in a certain number of enterprises. The method was, right after the Sandinista victory, to grant wage raises higher than those provided for in national targets set by the FSLN.

By means of such material concessions many workers at the San Antonio sugar mill were literally bought. More than 500 workers resigned from the CST. The bourgeois "union," the CTN/CUS claims that it recruited all these workers. A careful study by the CST showed that this was an exaggeration. Only 150 workers joined the yellow union.

THE SANDINISTA RESPONSE

A turn took place in 1981/82. In July 1981, the CST and the Sandinista technicians exposed the policy of the Pellas

family in a document addressed to the government. It showed that owners were following a line that went from ignoring the laws against the sabotage of production to "decapitalization" of the enterprise. A demonstration of 2,000 workers backed up the demands that the government deal with the machinations of the Pellas family.

Finally, before and during the last harvest, the CST in the mill was able to go back on the offensive. Since the Pellas family made no attempt to organize the harvest properly, the CST, with the support of the FSLN, presented the bosses with a precise plan for bringing in the sugar cane. An ultimatum was delivered. Either the Pellas carried out the harvest according to the plan, or the CST would take things in hand and expropriate the machines necessary to do it. Pellas had to give in.

In addition, a conflict broke out in a subsidiary. In Rio Grande, the yellow unions dominated in the mill. They had succeeded in driving out the CST. They negotiated a contract with the boss. But he violated 48 of the 50 points agreed on. A conflict ensued.

Despite the division that existed, the CST intervened and backed up all the demands the yellow union was making on the bosses. This exemplary line of working-class unity not only forced the boss to respect the contract and to grant other demands but also led to the total collapse of the bourgeois unions.

Today, the CST local in the enterprise is able to analyze the economic situation of the concern in a detailed and precise way. Nonetheless, its sphere for independent action is limited to monitor-

ing production. It must submit the results of its studies to the government, which alone in this stage of the revolution can set aside the prerogatives of ownership.

Francisco, the union secretary, explained to us it was to be hoped that the enterprise would be socialized totally in the not too distant future. For the time being, it was necessary to keep a close watch on everything the boss did. The militia unit at the plant is maintaining an armed guard over the installations.

ICI—THE LINE OF A MULTINATIONAL

The conditions are still more difficult in Nicaragua's biggest agro-chemical concern, ICI — Casa, a subsidiary of the British chemical trust, ICI. Of the 65 workers in the factory, 50 were members of the CST up to a year ago. The management left no stone unturned to sabotage production and divide the union. It demanded that the government maintain the fiscal concessions that had been granted by the previous regime.

When the FSLN refused, the company started to organize an investment boycott. The British parent company set up a competing plant in Guatemala. Then, it obliged the Leon subsidiary to buy raw materials at high prices in Guatemala and to sell its finished products there at low prices. In this way, more and more capital was drained off from the Leon enterprise.

The management went so far as to poison the finished products destined for Costa Rica, thereby destroying the plant's market in that country. The union found itself denied any access to the company

'Participate in the revolution, increase production.' (DR)



books. The CST union secretary in Leon was even barred from the plant.

Since the FSLN did not want to take on a multinational, the ICI — Casa workers got practically no political support. The management pushed its offensive still further. Workers who were ready to join the yellow union got wage increases. A tennis court was built for it. The yellow union got a loan for building a headquarters. More than thirty workers left the CST, and some of them joined the yellow union. The boss forced the CST union secretary to do a job outside the plant — transporting material to Honduras. Reluctantly, he accepted the assignment. On the road, he just missed being caught in a bombing of his truck. After

that he refused an order from the company to take material to Guatemala.

THE SANDINISTAS' HANDS TIED

It has been possible for the bosses to get away with this cunning divisionist line up till now essentially for two reasons. First, the agrochemical workers were among the best paid before the revolution. Since the FSLN has been concerned mainly with raising the minimum wage, the revolution has not brought any material gains for the workers at ICI—Casa.

Secondly, since the company is a multinational, there is no opening to de-

velop workers control and build workers militia. As the CST union secretary at Leon pointed out, the laws for fighting decapitalization, which make workers control possible, are quite lax with respect to multinationals.

Appointing a state manager in a multinational, however necessary, would have grave consequences for a country that is highly dependent on the world market and international credit. The British ICI has already threatened to impose a total blockade of raw-materials shipments. The European countries have made similar threats about cutting off credit.

(From *La Breche* of 18 December, the French language weekly of the Swiss section of the Fourth International.) ■

In the camp of the "Contras"

Lars PALMGREN

The following article is from the new year double issue (1-2, 1983) of the *Stockholm monthly magazine* ETC.

In mid-December war broke out again in Nicaragua.

At least a thousand counterrevolutionaries hit military and economic targets in the northwest of the country.

The Sandinistas accuse Honduras of opening up their territory to the counterrevolutionary forces, saying that the attacks are launched from across the Honduran border.

The Honduran authorities strenuously deny the Sandinistas' accusations, arguing that what is happening in Nicaragua is strictly internal to that country. The Honduran government has even claimed that the Sandinistas are using the claim about counterrevolutionary camps as a pretext for attacking Honduras.

Who is lying?

All indications are that the Honduran government is the big liar. But both the U.S. and the Honduran government have stuck to the same story, and up till now no one had seen the camps.

However, ETC's correspondent was in the border area when the fighting broke out, and along with three other journalists, he was able, for the first time as far as we know, to visit one of these camps. His report indicates that not only does the Honduran army know about these camps but that it works in close collusion with the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries.

Across the Honduran border, the terrain rises 79 meters, and the vegetation changes from tropical to tall pines, rather like Vastmanland in Sweden. Here between Paraiso in the west and Las Trojes

in the east, several tens of thousands of Nicaraguans took refuge during Somoza's time. After the Sandinista victory, most of them went home. But in the past two months, about 4,000 new refugees have arrived. Most of them are in the tract around Las Trojes, five hours journey from the capital of the department, Danli.

The road leads to Las Trojes reminds you most of a newly built logging road.

Immediately after coming off the main road, we ran into two Honduran soldiers who were on their way to their base in Las Trojes.

Julio, one of them, was 21 years old, and had been in the army for four years. A small mustache adorned his upper lip.

After a half hour of small talk, we started to talk about *Los Contras*, the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries.

"Have you seen *contras* around here?"

"Of course, there have been loads of them. Their camps are all around here; near Las Trojes there are a couple, maybe three."

"Have you ever been in one?"

"Yes, a couple of times. Most of them are teenagers, and there are girls, too. It's clear that a girl can shoot a FAL as good as a boy."

"Did they have good weapons?"

"Better than us. Almost all of them had FALs, but they also had grenade launchers and mortars of several calibers.

"What do you think of the *contras*?"

"They have been extremely decent to me. I think that they have been very nice to all of us."

"Have you ever fought the Sandinistas?"

"No, the Sandinistas have never come over here. But now the *contras* have gone into Nicaragua."

Suddenly, a valley opened up in front

of us. At the other end was Jalapa. That is where the biggest Nicaraguan tobacco plantations are. At the bottom of the valley, the road that we were travelling on forms the border. But we could see no guards on the Nicaraguan side. There were no buildings, only the racks for drying tobacco. A bit further down the valley, a long column of smoke was rising.

"The *contras* set fire to four tobacco storage barns a few weeks ago," Julio said.

Las Trojes consists of a few houses on both sides of the road, which turns at a 90 degree angle. A funeral procession was moving through the town as we came in. None of the known *contras* that the local people mentioned to us and said could take us to the camp were at home. So, we went on through the town, toward the newly constructed refugee camp and the coffee plantations.

The women coffee pickers, they are nearly always women, were just about to go home when we came up. About half were Nicaraguans, recently arrived refugees.

Who are they?

Why had they left Nicaragua?

One of the women — she could not have been more than 25, but with all her teeth gone she looked 50 — wore a ragged red dress. She said:

"You could not work like before, they wanted to take our land away."

"Did you have any land?"

"Yes."

"Did they take it away?"

"No. We had two *parcelas*, and they are now left uncultivated."

"So, why did you run away?"

"They could have come and killed us."

"Did they threaten you?"

"No."

"Do you know anyone who was killed?"

"No, but they said that they were going to take our land, and that they might kill us."

"Who said that?"

She looked down and did not answer.

"Was it your husband?"

"The *contras* took him away as soon as we got here."

"Where did they take him?"

"They said they were going to a meeting."

"Did he want to go?"

"No, he wept. He didn't want to be forced to leave me alone with our four children."

"Do you want to go back to Nicaragua?"

"Yes, with God's help."

"Are you sorry that you left?"

She murmured vaguely.

She and her husband and four children came here together with a group of about 300 others. From what she and other women said, it was hard to see why they left Nicaragua.

The stories they told suggested that they had been enticed to leave, and in some cases forced.

Most of them were poor, simple, uneducated people, often coming from isolated tracts of land. Their society was dominated by some authority, the priest, the local judge, the landowner, or some other kind of local strongman. Their stories had a common theme. The local boss told them to flee, because "they're going to come and take your land and kill you."

They were told that Honduras would be a lot better, and when they came here, the men were taken away, and the women were left alone. A lot of them said that uniformed Hondurans — some said police, others said soldiers — were present when their husbands were taken away.

A young Honduran woman said: "If they don't go with the *contras*, they are called Sandinistas and infiltrators, and they are likely to have a rough time."

While we were talking a heavy Toyota jeep drove past. Two men sat in front.

In the back, there was a load of ammunition covered by a tarpaulin. There were another four men sitting there.

We asked the women where the *contras* had their camps.

"A lot of them have been abandoned, since they have gone into Nicaragua," she answered.

"There is still one over there," another answered.

A young Honduran woman gave us more precise directions.

"If you go through the gate on the right side and then go straight up into the forest, you'll come to one of them. But be careful. They're a bit jittery."

After some time, we found the gate. An elderly woman was going by just as we went through.

"Are you going to the camp?," she asked. "Be careful, they're dangerous, they shoot."

We three Europeans and an American journalist went up to the edge of the forest. In the meadow facing it were some cows and horses. We talked in a loud voice so that no one could get the idea we were trying to sneak in.

Deep tire tracks showed that the heavy jeep had passed by on the path not long before. The smell of pines was strong in the gentle rain. After about a turn, we saw two men armed with FAL rifles standing guard. They jumped when they saw us. One ran into the forest; the other pointed the gun at us.

We put our hands over our heads and walked straight toward him.

"We are journalists."

"We come from the international press."

"We want to talk to your leader."

We did everything we could to convince and reassure the guard, who was getting more and more nervous as we came nearer. He was wearing a reddish shirt and blue jeans, and he had a helmet hidden under his straw hat. We stopped apart ten feet away. His eyes glinted with a look of nervousness, uncertainty, and perhaps fear.

"Sit down," he said, pointing with his rifle. "Sit together there."

"Do you want a cigarette?"

"No. Sit down, sit down."

So, we went to the spot where he was pointing nervously with his rifle. We sat as quietly as we could. We looked toward the forest.

An unarmed man in a black-and-white checked shirt and jeans was coming toward us. In the other side of the bend, we heard loud voices and noise from a radio.

"We want to talk to your leader."

He ran back around the bend. Five minutes later, he returned.

"There is no leader here; there's nobody here but refugees."

"Can we talk to them?"

"No, that is not permitted, that is not permitted. You must go back to Las Trojes and talk to the commander there."

"We have already talked to him. We want to talk to *contras*."

"We don't know anything about that," the nervous man with the rifle said. He pointed with his gun.

"You must go away, go away, we don't know anything."

We figured that it wasn't a good idea to insist any more. We walked back in the opposite direction. Before we reached the next turn in the road, somebody shouted.

"Stop, stop, they filmed us."

We turned around. The armed guard had raised his FAL. He was shouting all the time. We walked directly toward him with our arms over our heads. We were a bit more frightened now. Another man came over the ridge that concealed the camp.

He was wearing an expensive straw hat, and a short, light-weight black sports jacket, blue jeans and boots. He looked tense and suspicious.

"Who are you? How did you come here?"

We explained again, we were journalists, people on the road had said that we could find *contras* here.

Time after time, he asked us how we got there, and every time we explained that we had been directed by people along the road.

"Secrecy," he said, "you can't maintain any secrecy."

We talked for a while, and his suspicion began to fade. He said that he understood that we were looking for news. O.K., so we were journalists. The problem was that journalists always distorted what they said.

"We are not Somocistas or former National Guards. We are the FDN (Frente Democratico Nicaraguense, Nicaraguan Democratic Front). That's what we are called. Somoza has been dead for more than a year and a half, and my name isn't Somoza, so I can't see why you keep calling us Somocistas. And most of us were never in the National Guard. We are the FDN, write that."

It turned out that he was a lawyer from Managua. He has been fighting for three years, he said. Before, he studied with Luis Carrion and Jaime Wheelock,

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both of whom are in the FSLN national leadership.

"I know what they want," he said.

"I know that they are 100 per cent Communists. And if we don't stop them, even the U.S. is going to go Communist in ten years."

He was quite agitated.

"It's all Carter's fault. Write that, write that it is Carter's fault that we have to fight the Communists now. Write that we have to fight the Communists to defend the U.S."

A car drove up the path. When it came round the turn, we saw that it was the same Toyota that we spotted earlier. The back was empty. Ten minutes later it came by again, this time the back was full.

Edgardo, as the man said we could call him, nodded toward it.

"We have 6,000 men now. We have five fronts here and one on the Costa Rican border. Now the war is being

waged inside Nicaragua. We have liberated a territory, and that is where our command center is."

He looked at us, one after the other. We nodded.

"In three weeks, big things are going to happen here. In five months we will have won. Write that, write that in five months we will have the Communists cleared out."

We asked if we could follow them into Nicaragua and interview their leader. He rejected this.

"That might be good," he said. "We haven't gotten good coverage in the press, and we could use that. I'll see what I can do. Next week I have to go to Tegucigalpa. I'll see if I can set up some contact with our leaders."

Then he seemed to realize that he had already said too much.

"But the authorities here know nothing about us. We are totally underground here. Totally."

We asked about Eden Pastora, the so-called Comandante Zero, who is leading the FDN's attack from Costa Rico.

"He's as much a Communist as the ones who are still in Nicaragua," Edgardo snarled. "He's a splitter, maybe an infiltrator. I have no confidence in Social Democrats. It's right against left, there's nothing in between. We are the only ones who are really fighting, the FDN. We are the only ones who for real, the real counterrevolutionaries."

We left when night fell. We didn't stay over night in Las Trojes. We all got the feeling that the camp was a lot more dangerous than we had thought.

The day we arrived in Tegucigalpa, the papers carried a statement from the Honduran minister of foreign affairs saying that there were not, and had never been, counterrevolutionary bases on Honduran soil.

"We want peace," he said. "But the Sandinistas apparently want war." ■

FSLN's letter to leaders of Sandinista Defense Committees

The following is the text of an October 7 letter from Commander Bayardo Arce, Coordinator of the Political Commission of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), to the municipal, village, neighborhood, and block committees of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS).

The FSLN National Directorate sends greetings to the 459,750 CDS members throughout the country, who on a daily basis are strengthening the defense and preserving the gains of our people by carrying out their tasks. That is precisely why we want to repeat to you the concepts outlined by your National Coordinator, Commander Leticia Herrera, and by Sergio Ramirez, at the commemoration of the CDSs' Fourth Anniversary.

We affirm that the entire CDS membership, fully involved in their tasks and continually working to become more responsible, contribute decisively to the way in which the Sandinista People's Revolution confronts the difficulties inherited from the past. The same holds true in regard to the problems brought in by the war policies that have sought to strangle our aspirations to be respected, sovereign, and independent.

We firmly believe that the CDS leadership and membership must express qualities that can be measured by:

- participation in defense activities;
- respect for the revolution's laws;
- discipline and respect in carrying out the directions of their immediate super-

riors; and

- willingness to be the best servants of the people, avoiding and combatting opportunism, bureaucratism, favoritism, and bossism.

In this framework, a concern has arisen that troubles the National Directorate. We consider it an unavoidable duty to present it to you. There are signs that many coordinators have not accurately understood the line of the revolutionary directives. Based on its persuasive character, this policy has the aim of attracting the sympathy of sectors that, because of their situation, ought to be in favor of defending the revolution.

We refer to arbitrary attitudes and actions that have effects that are contrary to Sandinista principles. For example:

- Authorization of arbitrary land or building seizures, despite the fact that all legal efforts are being made to give a plot of land to all who need and deserve it.

- Withholding the sugar distribution card from someone who has still not come to understand the revolution, instead of using the revolution's achievements to raise his or her consciousness. We know that this method is used at times to pressure people into doing CDS tasks, which are supposed to be voluntary.

- Harassment by words and deeds of citizens who profess another ideology, religious or political, or who work with persons or institutions not identified with the revolution.

- Arrogant and haughty attitudes, taking on a kind of authority that only

discredits the organizations; creating small elite groups; and fostering divisiveness and intrigues among neighbors in a community.

- Misusing one's position in order to transform personal problems into problems of the organization, or promoting destructive campaigns to discredit persons with whom one has conflicts.

- Falling into an abuse of authority and using a responsible post in the organization as a way to enjoy personal or family privileges. A concrete case, for example, would be to award lots to close relatives, bypassing the directives of the revolutionary state. This only encourages and puts into practice notions left over from Somozaism.

- To tolerate or lead in abusing revolutionary vigilance (voluntary night-watch duty), especially through taking repressive measures against those who still have not joined in this task. (In some cases this has gone so far as the breaking of someone's door, or the casting of doubt on them, forgetting the fact that all CDS tasks are voluntary.)

It is absolutely necessary that we review our position and make corrections. We have been thinking that we ought to meet in the near future to discuss these matters internally. Today, more than ever, national unity is the determining factor in defense. That is why we have put forward these ideas, upon which you will surely reflect.

(From *Intercontinental Press* of December 27, 1982.) ■

A new defeat for the Uruguayan junta

Daniel JEBRAC

On November 28, primary elections were held to choose delegates for the conventions to reconstitute the three parties to which the dictatorship agreed to give legal status. Since all Uruguayans could vote in them, they were also a test of the relative strength of these parties, as well as the various currents within them.

The three legal parties were the Partido Nacional (Blanco) and the Partido Colorado, the traditional bourgeois parties; and the small Catholic party, the Union Civica, which represents a recent resurrection of a formation that dissolved itself in 1961. For each, 500 national and departmental-convention delegates were to be chosen.

The respective national conventions are to select the party executives, which will then be charged with working out the platform and designating candidates for the elections that are to be held in 1984, in the framework of the "process of democratic restoration" promised by the junta.

What the dictatorship wanted to get out of the exercise was to get a firm grip on the political apparatuses of the legalized bourgeois formations. Coming after the 1980 constitutional referendum, in which the junta's proposals were defeated by a 57% "no" vote, the party primary elections were a new political test for the military dictatorship.

The military had taken every precaution to assure that it was not dealt another rebuff. First of all, only old bourgeois formations were legalized. Every other party, from the Christian Democracy to the Communist Party remained banned, in particular those that belonged to the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition that was formed in 1971 and won 18% of the vote in the elections of that year.

Moreover, even the officially recognized parties were subjected to restrictions and harassment, such as the "suspension" of the civil rights of their main leaders. The junta also demanded that more than 600 persons be taken off the slates of candidates drawn up by the various parties, those it considered "unsuitable" for various reasons.

The weekly paper of the Christian Democratic Party, *Opcion*, was permanently banned because it called for casting a blank ballot. It was accused of "acting like a political party and serving as a mouthpiece for the Frente Amplio." The magazine of the opposition in the Partido Blanco, *Democracia*, was suspended, as was a publication of Catholic groups, *La Plaza*. It had raised the question of the political prisoners in an editorial entitled "Mercy for the Vanquished."

The military issued warning after warning to the leaders of the traditional parties, who, it said, "cannot find their proper place or cooperate with the boards of the elections." At a press conference on October 18, the minister of the interior, General Yamandu Trinidad, said: "There are factions in the traditional parties that want to go back to the old ruts and which are not helping either the process or the country."

A few days later, Yamandu Trinidad threatened "to bring to (military) justice any politicians who fail to conform to the norms that have been laid down."

Despite all this intimidation, the outcome of the elections represented a setback for the military dictatorship. About 70% of the 2 million registered voters went to the polls. The an-

nouncement of the results was greeted with an explosion of joy in the streets of Montevideo. The Partido Blanco had eclipsed the Partido Colorado, the party more openly linked to the dictatorship, winning 46% to its rival's 40%.

More importantly, the big winners were the dissident factions of the traditional parties. In the Partido Blanco, it was the candidates of the "For the Homeland" current, linked to the exiled leader Wilson Ferreyra Aldunate; and those of the Mocha Movement who topped the poll. They got 70% of the vote. And in Montevideo itself, their score reached 78%. The progovernmental current garnered only 9.4%.

In the Colorado Party, the current led by Jose Maria Sanguinetti and Jorge Battle (who had his civic rights suspended by the regime) won 330 convention seats and 67% of the vote. The progovernment current got only 148 seats and 28.6% of the vote. Only 1% of those who voted cast ballots for the Union Civica.

The Socialist and Communist parties (the latter's position was expressed by its exiled leader Rodney Arismendi in Moscow) called for a vote for the "progressive" candidates in the tolerated bourgeois parties. In opposition to this, a significant current developed around the call for a blank vote, representing a rejection of the dictatorship and its rules that had made it impossible to cast a class vote.

The blank-ballot call was supported by the Partido de Victoria Popular (PVP) and the Partido Socialista de Los Trabajadores (PST). But it was also supported by *Opcion* and General Liber Seregni, the former leader of the Frente Amplio, who was arrested in 1973. From prison, he issued a courageous appeal for a blank vote.

This position was also supported by Uruguayan emigre circles in Brazil, and it was backed up by the Brazilian workers movement in a petition with a long list of signers. Among them were the leaders of the Workers Party (PT), including Lula and parliamentary deputy Djamla Bom; trade-union leaders such as Paolo Skromov; and figures in the PMDB, the main bourgeois opposition party, such as Fernando Enrique Cardoso.

When the ballots were counted, 11% were blank, representing a very substantial success for a campaign of this sort.

As soon as the results were known, Ferreyra Aldunate's daughter, Silvia, called for a common front of all the opposition groups and currents to fight for a restoration democracy. This bourgeois opposition gained some new legitimacy as a result of the primary elections. But it was not able to do anything to follow up on the massive "no" vote against the dictatorship in 1980. In fact, its failure allowed the dictatorship to press the claim that the vote had simply been against any change in the regime.

For their part, the military have announced their intention of holding a new constitutional referendum in 1983, preparatory presidential elections in 1984. Both of these dates remain hypothetical, however. As regards the constitution, the military are sticking to their proposal of a "fourth branch of government," the Consejo de Seguridad Nacional (COSENA), which would perpetuate military involvement in government. This scheme of the military started a groundswell of support for the bourgeois opposition already in 1981.

As regards the projected presidential elections, the prospective civilian candidates acceptable to the military were all buried in the primary elections. ■

The primary elections and the Uruguayan workers movement

Interview with PVP leader

Shortly before the Uruguayan primary elections, Luis Romero, a leader of the PVP, gave the following interview to Luis Alonso, correspondent of International Viewpoint in Madrid.

The PVP was formed in 1975 in the underground, representing a fusion of elements coming from the anarchosyndicalist Federation of Uruguay (FAU) and the Tupamaros. After the stepup of repression in 1976, it had 200 members in prison. Anarchosyndicalism has historically been a major current in the workers movement in Argentina and Uruguay, with a revolutionary tradition.

The PVP represents the regroupment of a radical political current that developed over more than a decade. The FAU had participated in the founding conference of the Movimiento de Liberacion (MLN-Tupamaros) in 1962, but it soon broke away for the MLN in disagreement with its military line.

Question. How would you evaluate the constitutional referendum held by the dictatorship in November 1980?

Answer. You must understand that my country is in the grip of a bloodthirsty dictatorship, one of the most brutal in Latin America. Its prison system is one of the harshest. Torture is employed on a massive scale, and the number of "missing persons" is quite large.

Against this background, the majority of "no" votes against the junta's draft constitution on November 30, 1980, was a severe blow to the dictatorship. The results raised the hopes of the comrades who are fighting inside the country, of the poor masses, the workers, the students, and all those who are working outside the country to keep the resistance going.

We have to recognize that the weakness of the workers political organizations and trade-unions kept us from taking advantage of this victory to move toward achieving a fundamental change in Uruguay. The effects of many years of repression and disorganization prevented the people from gathering the fruits of their victory. It is clear, however, that the people are continuing to resist, and that there are going to be new opportunities to throw monkey wrenches into the dictatorship's plans and to go forward from the victory won on November 30, 1980.

Q. What role did the traditional bourgeois parties play in this process?

A. The results of the referendum represent rejection of the dictatorship by the people. But the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie — the Blancos and Colorados — saw the referendum solely as an opportunity for advancing their specific interests against the dictatorship. The people rejected the dictatorship in its entirety, while these bourgeois forces only rejected the constitution proposed by the military. This is

why the military were able to bounce back. In 1970, elements coming from the FAU played a key role in the emergence of two groups. One was the Revolutionary People's Organization 33, an armed group whose purpose was to back up workers struggles. The other was the Workers and Students Resistance, a mass organization that included many workers.

In 1972, after the defeat of the Tupamaros, a section of the MLN broke away looking for a more political strategy. It fused with elements from the FAU. All of these streams fed into the PVP.

Romero, a rubber worker, was a leader of his union before the union movement was suppressed and a member of the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) executive that called the 1973 general strike. Today he is a member of the coordinating body of the CNT in exile.

why the military were able to bounce back.

Between a return to indiscriminate repression and a dialogue with the traditional bourgeois parties, which it found amenable enough, the military opted for the latter solution. In defense of the interests of their class, these politicians opened up a dialogue with the dictatorship, thereby throwing away the victory in the referendum.

The bourgeois parties oppose certain aspects of the government's economic policy, but they see the military as their class allies. In fact, the conditions of this dialogue make it a bit of a farce. The government and the armed forces are imposing their conditions, which the bourgeois parties accept, even if they sometimes complain. But these politicians have never been able to resist dialogue with the dictatorship and to demand that the people's will be respected.

In their very first meeting with the political committee of the armed forces, the party leaders were forced to accept a reduction of the number of their representatives. The Blanco and Colorado parties presented draft statutes, on which the armed forces committee imposed restrictions, and then further restrictions were imposed by the Council of State. It was only in this truncated form that their statutes were accepted.

The demands of these parties have never gone so far that they have come in conflict with the dictatorship's plans. This is why the people do not regard them as a serious opposition to the dictatorship. If they did that would open up possibilities for making alliances to fight the dictatorship. The rules for the legal parties ban the main leaders of these parties, and they have accepted this. The rules prohibit the parties from having international ties, and they have accepted this, even though this affects Communist, Social Democrat, and Christian Democrat parties equally.

The upcoming primary elections are an

integral part of the military's program. After the elections, the leaders of these legalized parties will draw up a constitution together with the military. The military will impose what they want, that is, the inclusion in the constitution of the Council of National Security (COSENA) as a body to oversee the government. This council will be made up of the top generals, the ministers, and the president.

It is clear that the parties are going to accept these proposals because they have no class difference with the military and agree with the policy they are pursuing against the workers. It is in this framework that the military are preparing the way for the presidential elections scheduled to take place in 1984.

Q. How important do you think these primary elections are?

A. We think that these elections have to be used in the same way the 1980 referendum was, since the population as a whole will vote in them. That is, they have to be used to expose the dictatorship, to register a rejection of the military's policy.

In the left, there are three positions on these primary elections. One calls for voting for the most progressive candidates in every constituency. Another calls for boycotting, and we have to consider the possibility that there may be a high abstention rate, given the slight interest that these elections have aroused among the masses.

The third position, which is the one that the PVP shares, calls for a blank vote, which involves rejecting the dictatorship altogether. For us a blank vote is a vote for class independence, it is a means of mobilizing the masses organizationally and programmatically. It is a vote that can serve to regroup the left and the consistently democratic forces. It is the kind of vote that will show that after so many years of repression the Uruguayan left is alive and fighting to bring

down the dictatorship.

Q. What is the position of the Frente Amplio?

A. It should be remembered that when it was set up in 1971, the Frente Amplio embraced all of the left and sections of the Blanco and Colorado parties, that it had the support of the Tupamaro guerrillas and the March 26 Movement. At present, after the repression, the Frente Amplio is very weak inside the country, and its representatives are influenced decisively by the Communist and Socialist parties.

Nonetheless, in meetings in Uruguay, the comrades of the Frente Amplio decided to call for a blank vote, relying on the authority of the chairman of the front, General Liber Seregni, who supported that position from prison. I want to make it clear that the position of our party, the PVP for a blank vote in these primary elections does not mean that we exclude the possibility of antidictatorship fronts with sections of the bourgeois parties.

To the contrary, our party has called several times for the formation of such a front, but on the basis of a public agreement, an agreement based on consistent opposition to the dictatorship and calling for real struggle and mobilization to win the democratic demands raised by the people.

Q. What is the present situation of the trade-union movement?

A. After many years in which trade-union activity was almost totally suppressed, in 1980 the dictatorship issued a law on professional associations. It was designed to divert the trade-union movement that was beginning to revive. In order to accomplish that, however, the dictatorship was obliged to grant a certain margin for maneuver, which, however narrow, made it possible to reorganize workers. So, they permitted the formation of trade-union commissions in the workplaces, with a lot of restrictions. It included the proviso that there could be more than one commission in each workplace.

Since then, more than 200 commissions have sprung up, and they have maintained a spirit of working-class unity. They have not split. And many of them publish bulletins. The government plans call for continuing this process of forming commissions until it leads to the creation of unions. But we think that as the process develops the workers will maintain their spirit of class independence and wreck the military's plans for atomizing the working-class forces.

In this process of reorganizing, the Uruguayan workers need to be able to count on the international solidarity of the workers movement. Recently a delegation of Brazilian trade unions of all tendencies, including the bureaucracy, visited my country. It played an important role because it enabled a workers movement that has been illegal for a decade to reestablish some international ties

and to get the feeling that it has some backing in its struggle to reorganize the workers.

We cannot forget that the working class desperately needs its own independent organizations that defend its interests. We should not forget that the real

wage has dropped 53% in a year's time, that 12% of the workers are unemployed, and hundreds of thousands of people (out of a population of about two and a half million) have had to leave the country, either because of the repression or because they could no longer earn a living there. ■

"Vote against the dictatorship"

The following is a somewhat abridged translation of the statement on the Uruguayan primary elections by the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST-Socialist Workers Party) of Uruguay, an independent Trotskyist group. The PST-U left the Fourth International in 1979, but it now belongs to no international grouping. The statement was issued in Montevideo a few weeks before the primary elections.

After its crushing defeat in the constitutional referendum, the dictatorship is now preparing to implement its alternative political plan.

Thanks to the political truce offered by the so-called opposition politicians, the dictatorship has been able to regain its footing after the defeat suffered in the referendum. After months of intense discussions in the name of "dialogue" and orchestrated around the theme of "transition," it has come up with a new project. In this framework, the politicians of the Blanco and Colorado parties supported putting General Gregorio Gomez in the presidency.

For the bourgeois opposition leaders, their fear of the poor masses and workers organizing was so great that they did not hesitate to sell-out the "no" vote victory in the referendum, and crawl back under the protecting wing of the dictatorship. In fact, in the ten years of the dictatorship they have scarcely ventured from this hiding place. What the generals had to promise them to get them to shut their mouths was not much. It was enough to give some partial concessions, even ephemeral ones, to get these people to run to the government palace and bow down...

To put it another way, to call for voting for the candidates of the traditional parties of November 28 has the same significance for the government as calling for a "yes" vote in the 1980 referendum. Voting "yes" to dialogue is voting for a country where wages constantly go down and the number of unemployed constantly goes up, for a country without jobs, full of political prisoners, victims of torture, people banned from public life, and "missing persons." It means saying "yes" to pillage by the bosses and the military, to the abandonment of the country to imperialism, to the denial of democratic rights. Finally, voting in these elections for the candidates of the bourgeois opposition parties — whether they say they oppose the government or

whether they say they are "for the process" — means saying "yes" to maintaining the dictatorship.

The kind of candidates we find on the slates of the so-called opposition makes this all the more clear — exploiters and people response for repression against the workers and the masses. Those who vote for the "opposition Blancos" should know that they will be voting for General Ventura Rodriguez, former chief of police, who ordered the butchery of workers. They will be voting for representatives of the imperialist banks, such as Pons Etcheverry, and such ill-reputed former ministers as Pivel Devoto.

The same sort of figures adorn the slates of the "oppositionist Colorados." This ilk goes from the lawyers of imperialist cooperations like Torigo to avowed enemies of public education like Sanguinetti. This is why the only way that the workers and the masses can make their votes count is to cast blank ballots, to vote against the dictatorship and the champions of dialogue.

By casting blank ballots, we will be voting against the economic plans of the government and the imperialists, for restoring the buying power of wage earners and pension recipients, against layoffs and unemployment, for the restoration of social benefits, and against higher prices and rents.

We will be voting against restrictions on the right to strike, for the free functioning of the trade unions, and against the trade-union law.

We will cast blank ballots also to demand an end to the intrusion of the state arm into the schools, for autonomous and democratically run universities, against entrance examinations.

We will be casting blank ballots to demand the release of the prisoners, an end to torture, return of the exiles, and for the reappearance, safe and sound, of the "missing persons."

In short, we will mobilize for jobs, better wages, and freedom. We will vote and we will mobilize to bring down the dictatorship..."

—Cast a blank ballot against the dictatorship and policies of dialogue!

—For free elections and a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage, without anybody being banned from participation in political life, without political prisoners, exiles, or "missing persons."

—For a government of the workers and poor masses. ■



Lula, leader of the PT and candidate for governor of Sao Paulo (DR)

The outcome of the elections in Brazil: defeat of the dictatorship

Daniel JEBRAC

General elections took place in Brazil on Sunday December 14, 1982. These elections brought a clear defeat for the party in power, the Social Democratic Party (PDS), which lost its majority in the Federal Chamber. It won the governorships of 12 states, as against 9 won by the main opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB). The governorship of the politically most important state, Rio de Janeiro, was taken by the leaders of the Democratic Workers Party, (PDT) Leonel Brizola.

The opposition was victorious in the most significant states; those with the greatest population and the most industry, which are economically decisive. For example, in the southern state of São Paulo, which produces 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, the PDS won only 25 per cent of the vote. Overall the opposition captured 60 per cent of the vote.

The victory of Leonel Brizola, against a candidate of both the PDS and PMDB,

was significant. As the most consistent bourgeois oppositionist, his election was a clear condemnation of the dictatorship.

Although the results were a defeat for the PDS, they give the bourgeoisie an increased room for manoeuvre. The elections themselves imparted a certain legitimacy to the regime, which was reaffirmed around that time by the visit of President Reagan, who promised increased financial aid.

The opposition governors have not organised themselves as an opposition grouping, and indeed are all ready and willing to negotiate with the government. Indeed, Brizola himself openly stated that 'reconciliation is a duty'. All the opposition governors have felt moved to praise the president-general Figueiredo as the guarantor of the liberalisation process.

Thus, the bourgeoisie now find themselves with a more diversified and flexible system of political domination. The PMDB is becoming more and more a party of the centre-right — supported by the big industrialists, and political figures

who were involved in the 1964 coup, and who were later linked to the Alliance for National Renewal (ARENA), the predecessor of the PDS, and then to the PDS itself. This was notable in São Paulo where the PMDB candidate was supported by a powerful employers federation.

However the PDS, although losing its majority in the Federal Chamber, has by legal mechanisms, retained its majority in the electoral college, which will elect the new president in 1984.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS FOR THE BOURGEOISIE

The outcome of these elections can be considered as the fruition of the 'liberalisation' scenario that was the aim of the old strategy adopted by the regime. This scheme provided for a bourgeois opposition and a 'responsible' workers opposition. This plan had been disrupted by the emergence of the Workers Party (PT), but the relative electoral defeat of this party and the election of Brizola has relaunched the former perspective.

The bourgeoisie urgently needs to establish a mechanism for a social pact with a house-broken opposition that controls at least part of the mass movement. This is a job that the labour bureaucracy in the Brazilian Communist Party, and in the Maoist Brazilian Communist Party is ready to fill.

Only a few days after the elections, the government was once again renegotiating Brazil's enormous debt of 90 billion dollars with the International Monetary Fund. Likewise, Reagan promised aid. But the social consequences of the conditions demanded by international capitalism — an end to the six-monthly adjustment of wages, and attacks on the social security system — are already evident.

Although the Brazilian bourgeoisie has come out of the elections in a better position to deal with the situation, it is still far from having achieved a controlled disengagement from dictatorship. There are strong internal tensions within different sections of the bourgeoisie and its political parties.

The political institutions remain unstable, the trade-union question is not sorted out. The PMDB, from now on in power in several important states, will be exposed to strong internal pressures. Its right wing is already thinking about a liberal party that could act as a prop to the PDS in a future coalition. Others would not be unsympathetic to the idea of a social-democratic party, which Leonel Brizola has already put forward.

REASONS FOR THE RELATIVE FAILURE OF THE PT

The PT is a young party, born in the workers struggles of 1978/79. Its launch was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm.

The membership rose rapidly to 300,000 and it waged a successful campaign for legal recognition (*International Viewpoint*, No 17 November 15, 1982). This initial success brought about an over-estimation of how much it could achieve in these elections.

Overall the PT received some 1.5 million votes. The large majority were in the state of Sao Paulo — 1.1 million. Here, the PT received 10 per cent of the vote, the national average was around 3 per cent. The PT now has around 10 federal deputies, 6 of whom are from the state of Sao Paulo. It has some member in state parliaments, and a good number of municipal councillors.

The party won the mayorship of Diadema, a town in Sao Paulo's strongly working-class suburbs known collectively as the ABC (Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo, Sao Caetano, and Diadema). However, in some states the number of votes cast for the PT did not even equal the number of members.

Because of its newness and its lack of a stable organised apparatus, it has not yet been able to firmly implant itself amongst the working class. Thus, its supporters are still very much under the pressure from the centuries-old traditions of patronage voting.

WEAKNESSES IN THE PT CAMPAIGN

The electoral mechanisms of the regime also worked against the PT. The tied vote system made it compulsory to vote for candidates of the same party for all posts. In many smaller and less politicised towns, the PT could not put up local candidates, so voters there did not get a chance to vote for PT candidates for state posts. In the cities, there was a strong pressure to cast a 'useful' vote, to strengthen the recognised opposition so as to maximize the opposition to the dictatorship.

Thus, after 18 years of dictatorship, there were objective reasons for the PT's lack of success. But there were also weaknesses in the PT's campaign itself.

The more moderate and electoralist sector of the party are blaming the 'radicalism' of the campaign for the failure. But, the results in Diadema explode these accusations. The newly-elected PT mayor of Diadema is a well-known militant trade-union activist who makes no secret of his radical views. And he waged a vigorous campaign.

The PT Campaign suffered from a certain propagandism. Slogans such as 'A worker should vote for a worker', or 'Those who know how to work know how to govern' were important for affirming the independent class nature of the PT's campaign. But they did not provide clear practical responses to the crisis, or focus clearly on the question of the dictatorship. Often PT speakers referred to the PDS and PMDB as 'alike as two peas in a pod', which is true in the



'Power to the workers' (DR)

last analysis but diverted attention from focusing on opposition to the dictatorship.

One of the most important weaknesses was that the PT was not sufficiently organisationally and politically consolidated to avoid centrifugal tendencies. Only in some areas, like Diadema, was the campaign centralised, elsewhere they tended to be rather individualistic.

The election results shattered two myths about the PT; that it is supported by the Church, and that it is a party of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie attracted by fashionable ideas. It is true that Catholic fellowships were involved in launching the PT. But at the time of the vote, the Church hierarchy clearly opted for supporting the responsible bourgeois opposition. And the best results the PT obtained were in the strong industrial concentrations.

A NEW STAGE FOR THE PT

The November 15 elections mark the opening of a new political stage in Brazil, and for the PT as well.

The outcome of the elections changes the relationship of forces within the working class in favour of the collaborationist sector. This will bring increased pressure on the PT.

Bourgeois commentators have talked of the 'vanguardism' of the PT. For example the Minister of the Economy, Delfim Neto, stated in an interview with the newspaper *Folha do Sao Paulo*, 'I have always said that what causes the most problems for the working class is its vanguard. Without its vanguard, the working class really would be masters of power.'

These pressures have made themselves felt within the PT itself, particularly within its small parliamentary fraction. One deputy has publicly said that he thinks

to build local units for political discussions and organisation is a waste of time, and useless for electoral campaigns. Another has publicly blamed the radicalism of the campaign for its lack of success.

Intransigent reaffirmations by Lula and other leaders of the class independence of the PT, and that the party is based on the self-organisation of the workers not electoralism, are not enough to stop those who want to dissolve the PT into an electoral front or a tail of the bourgeois opposition.

Nor will it be sufficient just to discuss a balance sheet of the election campaign. It is necessary also to take up the failures within the trade-union movement — the lack of progress in building a unified class-struggle current, the impotence of this current in the national students congress, where divided slates allowed the reformists to win power.

The PT is not strongest on the electoral front; it draws its strength from the mass movement. To overcome its weaknesses, it has to work consistently to build its rank-and-file units, 'nuclei', within the workers movement. But it cannot just base itself on localised workers struggles.

The PT has to develop a strategy for dealing with the political crisis and the politics of austerity. It has to have an overall strategy for fighting to build an independent and united workers movement. A similar orientation is necessary with respect to the students', peasants', and women's movement, and social movements in general.

The PT cannot remain a small vanguard party, rather on the sidelines of the political arena, it has to develop the political clarity that will enable it to become a coherent and active force. The revolutionary currents that have been in the party since its foundation have a crucial role to play in ensuring that it develops this political clarity and a political programme to give it the capacity to fight against the dictatorship.

Women prisoners in Chile

Interview with MIR activist

Ana L. Pinailillo is a member of the Chilean MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left). She was forced to leave Chile in 1974, after the overthrow of the Salvador Allende Popular Unity government. After four years in exile she returned to Santiago in 1978 and became involved in the clandestine struggle against the dictatorship. In 1979 she was imprisoned for three years. A few months ago she was released in order to be expelled from the country. Had she been left to finish the last six days of her sen-

tence she would have had the right to stay in the country.

Ana played an important role in organising the prisoners during her time in Santiago women's prison, and in the high-security prison 'La Serena'.

Luise Briceno of *Cahiers du Feminisme*, a feminist magazine published by the LCR, French section of the Fourth International, asked her about her experiences.

Question. We know that you were involved in the formation of a women's group in prison. Can you tell us about this experience in detail?

Answer. We were forced to organise ourselves so as to be able to fight together to defend our rights, to get recognition of our status as political prisoners. Women in Chilean prisons suffer even greater torture and repression. This is because we are isolated from the other political prisoners, from the mass movement, and there are fewer of us.

Q. Do you think that there is greater repression against women because they are coming out of their traditional role? That they are doubly repressed, because they are militant activists and because they are women militants?

A. Yes, the revolt is double. Against the system and against the role to which society assigns women. Given this situation, we decided to organise ourselves as much as possible in the 'Women's Marta Ugarta Contingent'. Our main aims were to organise against the torture and repression in prison, and to win our minimum rights as political prisoners.

Q. Which are?

A. The right to social and political expression — to communicate among ourselves and with the outside; to organise ourselves independently as women in the prison. The right to cultural activity — to receive books and journals. The right to recreation — to organise a minimum of leisure activities such as gymnastics. All prisoners except us can do this. The right to work — to have access to the training and craft workshops. We, the political prisoners, are the only ones denied this. The right to health — gynaecological assistance for example. The right to see our children — visiting rights are very restricted and are accorded in a totally arbitrary way.

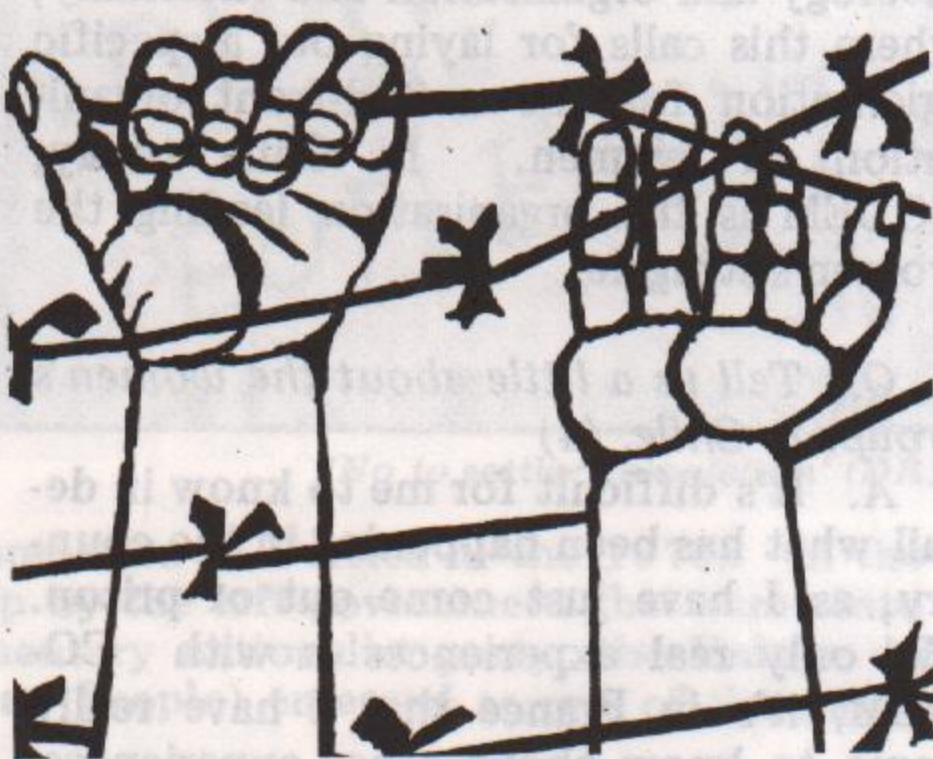
We also set other objectives:

— to make links with human-rights organisations.

— to make links with sections of the population so as not to remain completely isolated from their struggles.

— to strengthen the work of the National Co-ordinating Committee of Political Prisoners, of which we were a part.

— to train ourselves politically and ideologically as militants.



Q. What results did you get from forming this contingent?

A. In the first place we made known the existence of women political prisoners. Until then only the struggles of our male comrades were known.

To a certain extent we broke through the repressive circle, the isolation which the dictatorship imposes. The fact that we got the right to communication between political prisoners made it possible for the contingent to enter into contact with the Defence Committee for Political Prisoners, and with CODEM (Committee for Women's Rights). This, in turn, made it possible to make contact with the outside.

Also we began to make links with the struggles of women which were growing in a semi-legal way — with CODEM and poor women, who were organised to find accommodation and work.

As regards our specific demands we were able to regain rights, which had not been respected. At the end of 1981 we got the right to receive books and journals, to go to the workshops, to receive medical visits, and to certain leisure activities.

(1).

Q. At the time of the fall of the Popular Unity government Chilean women had won certain partial rights, even if they were not codified in the law. What is the present situation on the right to abortion, and to divorce? (2)

A. It seems to me that Chilean women today are more motivated. Among all the difficulties they have begun to participate actively in the resistance to the dictatorship, in taking part in CODEM to struggle for rights as women, while being part of the general fight against the dictatorship. Women are taking part in the organisations of relatives of the missing persons, most of whose members are women; of political prisoners and of exiles; or in organisations for a democratic fight for human rights. They are taking part in the underground struggle, linking up with activities of the Resistance. And of course, if they end up in prison, the comrades join the women's contingent. It goes without saying that the struggle in the prison does not stop at the fight for

1. The formation of the contingent goes back to the beginning of 1981 in Santiago women's prison. In September of the same year it became known by organising a hunger strike to protest against the inhuman conditions in the prison. It won partial satisfaction of its demands. In July 1981 it publicly presented its platform and, in coordination with almost all the political prisoners in Chile, launched a new hunger strike which won qualitative improvements for political detainees.

2. Chilean law considers divorce only as a physical separation. Divorced people cannot remarry, they remain linked by marriage.

From the 1960s the number of marriages has declined. Young workers and intellectuals live their love relationships more and more freely.

Also, from the 1970s abortion was relatively liberalised. The Barros Sud hospital in southern Santiago, for example, organised free consultations in its clinics in the poor neighbourhoods (gynaecology, information and distribution of contraceptives, and free abortions among others).

Attempts to introduce women into work outside the home were also made during the period of the Popular Unity government. During this period, on the initiative of some local leaders, 'Mothers Centres' contributed a lot to developing technical training and education for women.

At the same time the JAR (Junta de aprovisionamiento publico—committees for distribution of basic necessities) which were 80 per cent women, encouraged women to participate in social activity.

democratic rights, but has to become an active front of the resistance.

Q. Why did you call yourselves the 'Women's Contingent', and why Marta Ugarte?

A. 'Women's Contingent' because we organise women held for resistance activities. That obviously implies the aims and experiences of the clandestine struggle against the dictatorship. We have to organise with a minimum of rules and discipline of activity so as to avoid repression. That requires a certain commitment.

We chose the name of Marta Ugarte as an example of a fighting woman. She was a member of the Central Committee of the Chilean Communist Party, and was raped, tortured, and finally murdered by the dictatorship in 1976.

Q. You were an activist in the resistance and a member of the MIR. Can you tell us what proposals your organisation makes for the recovery and extension of women's rights in Chile?

A. Before, we did not consider the problems of organising the women's movement. At the moment we regard this an important question, but we do not approach it in terms of winning back the gains made under the Popular Unity. We are building CODEM and trying to consolidate it. (3) Obviously regaining former rights and winning new ones are part of the revolutionary struggle in general.

Q. Can you summarise the demands of CODEM?

A. First of all CODEM considers women's struggle in the framework of national politics. It proposes demands linked directly to those of the mass movement. For example, on health it demands laws which protect maternity. Today in Chile doctors remove the intra-uterine contraceptive devices during gynaecological consultations without the consent of the women and without warning her. It demands nurseries for children, and sexual education.

And on housing: decent houses, drinking water, sewers, electricity. For leisure

time — adequate places and a fight against alcoholism, drugs and prostitution. On education — free education, development of educational establishments; against the alienation and militarisation of education. And against exploitation at work and for the right to work.

As you can see the situation of women in Chile is definitely not the same as women in Europe, who have the minimum conditions that allow them to regard themselves as social beings. But our orientation does not exclude the themes that concern women more directly, such as sexuality. We are fighting against the notion of 'women as baby factories'.

Q. How does the woman question arise for the MIR?

A. A new type of mass movement is growing up today in Chile, breaking from the traditional forms of organisation and struggle. This, along with the present conditions in the class struggle, is opening up the way for the development of a women's movement directly linked to this 'advance' of the people.

The MIR, as a revolutionary party, cannot fail to include the woman question in its programme. This holds true both internally, as regards the party's ideology and organisation and externally, where this calls for laying out a specific orientation for the united-front organisation of women. In Chile today, CODEM is the organisation leading the women's struggle.

Q. Tell us a little about the women's groups in Chile. (4)

A. It's difficult for me to know in detail what has been happening in the country, as I have just come out of prison. My only real experience is with CODEM; it's in France that I have really come to know about other experiences. I can tell you that there are several groups which concern themselves with study and analysis of this question, as well as a women's section of the national trade-union co-ordination. Like CODEM it has organised meetings — debates on broad subjects like the active participation of women in the mass struggle for popular demands,

and also on more specific themes.

Q. Why did the MIR not have an orientation on the question of women at the time when the women's movement emerged in Latin America, as it did in the rest of the world?

A. You have to remember the framework in which the MIR was fighting in Chile. The woman question is only one more question that we have to deal with in underground conditions. After the coup d'état, we concentrated our forces on rebuilding the mass movement, for the fight against repression, hunger, poverty, persecution, assassinations, torture, exploitation in its cruellest forms.

Political struggle in Chile involves direct confrontation in mass terms, military terms... You see in this situation the priority is building up the people's revolutionary forces. It is in this framework that it became more necessary to define an orientation on question of women, as on others.

Q. Do you think there is a place for a feminist struggle in Chile today? And that this struggle can strengthen the fight against the dictatorship?

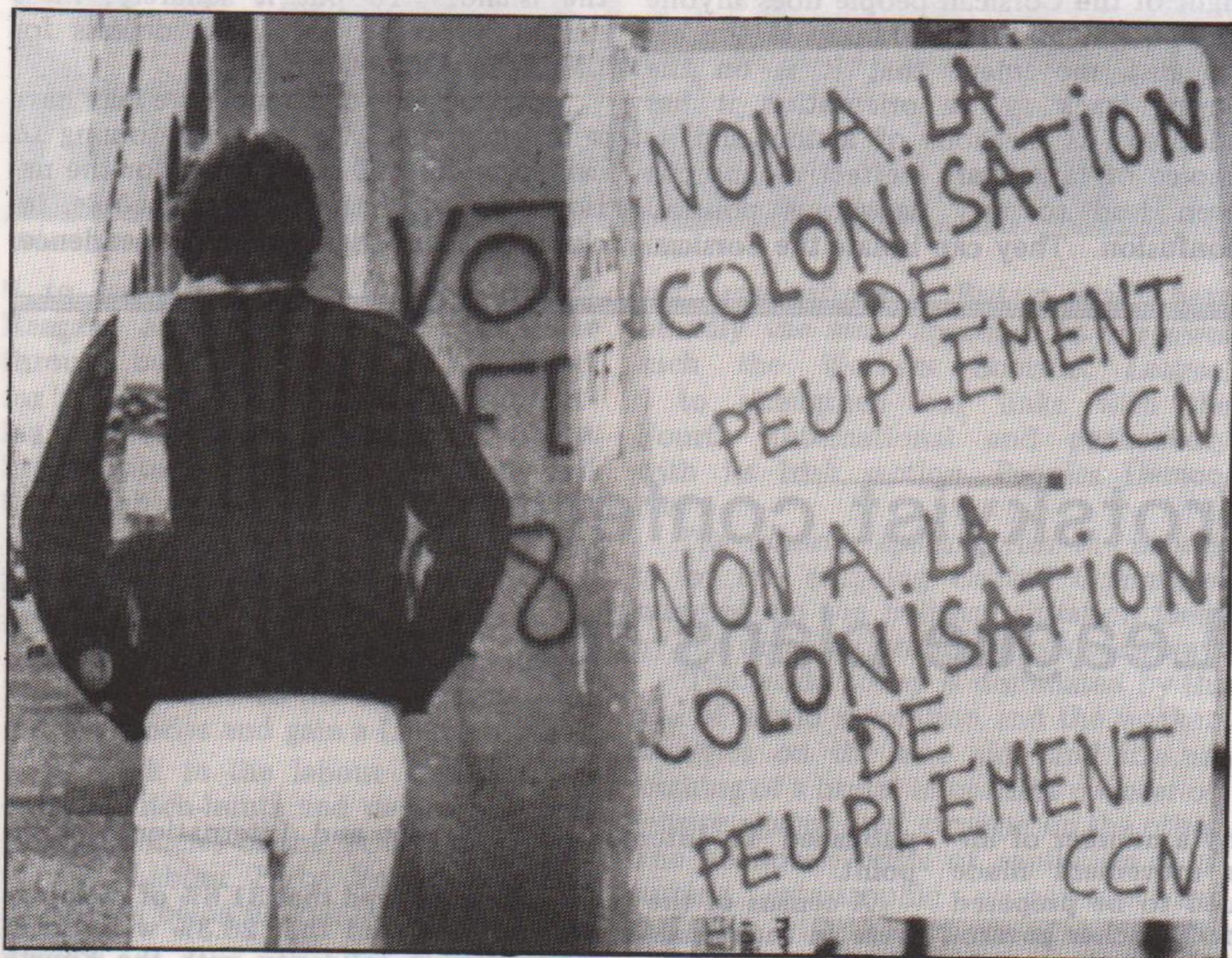
A. Evidently, the organised struggle of women plays a fundamental role in the struggle against the dictatorship. An autonomous organisation must be linked to the general political struggle. Specific demands must flow from the general objectives of the fight for overthrow the dictatorship, for a democratic revolutionary people's government. It is only through the liberation of the people as a whole that the liberation of women can be accomplished. ■

3. CODEM: Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights. This is a broad and independent organisation which is part of the Committee of Human Rights, which itself is part of the Committee for the Defence of People's Rights formed three years ago.

4. The organisations which are properly called feminist have had a growing response in the last two to three years. After years of silence and severe repression they appear to have entered into a stage of slight growth. An example of this is the *Circulo des Studios de la mujer* (Circle for Women's Studies). Under this title a women's group is trying to draw in other women to discuss together how to take charge of their own futures.



Mitterrand orders crackdown against Corsican nationalists



'No to settler colonialism' (DR)

Political nationalism became a mass phenomenon in Corsica in the 1970s. In the elections for the Corsican assembly set up by the left government that came into office in the spring of 1981, the parliamentary nationalist party, the *Unione do Popolo Corso* (UPC Union of the Corsican People) emerged as one of the major parties, eclipsing, notably, the CP.

The election of a left government in France and the creation of a Corsican assembly created considerable hopes for political and social reform in Corsica. That was reflected in the fact that the bulk of nationalist support fell in behind the UPC in the spring 1982 elections for the assembly.

However, the new regime has produced no real change, and at the same time the economic situation has worsened. In August, the section of the nationalist movement committed to physical force ended the truce it had declared during the period when hope for change was at its peak. Since then, there has been an increasing series of bombings and the physical-force organization has announced that it will exact a tax from the local wealthy to finance the struggle.

The growing tension in Corsica has provoked a furor in French political life and in the French press. The right is raising a hue and cry about the situation as an example of the inability of the left government to maintain order. In particular, the sensational press has played up the nationalist slogan "I Francesi fora," that is "French Go Home."

The Corsican language fits into the spectrum of neo-Latin dialects spoken in the Italian peninsula; it is historically closest to the dialect of Genoa, which ruled Corsica at one time. But the language of the Corsicans had a separate development because of the political vicissitudes of the island, and the nationalists claim that it is a separate language from Italian. It is written according to a different spelling system that takes account of Corsican pronunciation.

The influx of non-Corsicans is a sharp issue because the distinctly Corsican population is being submerged. Furthermore, the newcomers are generally economically much better off than the locals and include a lot of wandering exploiters, many driven out of Algeria. In its January 7 issue, *Rouge*, the weekly paper of the French section of the Fourth International, noted:

"The slogan 'i francesi fora' appeared long before the FLNC. It is everywhere on the island, on the walls, billboards, and on many lips. It is the spontaneous and elementary expression of the rebellion of many Corsicans against a central government that has always humiliated them and shown contempt for them, denying them even the most minimal national rights."

The following article is from the same issue of *Rouge* and represents the view point of French Fourth Internationalists:

Bombings, extortion, attacks against persons, the situation is deteriorating drastically in Corsica. With the municipal elections only three months away, what is going on the island is becoming a national political issue. The right wants to exploit the difficulties in which the government finds itself.

As for the government, it wants to demonstrate its ability to defend the bourgeois state. "No compromise is possible when the unity of the nation is in question," Francois Mitterrand said in his January 2 speech over French TV.

There are three main comments we can make about the recent events.

1. The offensive by the *Fronte di Librazione Nazionale Corso* (FLNC—Corsican National Liberation Front) is only a symptom of the general deterioration of the situation. People too often forget the effects of the long period of French domination over the island. The rates of inflation and unemployment are much higher there than they are in the mother country. On the other hand, wages are strikingly lower. The economic conditions that prevail on Corsica are forcing a massive exodus.

Where modern agricultural operations are started up, they are in the hands of big landowners who often live outside Corsica, either repatriated French Algerians or continental French. Likewise, the only ones to profit from the establishment of a parasitic tourist industry have been promoters, banks, trusts, and merchants.

The picture is completed by a political life dominated by certain families, the denial of the Corsican language and culture, and the presence of several Foreign Legion regiments, which are only the most spectacular manifestation of colonial occupation.

"Everything that should have, and could have been done to permit the development of the specific Corsican way of life has been done," the head of state said. Nothing could be more untrue. Since the May 10 victory of the left in the national elections, the new government has not gone beyond granting Corsica a "special status." The local legislature that was elected on this basis has in fact no powers and remains in the hands of the traditional families.

Le Monde summed up the problem well on January 4, noting "the central government has been very slow in defining the powers of the Corsican assembly," and that the latter "has been very slow in gaining authority." It gave a good summary of the results of the government's actions: "The Socialist representatives of the central government have scarcely demonstrated that they were really working for change, that is, to end the domination of political life by family interests."

2. Instead of looking for the reasons for the present tension in the failure of its own policy, the SP-CP majority in parliament has come up with only one answer — repression. On January 5, the Council of Ministers decided to ban the

FLNC and appoint Robert Broussard, the former head of the special police, to direct the "forces of order" on the island. These decisions will be seen in Corsica as a provocation, as a return to practices quite similar to those of the former rightist governments. The government is openly risking bloodshed. Broussard, an old supercop under the Giscard regime, responsible for innumerable "excesses," has already shown the sort of method he favors.

This spiral of violence must be stopped now. Otherwise, the Corsicans will lose their hope that there is going to be change in reality, and they will turn against the government. For our part, from the moment that the repressive axe fell, we have expressed our total solidarity with the struggle of the Corsican peo-

ple.

We have no intention of accepting from a government that claims to represent democracy and the working class what we opposed when it came from a reactionary regime. It is French capitalism alone that is responsible for the situation on the island. And the parties now in office have not met the expectations of the Corsican people. So, we will stand by every victim of police action.

3. Only on the basis of supporting the fight of the Corsican people does anyone have the right to say frankly to the nationalist movement that it is on the wrong track. The orientation it has adopted, its methods of action, and its choice of targets are ineffective, and can even lead to very dangerous political confusion. They can isolate the Corsican

masses from the bulk of French workers, as well as from the tens of thousands of activists all over the country who are telling the left majority that came into office after May 10, "enough compromises, the policy has to change." This current is growing everywhere, even if it is still scattered.

What is more, far from uniting the working people of Corsica, slogans aimed indiscriminately at "the French" threaten to deeply divide the people of the island. To put it squarely, these errors can result in serious defeats for the Corsican people.

But whatever differences we may have with the FLNC, we are continuing to campaign for full recognition for the national rights of the Corsican people, including their right to independence.

British Trotskyist conference : Socialist League plans for 1983

The last year in Britain has been marked by a number of important developments. The anti-missiles movement made significant strides forward. Workers continued to be prepared to fight against the disastrous policies of the Thatcher government to defend their jobs and living standards, like the health-workers who fought a bitter nine-month dispute over wages. The labour movement leadership ran true to form in refusing to give a resolute lead to these struggles, thus leading to a series of defeats in the struggle against the Tories. And they turned on the left in the Labour Party and launched a witch hunt against the Militant tendency.

This was the political context in which the British section of the Fourth International held its conference last December, where the main issue debated out was the attitude of revolutionary Marxists to the Labour Party.

The conference also turned its attention to discussing the world political situation, giving special attention to the development of the revolutionary process in Central America and the Caribbean, and the situation in Poland one year after martial law. These debates marked the start of preparation for the next World Congress of the Fourth International. The conference adopted positions similar to those of the International Executive Committee in 1981 and 1982 which have been

Steve ROBERTS

The conference of the British section of the Fourth International took place on December 18-20, in London. Delegates decided to put all their efforts into backing mass action against unemployment and for unilateral disarmament as the best way of securing a Labour victory and kicking out the Thatcher government. Conference also decided to change the name of the organisation from the International Marxist Group to the Socialist League.

Present at the conference were over 400 delegates and guests from the British and international labour movement.

Delegates heard greetings from Irish, Swedish, American, Mexican, and Hong Kong supporters of the Fourth International as well as the leadership of the International United Secretariat.

Five months of discussion had preceded the conference. The organisation is proud of its reputation for democratic internal functioning and sees the formation of tendencies organised around different points of view in this period as a natural and healthy development.

Fourth Internationalists contrast this method of functioning with that of the bureaucratised communist and social democratic parties who refuse to allow the right of tendency. Instead these parties conduct expulsions or witch-

hunts such as that being carried out against supporters of the Militant newspaper in the British Labour Party.

published in Intercontinental Press and International Viewpoint.
A census of the organisation showed that 31.6% of members were in industrial or manual jobs, and that 26.3% were members of the youth organisation in solidarity with the Fourth International. This showed an increase from the previous conference and recorded the progress made in two projects reaffirmed there — to build Revolution Youth and to implant the organisation more firmly in decisive sectors of the working class.

The Central Committee elected to lead the organisation in carrying out the tasks adopted also reflected the changing composition of the organisation with 37.5% of members in industrial jobs. The proportion of women members rose to 42.5%, while the important role of comrades from the youth organisation in the work of the section was recognised in the decision to allocate two places for comrades directly elected from the youth organisation in addition to the 10% youth members elected at conference.

The report of the conference we publish here is taken from Socialist Challenge January 7, 1983.

P.D.

hunts such as that being carried out against supporters of the Militant newspaper in the British Labour Party.

The principle of democratic centralism therefore entails complete freedom of discussion; however it also demands that once decisions have been taken by majority vote that they are carried out by all members.

Hence for the British section of the Fourth International its national conference is sovereign, subject only to decisions taken by the world congress of the Fourth International.

By a small overall majority the conference adopted the following major points of policy;



Demonstration against nuclear missiles in Britain (DR)

* to campaign against the war-drive of Reagan and Thatcher; in particular through building the present movement for unilateral disarmament and supporting those fighting against imperialist intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

* to campaign for the release of all the heroic Polish fighters imprisoned by the present regime

* to build mass action around the slogan 'jobs not bombs' as the best way to kick out the Tories and gain a Labour victory.

* to work in the labour movement to oppose witch-hunts and defend the progressive policies of the TUC, Labour Party and Labour Party Young Socialists congresses being junked by the right wing leaders.

* to support the fight of women in the labour movement for an effective say at all levels of the labour movement and for policies like affirmative action for jobs and a woman's right to choose.

* to help build Revolution Youth, the youth organisation in solidarity with the Fourth International in Britain.

* to be in favour of unity with other far

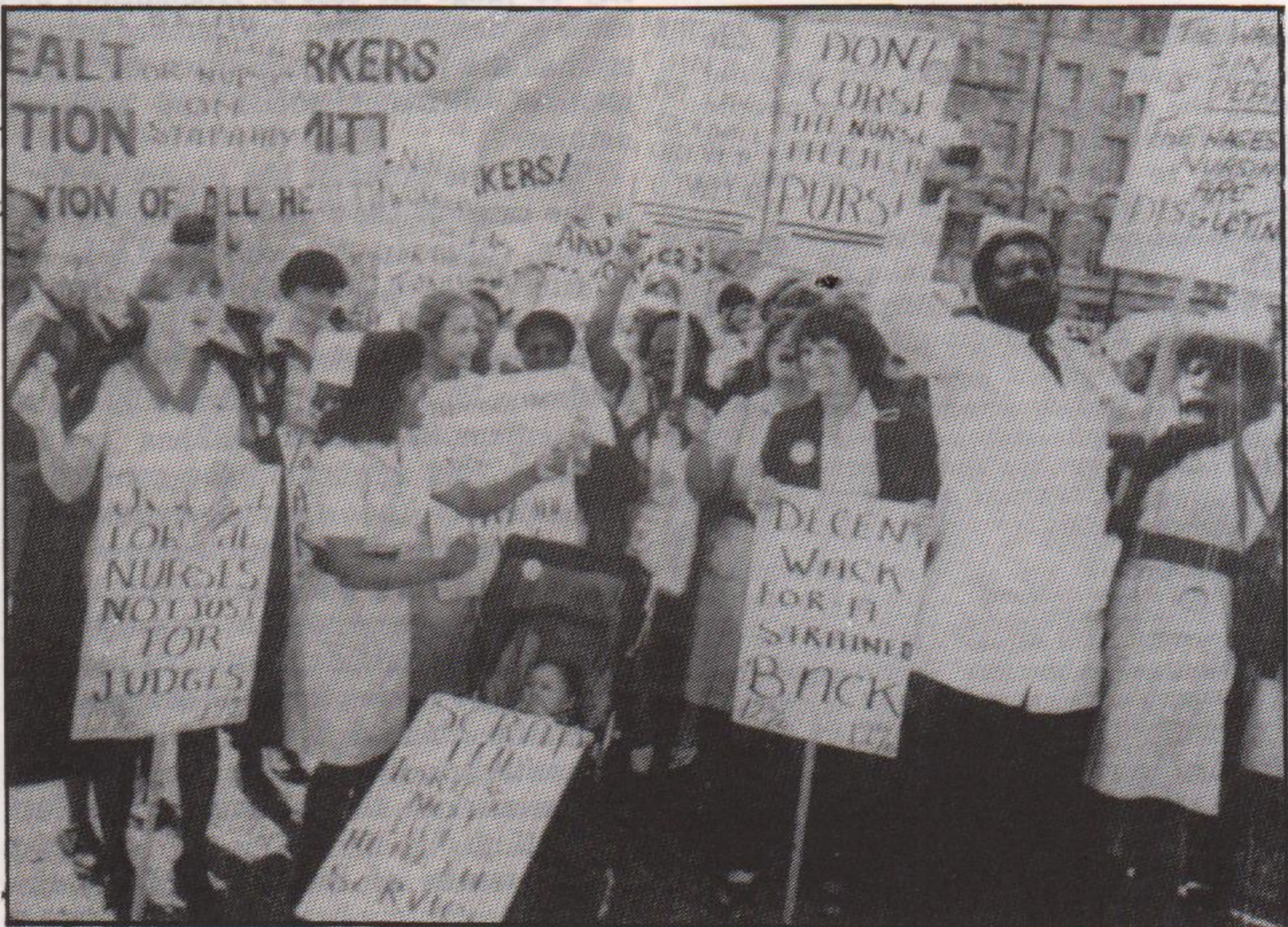
left organisations in Britain which have broadly the same approach as our own, such the Workers Socialist League. * to strengthen our links with the Fourth International and particularly with its Irish section, Peoples Democracy.

The reporter speaking for the majority of the outgoing Central Committee summed up the political situation faced by the organisation in the following way:

'The world today is dominated by the rise of world revolution and the workers struggles on the one side and the unleashing of a brutal imperialist counter-offensive against that struggle on the other. The economic crisis of capitalism is assuming catastrophic proportions and combines with the advance of world revolution since 1968 to fuel a deep-going crisis of bourgeois rule and Stalinism.

'The most advanced points of this sharpening class struggle have been the revolutionary struggles in Central America and Poland. These combine with the rise of the mass anti-nuclear weapons movements in the imperialist heartlands and the struggle for class independence in the semi-colonial countries to bring to the

British health workers took industrial action for nine months over wages (DR)



fore the unity of the world revolution in the struggle against the capitalist class and of its allies — particularly the bureaucrats of Moscow and Peking.

'In Britain the period since the election of Thatcher has been one of partial defeats and political set-backs for the working class, but with the basic organisations of the working class remaining intact and being capable of launching tremendous battles, like the health-workers strike, against the capitalist offensive.

'Within the labour movement the development of the Bennite current and the political offensive of the right-wing of the labour bureaucracy against it represents the deepest political polarisation of the British labour movement for fifty years. We are at the beginning of a historical crisis of British labourism.

'The decisive task of revolutionary Marxists is to shake off all sectarian prejudices and *participate* in the coming political battles that will shape the future of the British working class movement.

'For this new methods of work are necessary. Workers and youth today increasingly look to the Labour Party and its left wing for political solutions to the crisis of British society. For this reason a revolutionary socialist newspaper is needed within the Labour Party to give a voice and political direction to their struggles.'

The attitude of the Socialist League towards the Labour Party is that it would like to be able to affiliate to it in the same way as the Cooperative Party and Fabian Society can. But it believes that in the current climate of the witch-hunt against socialists that this would be rejected by the Labour Party.

The Socialist League therefore organises separately from the Labour Party; membership is open to all who accept the objectives and organisational principles of the Socialist League and who are prepared to actively realise them.

While the Labour Party today dominates all questions of working class politics the conference recognised that the decisive political issues in the party would be resolved in the trade unions through the block vote. The trade unions remain the fundamental organisations of the working class despite the toll wrought by unemployment.

The conference was therefore happy to record a rise in the proportion of its membership in such decisive unions as transport, rail, engineering, electrical and telecommunications. Over 26 per cent of its members are in the industrial unions, five per cent in manual unions such as NUPE and COHSE and 15 per cent are looking for industrial jobs.

Within the unions the Socialist League works to support the day-to-day fights against the employers and the Tories while at the same time building reform currents within the unions to introduce the type of principles of workers democracy espoused by the militants of Solidarnosc in the building of their mass trade union. ■

Russell Tribunal denounces Kremlin forces' atrocities in Afghanistan



The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the continuing war in that country have been difficult questions for the socialist and workers movement to deal with.

There are a number of obvious reasons for this — the remoteness of the country; the backwardness of its social structure; and the fact that, for material reasons in particular, the organizations leading the struggle of the Afghan people are strongly influenced by right-wing forces and institutions. Moreover, these right-wing forces are trying to exploit the conflict to whip up an anti-Communist campaign and justify an imperialist war drive against the workers states.

Nonetheless, the question is extremely important for the socialist movement, especially because of the use that the imperialists are trying to make of it. It is above all a political question, since there is no direct military confrontation between the Soviet Union and the imperialists in the Afghan region, and even the potential for one is highly dubious.

Therefore, the Soviet intervention cannot be justified on the grounds of overriding needs of the military defense of the workers states.

On the other hand, since the extent of the conflict is now clear, is it possible to justify the Soviet invasion or even to refrain from denouncing it and from fighting it politically on the grounds that the resistance is reactionary? Is it possible for massive resistance of a poorly armed people against a powerful military machine to be reactionary through and through to have a reactionary dynamic? Can socialists approve the imposition of progress by massive military force? Those are extremely important questions particularly when the world capitalist crisis is opening the way for a revival of socialist ideas in the advanced countries. They have implications that go far beyond Afghanistan.

The Russell Tribunal hearings on Afghanistan deserve, and will get, a more attentive hearing on the left than other studies of the question. It is important to examine the results carefully. The following article from the December 31 issue of *Rouge*, the weekly paper of the French section of the Fourth International, represents an initial look at them. It has been somewhat edited and abridged.

Michel LEQUENNE

The second session of the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples was held in Paris December 16-20. It was devoted to Afghanistan.

First of all, the question has to be taken up of what the authority was for holding such an inquiry, since the Stalinists will certainly not fail to question its legitimacy.

For example, when Jean-Paul Sartre condemned the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, he was asked: "What right do you have to protest? On the basis of what principles, what philosophy are you protesting? Is it your own?"

In fact, there is a very long tradition for such protests. It goes back to Voltaire. Among the more recent cases are those of Zola and Anatole France, who took up Dreyfus's defense well ahead of the organizations in the workers movement. We should also mention in the Dewey Commission on the Moscow purge trials.

This tribunal's authority derives from the concept of justice in whose name these great intellectuals spoke out, against the interests of their own class; from the humanistic principles that are given lip service even by those who by their deeds trample on them.

It is on this basis — although with a greater understanding of the relativity of these principles — that the team of internationally known intellectuals who make up the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples have taken it upon themselves to judge war crimes and violations of the rights of peoples.

This is not in the name of some abstract morality elevated above the class struggle but in the name of principles that have become elementary in our time and have been recognized by the concerned parties themselves in accords, conventions, and protocols that they have signed or ratified.

The tribunal has a considerable authority to judge the case of Afghanistan because it has previously condemned crimes against the peoples committed by hangers-on of different social and political natures.

Thus, the tribunal has issued verdicts in the cases of the conflict in the western Sahara (Brussels, November 1979), Argentina (Geneva, May 1980), the Philippines (Antwerp, November 1980), Salvador (Mexico City, February 1981), Timor (Lisbon, June 1981), and finally Zaire (Rotterdam, September 1982).

In its first verdict on the conflict in Afghanistan, the tribunal established that the Soviet intervention represented aggression. The purpose of the recent session was to establish, through the work of a special commission of inquiry, whether the Soviet forces in Afghanistan could be charged with "violating the humanitarian code of war, in particular with respect to the treatment of civilian populations."

The results of these studies and the mass of testimony heard were devastating

for the Soviet bureaucracy.

Testimony was heard from researchers assigned by the tribunal, doctors (including 59 from various French medical aid groups), Afghan witnesses from all walks of life — fighters, members of resistance, and ordinary civilians — journalists, photographers, and experts who spent time in the country between 1980 and 1982. Photographs were presented, official reports, and press analyses. On the basis of this evidence, a picture was built up that leaves no doubt about the atrocious inhumanity of this dirty war.

Despite its limited means, the Tribunal of the Peoples was able to establish to its satisfaction that most of the accusations made were proven. It issued the following verdict:

"The tribunal condemns the Soviet Union for violating the provisions of the accepted law of war as set forth in the body of its report.

"It states that such abuses are bound up with the violation of the inalienable rights of the Afghan people, and that respect for the fundamental rights of peoples is an essential precondition for respecting the basic human values inherent in the law of war."

THE METHODS EMPLOYED

It was established incontrovertibly that several kinds of weapons prohibited by international conventions are being used in Afghanistan by the Russian troops. This included dum-dum bullets; fragmentation grenades; explosive booby traps disguised as pens, watches, and toys, or hidden under bodies. Evidence was also presented of the use of substances that produced the sort of effects that poisonous gas does — prolonged unconsciousness and wounds take an unusually long time to heal. Photographers showed pictures of the victims and the results of their studies were developed.

The difficulty of making a conclusive judgement about the use of such weapons led the tribunal to conclude that the U.N. mission assigned to investigate this had done an inadequate job with respect to such a serious question.

Photographs of carbonized bodies demonstrated the use of napalm.

THE TREATMENT OF THE WOUNDED AND PRISONERS

It was clearly established that Soviet troops have been finishing off wounded fighters, and that this is being done in such a way that it seems that "orders have been given to leave no survivors." It was also clearly shown that the bodies of dead fighters are being profaned (which is an outrage to the cultural conceptions of the country) and that prisoners are being subjected to degrading treatment.

Torture is a general practice, and is inflicted both on fighters and civilians. Along with beatings and deprivation of sleep, the use of electric shock is widespread. Women have not been spared, and some have been raped. Soviet opera-

tives are generally present and participate in these tortures.

The most horrifying testimony given to the tribunal was certainly that of the medical student Farida Ahmadi, who was held from April 24 to September 20 1981. She told how she had been subjected to several types of torture over a number of weeks, and had seen still more atrocious forms of torture inflicted on other prisoners, such as cutting off parts of the body and gouging out of eyes.

MASS TERROR

The Soviet forces are waging war on an entire people. Their experience with guerrilla warfare (people's war) has taught them that the only way to defeat guerrillas is to destroy their social base. Perhaps for that reason, they are waging a war of terror against the civilian population. The objective of the operations seems to be to force the local populations to flee.

Antipersonnel mines are planted on the roads, in the meadows, around villages. Old people, women, and children are slaughtered. Harvests of wheat and corn are burned (in particular by helicopters). Livestock is killed. Villages whose inhabitants have fled are destroyed. The total effect is to create a climate of all-pervasive fear.

AN UNPRECEDENTED EXODOS

The testimony presented tells of the destruction and pillaging of mosques, of whole villages destroyed by bombing. Hospitals are systematically destroyed, including those marked by a red cross (such making is no longer used because it increases the threat of bombing rather than reduces it).

One massacre was studied in detail, on the basis of testimony by researchers, the mayor, a peasant, and a mullah from the village of Padlahwab-e-Sharra in the pro-

vince of Logar to the south of Kabul. Five hundred bodies were taken out of an irrigation canal where the population had taken refuge, along with a few mujahedin, some migrant workers, and some people who had fled from other areas. The slaughter was accomplished by the burning and explosion of various chemical products in the water.

The effect of this generalized terror is an unprecedented exodus. Two and a half million have taken refuge in Pakistan, several hundred thousand have fled to Iran. Out of a total population of about 15 million, leaving aside the question of how many have been killed, this represents between a fifth and a quarter of the entire population who have been forced to flee their country by the Russian invasion. It is the largest body of refugees in the world.

Despite all this, the Soviet forces remain bogged down. In 1982, there has been a considerable increase in the number of Russian operations. However, the resistance has grown stronger.

MEMBERS OF THE TRIBUNAL

Francois Rigaux, chairman, professor of private international law at the Catholic University of Ouvain, Belgium; Richard Baumlin, professor of constitutional law at the University of Bern, member of the Swiss federal parliament; Vladimir Dedijer, historian Yugoslavia; Francois Houtart, sociologist, professor at the Catholic University of Louvain; Edmond Jouve, professor of international relations in the third world at the Sorbonne, France; Jan Kulakowski, general secretary of the World Confederation of Labor; Leo Matarasso, lawyer, France; Sergio Mendez Arceo, bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico; Ajit Roy, economist and journalist, India; Laurent Schwartz, mathematician, professor at the University of Paris VII, member of the Academy of Sciences.

Afghan resistance fighters (DR)



Tasks of revolutionists in the Spanish unions under the SP government

The following report is from the December 17 issue of *Combate*, the weekly paper of the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* (LCR, Revolutionary Communist League), the section of the Fourth International for the Spanish state.

On December 11-12, the Trade-Union Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the LCR met with all the Liga's fraction heads for the various nationalities and regions. The objective of this meeting was to analyze the changes that have taken place in the workers movement and the trade-union scene since the PSOE's victory in the general elections and after the trade-union elections. Likewise, it was intended to update the tasks of revolutionists in the factories and unions in this new stage. The main conclusions are as follows:

1. THE CHANGES

The PSOE's victory reflected the desire for change of the great majority of the workers. It can result in a certain revitalization of the workers movement, which harbors big illusions about the prospects for change, that is, that its most elementary demands are going to be met.

The great majority of the workers expect the new government to take a different attitude than the old, more favorable to their interests. This means that they have a certain confidence in the coming government which revolutionists have to take account of. But our analysis also pointed up the narrow margin that the PSOE has for undertaking a policy of reforms, as is confirmed by the economic program and the first measures it adopted after taking office. This means that here, unlike in France, from the beginning the timid reforms of the Social Democratic government are going to be accompanied by antiworking-class and anti-people measures, which are going to arouse discontent and a lack of confidence. This tendency will be relatively weak at the start but will grow. We have to be attentive to it.

Unless there is strong pressure from the workers movement, there is not going to be any change. The trade-union left has considerable room for action if it is able to base itself on the desire for change that was reflected by the results of the October 29 elections. That is, if it is able to build campaigns that take into account

the illusions that the workers hold — despite the lukewarmness of the PSOE's line — in a government that they see as clearly different than the previous ones, a government that through the UGT has the support of an important sector of the workers movement.

We are going to demand that this government actually implement some reforms that, however basic, are in the interest of the workers. We are going to expose every antilabor measure or attitude it adopts. We are not going to accept any social peace, no matter how big a role the PSOE plays in the government; we are going to keep on fighting the bosses and the CEOE (the employers organization). Today, more than before, the strength of the workers is in mobilization. But we must be very careful to focus clearly on the central enemy facing us in order to assure that the working-class actions that we promote are aimed against the bosses and not directly against the government. We will demand that the government take the side of the workers. And we will denounce it if it takes the bosses and the right.

2. THE UGT AND THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS

In recent years, the UGT has built a union organization capable of competing with the Workers Commissions. In saying this, we are not overlooking the fact that the UGT got preferential treatment from the UCD (the ruling bourgeois party) and the CEOE to the detriment of the Workers Commissions. But that is not enough to explain the UGT's growth. The Workers Commissions made grave errors, taking a course that brought them closer and closer to the moderate and conciliationist line of the UGT leadership. It was because of this that the Workers Commissions lost their dominant position in the workers movement.

Today, the UGT is still better placed to continue taking the initiative. But this union confederation has major ties with the workers, and the monolithism that it has been able to impose in recent years can start to break down. The policy of "pressing the workers demands and keeping its eyes open" that the UGT leadership says it is maintaining toward the PSOE — and which many members and activists in the UGT believe it is actually doing — is not compatible with a course of supporting many of the antilabor mea-

asures that the PSOE is going to try to push through with the help of the UGT leadership.

The Workers Commissions are going through a difficult period. Whether they win or lose factory elections, their decline is manifest. Nonetheless, in this situation, they would have vast room for action if they were able to take a left turn. They could fight back effectively against the campaign designed to wear them down by adopting a strategy of mobilizing the workers. But this is not the approach of the Communist Party.

Unfortunately, the calls for forming a united body with the UGT are not aimed at achieving unity in struggle or at keeping the UGT from being turned into a pawn of the government's economic policy. Rather, the Workers Commissions leadership wants to be included in this collaboration, to pursue the moderate course that has already led it to so many disasters. So, the task of forcing a left turn, of keeping the Workers Commissions from continuing to move to the right, falls to the left wing within the organization, the broad left wing that came forward in the last congress. We are going to keep on working to unite and coordinate this entire opposition current.

But within the apparatus of the Workers Commissions itself there are dissensions, if not on trade-union matters at least over the question of the independence of the union from the CP. This, combined with the growing sensitivity to the question of internal democracy, gives us an opportunity to press for an offensive to win an amnesty for all those who have been expelled and penalized by the union, especially the Asturias Current, which is continuing to demand this.

3. THE NEXT PACT

The major part of the meeting was devoted to what is involved in the coming negotiations between the unions and the bosses over the pact on guidelines for bargaining in the contract renewal talks. The sort of pact that is shaping up is quite similar to the AMI that the UGT and the CEOE signed in 1980, which was so disastrous for the workers. We came to the conclusion that after the experience of these last years a new guidelines pact would have a very bad effect on the contract bargaining.

Instead of a move to take advantage of the relationship of forces won by the October 28 electoral victory to gain better positions than we have had for some years, to stop the loss of buying power, and get better contracts, this pact represents an attempt to bypass the demand for change. It is an attempt to start by throwing away the electoral victory and the chance for better conditions for the workers.

Particularly disturbing is the long chain of provisions about productivity, absenteeism, establishing shift systems, mobility of labor, and flexible hours. If these were actually included in the contracts, they would mean great deterioration in working conditions and a new blow for the working class.

So, the No.1 activity of the LCR in the workers movement in the coming weeks is going to be opposition to this guidelines pact. We know that the conditions are going to be difficult, because they are going to present it as an agreement guaranteeing buying power, which is false; and they are going to take advantage of the illusions and expectations created by the elections to say that this is a different sort of pact than in the past. Therefore, we are going to be careful about the kind of pedagogy and arguments we use, but we are going to oppose this pact resolutely.

First of all, we will explain in the factories why a guidelines pact is a bad thing, and why platforms have to be prepared for the contract bargaining that will maintain buying power and lead to a progressive reduction of working hours, which will contain provisions that guarantee jobs. Secondly, we have to wage a strenuous campaign in the unions to assure that many do not sign the pact.

We are going to give this work a high priority, especially in the Workers Commissions, where many bodies are already opposed to the pact. We are going to work to extend this attitude, to demand that the union be consulted, and to press for the expression of broad opposition to the pact before it is signed.

We are going to fight for this in close unity with all those who share the same view. This is the best way to consolidate the left opposition that is so necessary in the Workers Commissions today.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT

Analysis of the government's economic orientation did not leave much hope that the PSOE would keep its election promise to create 800,000 jobs in the life of this parliament. To the contrary, we are faced with a drastic restructuration policy in all industries that threatens to wipe out tens of thousands of jobs. At the same time, there is no indication anywhere of how the government is going to create jobs. Reform of the Employment Statute to extend unemployment insurance has not yet been put on the agenda.

It is precisely in the area of unemployment that the election promises will be

most honored in the breach. But we cannot expect big actions right away to put pressure on the government. So, what we have to do is to continue a policy of opposing restructuration, of unequivocally supporting the workers struggles that break out over such question. And at the same time, we have to take advantage of the better possibilities for pressuring

the government that exist now and try to build solidarity and unity. We have to demand the promised reform of the Unemployment Statute right now, and to build a movement around this question that keep the unemployed organized, around the unions in particular, and demand that not a single jobless person be left without compensation.

Union elections since the PSOE victory

Since the victory of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in the October 28 general elections, shop-steward and factory committee elections have been held in two key areas in the Spanish state — in Madrid and in the Basque country.

In Madrid, the renewal of factory representatives went much more slowly than in the last round of elections in 1980, when 6,700 workplaces elected representatives. By late November, only 20% of that number had held new elections.

In the big workplaces, the relationship of forces between the UGT (Union General de Trabajadores — General Workers Union, the PSOE-dominated confederation) and the Workers Commissions (which historically have been dominated by the Communist Party) remained substantially the same.

However, the UGT has been gaining ground rapidly in the small enterprises, where it has been running a better organized campaign than the Workers Commissions.

The Madrid area UGT leadership is a housebroken one. The majority of the old provincial leadership opposed the pact with the bosses that was pushed by the PSOE leaders and the union bureaucrats tied most tightly to it. So, this majority was overturned bureaucratically by the Social Democratic machine.

On the other hand, at its last congress, the local organization of the Workers Commissions established a considerable margin of trade-union independence. The slate supported by the CP apparatus was defeated. Since then a majority of the present leadership has broken with the CP and taken a more militant line of action in trade-union struggles, exemplified by its role in building the Getafe general strikes.

In the Basque country, the situation is much more complicated. The Communist Party has never been a major electoral force in this area, where the left is dominated by radicalized nationalist currents. In the October 28 elections, it was virtually wiped out.

In addition, besides the all-Spain confederations, there are two nationalist unions in the Basque country, the Basque Workers Union, which is linked to the moderate nationalist party, the PNV; and the LAB, linked to the radicalized nationalist party, Herri Batasuna (HB — The People United). Moreover, the EMK, the Basque equivalent of the Movimiento Comunista de Espana, a left centrist group, supported independent slates, the CUIS. It had been active in the Workers Commissions, but allowed the CP to push it out.

The results differed widely according to the locality. In general, the Workers Commissions are much stronger than the CP. The Workers Commissions did best where they were most clearly independent of the CP, notably in the province of Guipuzcoa, where the CP apparatus does not fully control the union and the Fourth Internationalists have a strong presence. Here, the Workers Commissions got 20.3% of the delegates, topping the UGT by 50%.

In Alava, where the Workers Commissions are tightly controlled by the CP, they suffered a setback, getting only 14%. The CUIS gained a dominant position in the engineering industry in this province. It was here that the department of the EMK from the Workers Commissions made the most impact, the process having been initiated by bureaucratic expulsions.

It was in Alava that the UGT got its best result, 32.3% of the delegates. This is also the province where the UGT leadership has been most independent of the all-Spain leadership, standing clearly to its left. It gained a major lead over the STV, which got only 23.3%, and that was mainly in the small workplaces.

In Viscaya, the STV remained the strongest force with 28.4%. The UGT got 22.5%, but got the highest vote in the large workplaces. The UGT and the Workers Commissions (with 19.87%) remained dominant in the Bilbao industrial area, the main working-class center in the Basque country, where a large percentage of the workers are not of Basque origin.

Notably, the STV doubled its percentage (to 16%) in Navarra, the largely hispanicized province that has not officially been included in the Basque region.

The LAB increased its percentage somewhat in Viscaya. In Alava it remained quite weak. In Guipuzcoa, however, it got 10% of the vote in the engineering industry. At the same time, this was the province where the CUIS was weakest. In general, the LAB increased its vote, but only very slightly.

Fourth Internationalist ran on Workers Commissions slates mainly, but also on UGT and LAB slates. They made gains, especially in Guipuzcoa.

The effects of the black gold rush on the African neocolonial economies

The OPEC special conference held in Vienna last March pointed up in particular the fragility of this cartel of producing countries in the face of the maneuvers of the big imperialist countries. The tactic of cutting back oil production somewhat in the attempt to hold up the sale price of crude and thereby maintain the currency income of the producing countries has only limited effectiveness.

This is first of all because the imperialist countries can buy from non-OPEC members (not all oil producers are members). But it is also because Saudi Arabia, one of the pillars of imperialist policy in the Middle East holds the top cards in OPEC. It produces by itself more than five times the amount of crude produced by the second largest exporter in OPEC, Venezuela, and nearly ten times more than Algeria and Libya.

This conference also revealed the extreme dependence of the Nigerian economy on the world market and the big imperialist companies. The competition of cheap North Sea oil, and also doubtless the maneuvers of the oil companies, forced a sharp cutback in Nigerian oil production (from 2,000,000 barrels a day in January 1981 to 700,000 in August of the same year).

Since Nigeria gets 90% of its export income and 80% of its

domestic income from oil, any drop in oil production means grave consequences for the economy of the country. So, Nigeria's currency reserves dropped by two-thirds over 1981. The credits allocated to the Development Plan had to be cut by about 2.4 billion dollars. Thus, Nigeria's economic dependence on the world capitalist market is increasing.

On this occasion, OPEC managed to prevent a new cut in the price of Nigerian oil by granting the country a subsidy of a billion dollars paid by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which can only increase Nigeria's foreign debt, already 7 billion dollars. But this did not at all reduce the country's economic dependency.

So, this is what is left of the illusions that were entertained in Black Africa about the possibilities for "independent" development offered by oil. Besides showing the emptiness of these illusions, the following article analyzes in detail the consequences of the economic differentiation created by oil among the various African countries. A distinct "oil producer model of industrialization" is now emerging which does not, however, represent a break in the structural economic dependence of these countries on the capitalist world market and imperialism.

Claude GABRIEL

The various stages in the pillage of Africa did not affect all the countries and regions of the continent evenly. The golden age of mining and colonial superprofits itself brought about a certain differentiation among the countries. Then, with the advent of decolonization and, at the start of the 1970s, of industrialization schemes, the imperialists adopted the conscious aim of increasing the uneven development of the African countries.

For example, in the framework of the First Convention of Lome, which linked 44 African, Pacific, and Caribbean countries to the European Economic Community, the European International Trade Center (Centre europeen du commerce international—CECI) was set up. The chairman of this body, Olivier Giscard d'Estaing indicated quite clearly the policy of preferential treatment adopted by imperialist Europe. The tasks of the CECI, he said, were "to develop to the highest possible degree economic relations between a 'selected' group of countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, and European companies, with the aim of establishing profitable and enduring arrangements (1)."

This selectiveness by investors—based on economic, social, and political criteria—has resulted in aggravating the disadvantages suffered by various countries, which originally arose because of such factors as isolation, insufficient resources, or the spread of deserts.

Because of the inequalities in the availability of commercial outlets and financing, the regional industrial schemes have generally favored one of the countries involved to the disadvantage of the others.

It was, to a certain extent, in an attempt to cover up this state of affairs that the concept of "the least advanced countries" was put forward. These countries, for reasons deliberately left obscure, are set apart as the poorest of the poor. Of the 31 countries put in this category, 21 are sub-Saharan African countries.

This unevenness has increased still more since the big oil price rises in 1973-74. Most of the countries in Black Africa produce little if any oil. Imported fuels account for between 13% and 15% of their total imports. The worst off in this respect are Zimbabwe (formally Rhodesia) and Uganda. Some 30% of their total imports are fuels.⁽²⁾ In comparison, the four main oil countries in sub-Saharan Africa — Nigeria, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Angola — pay only 2% of their import bill for fuels.

The oil problem has steadily pushed up the foreign debt of the importing countries. The current accounts deficit of the African oil importing countries has gone from 1.5 billion dollars in 1970 to 8 billion in 1980⁽³⁾.

Moreover, above and beyond this foreign trade imbalance, the presence or absence of oil in Africa seems to be becoming additional basis for discriminatory investment policies.

Many African governments have started a frantic search for oil, while only a few years ago everyone seemed to have made up their minds that most of these countries had no petroleum resources.

The known reserves today are quite modest. The four countries currently producing oil hold the bulk of them⁽⁴⁾. But obviously these figures have to be taken with a grain of salt. It can never be excluded that an unexpected find may put a country that now seems to lack com-

mercially exploitable fields at the head of the pack. We also know that one day, for political reasons, the Western drilling companies may "discover" major reserves where they searched, apparently in vain, for years⁽⁵⁾.

Next in order of importance after the four African oil exporters are some countries that still produce small and inadequate amounts of oil, even for their domestic market, but still enough to fire hopes of their governments and the interest of investors. This group is made up of the Cameroons, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Zaire.

This trend is beginning to take on considerable importance in the imperialists' plans, and obviously to have an effect on the chances that the various African countries have to interest investors.

A good example of this phenomenon is provided by the Congo-Brazzaville. Traditionally, this country has had only a very marginal attraction for French investors. Henceforth, they may find it much more interesting. It did give you a bit of a start to hear Robert Galley, then minister of cooperation in the Giscard-Barre government, say that the Congo could become a country with a future. Always before, this country's self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist junta was supposed to be a bogey for French investors.

1. AFP, Abidjan, April 12, 1975.
2. World Bank Report (the "Berg Report") "Indicative Action Program for Black Africa," 1981, p. 175.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 21, in 1978 dollars.
4. For all Black Africa, reserves are estimated at a little more than 19 billion barrels. "Berg Report," p. 121.
5. For example, on several occasions the Congolese government has complained about the ELF-ERAP cutting back production on the pretext of insufficient reserves. Then when the across-the-board increases in the price of crude made Congolese offshore crude more profitable, this company "discovered" major reserves.

The presence of oil seems to have come to weigh more heavily in the balance than ideological facades. At least this seems to be what a director of the SCOA trading and industrial company (in which the Paribas Bank holds the majority interest) thought when he said that "it is not Beauce or Brie that give the franc zone its solidarity. It is the French African Community franc, which has been strengthened in recent years by the volume of African oil surpluses (6)."

In other words, the French African Community franc is nothing but the "mother country's" currency issued under another name by the central banks located in the former French African colonies. No matter whether these countries are Gabon, which was long controlled by Gaullist mercenaries, or the Congo, whose regime claims to be revolutionary and apes its Soviet "brother," the oil is pumped by French firms in the same currency area. This neo-colonial oil could not be any more French if it were pumped in the Paris basin itself.

If countries such as the Congo Brazzaville are able to attract international finance thanks to their oil reserves, the hierarchy of uneven development in Black Africa could easily be upset. Is the classification that Olivier Giscard d'Estaing made for his CECI in 1975 still valid in 1982?

Countries such as Senegal and Kenya, which seemed first in line for imperialist industrial projects, may lose a lot of their attraction if oil comes to play such a role.

While we have to be cautious about extrapolating possibilities in a sector like oil, and the past months have shown how unstable the oil market is, we should still consider the advantages that African crude could offer for the imperialists, and therefore the sort of structural role it could play for sub-Saharan economic projects.

SCHEMES

In the first place, African crude, especially from Nigeria and Gabon, is regarded as high quality, light, and producing little pollution in the refinement process. Secondly, for political reasons not hard to understand, this oil is located in countries that can be controlled more easily than those in the Middle East.

The political weakness of the African ruling classes and regimes in general makes it possible for Western governments to keep a firm grip on sources of supply in these countries. Despite some tough-sounding positions toward South Africa, the Nigerian government has never dared to try to do what the Arab ruling classes did at the time of the 1973 war with Israel (7).

For both political and economic reasons, it does not seem either as if the Black African oil producers have any particular desire to join OPEC. Gabon and Nigeria are members. But the Congo-Brazzaville and Angola are not. And the Cameroons and the Ivory Coast show



even less interest.

It is obviously out of the question that African oil will ever figure more importantly in Western imports than oil produced in the Arab countries or in Latin America. Such a possibility is not involved in the question of the importance of African oil. However, countries such as France or the U.S. do have an interest in diversifying their sources. That is the reason that France has gotten its hands so sticky in Gabonese or Congolese crude and the U.S. in Nigerian.

In reality, African oil seems to play a role mainly as regards the "model of development." Since it by itself attracts certain industrial and trading capital, it becomes the trigger of certain processes of development. Oil income changes political and economic behavior. Around the hopes fired by oil, schemes take form in other areas, including the social.

The basic scheme held in common by the imperialist governments and the African governments with respect to this oil can be summarized as follows—maximize oil income in order to promote the economic and social development of the countries concerned. At least, this is the publicly expressed political intent.

However, taking into account what was said above about the political weakness of the African regimes, the actual return per barrel of oil sold to their national incomes has varied greatly. The general increase in income that they expected has been far from realized everywhere. The actual increase has varied widely owing to the disparity of techniques for removing the oil, the multiplication of new types of drilling and pumping contracts, as well as big differences in the various fiscal systems.

In certain cases, the overwhelming political and economic power of one or another imperialist country, which

could be the major buyer of oil and the holder of the oil concessions, has tended to push the local bourgeoisie virtually into a comprador status, despite its theoretical ownership of the petroleum reserves. This is certainly the case as regards the French role in Gabon.

Besides these hazards, which are "natural" in the context of the world capitalist economy, the growth of oil production in a country can have catastrophic effects, as the experts and the governments themselves have regularly pointed out but without anyone paying very much attention (8). A general study of the economies of Nigeria and Gabon over the past ten years highlights the following structural effects.

—Flight from the land and mushrooming of cities; decline of agriculture and increased dependence on food imports.

—Stepped up inflationary tendencies.

—The development of industrial projects not related to the needs of the domestic market but inspired by the local energy resources.

THE EXAMPLE OF NIGERIA

Nigeria is the leading African oil producer, out ahead of Libya and Algeria. In 1979, its income from oil amounted to 25 billion U.S. dollars (15 billion in 1978). The United States was the main buyer, taking 40.7 % of Nigerian production (9).

6. *Le Matin de Paris*, December 19, 1980.

7. In 1979, the Nigerian government decided to nationalise the assets of British Petroleum after denouncing the complicity of this company with South Africa.

8. See for example the documents of the "Seminario internacional sobre petroleo e desenvolvimento," Luanda, Angola, May 5-8, 1981, Ministerio dos Petroleos.

9. Nigeria Department of Information, *Ambassade du Nigeria, Paris*.

In the 16 years between 1964 and 1980, Nigerian oil production increased from 6 million tons to 103 million tons. These few figures suffice to indicate the scope and dynamism of this industry in Nigeria.

Obviously, with such resources, it is not surprising that Nigeria is one of the few countries in Black Africa that do not have a deficit in their balance of payments. Despite this wealth, in fact we could say because of it, this country has the classical imbalance of foreign trade that marks neocolonial states. Oil accounts for 90% of the value of Nigerian exports. Its imports are essentially machinery and transportation equipment (43.7 % of the total in 1978), manufactured goods, food, and chemical products. Stagnation or relative decline in the oil market would throw Nigeria into a grave financial crisis.

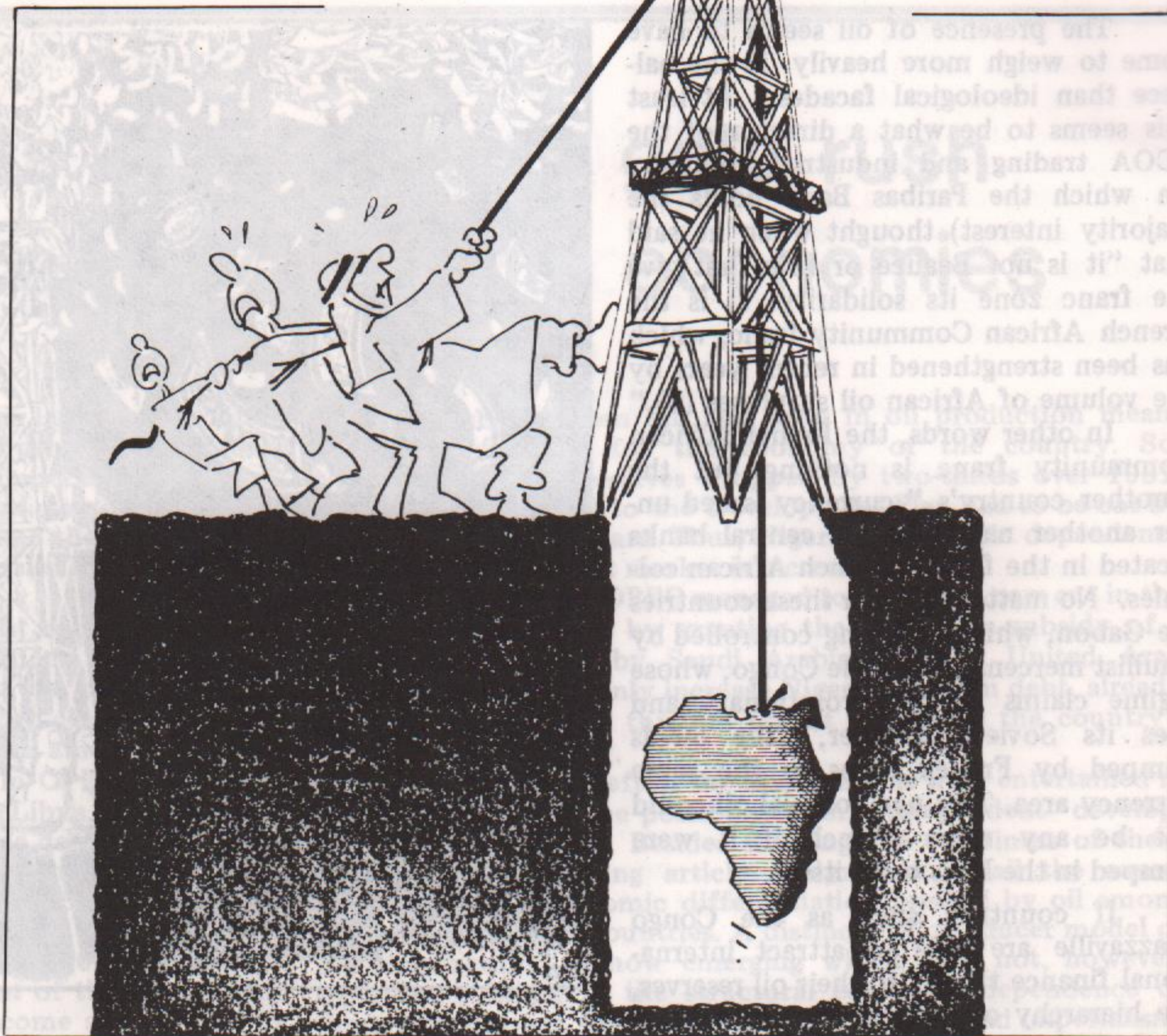
Without having to wait for that, the Nigerian economy is already suffering ill effects from this high oil income. Since 1977, the country has been importing more than a 100 tons of cereals per year. The average daily consumption of food has been declining, and for some years the urban population has been growing at a rate of 10%. In fact oil has been a disaster for the peasants. In 1968, agricultural products, including cotton, accounted for 62% of the income from exports. As early as 1974, they accounted for only 5% in a volume that had, to be sure, multiplied 15 times. But this relative decline was accompanied by a collapse of the market that ruined the peasants (10).

The food deficit has grown at the same rate as the increase in the population and the flight from the land. In 1960, 13% of the population lived in the capital, Lagos. In 1980, 17% did. But for the country as a whole, 58% of Nigerians now lived in the nine cities with a population of over 500,000, as against the 22% in the 1960 that lived in the two cities that at that time had reached that size (11).

This went along with the inflationary tendency of an economy centered around oil income. From 1970 to 1977, the consumer price index rose by 200%. Food prices increased by 500% (12).

Nigeria shows on a grand scale for Black Africa what happens in countries with large incomes from extractive industries, whether it be oil or other mining operations. A part of this income goes into the speculation and luxurious consumption of the ruling class, which, moreover, may grow rapidly under the cover of "Africanization" of the professional staffs and the management of companies.

The financial gains are not pumped back into the Nigerian market to the benefit of the majority of the population. The capitalist development of the country remains marked by the features of dependence, backwardness of the ruling layers, and weakness of the domestic market.



The oil income, moreover, increases the political and economic weight of the state. On a continent where the ruling classes remain so dependent on income from the state, it is not surprising that the growth of the state's revenue results in a growth of theirs.

In a country such as Nigeria where the regions and therefore the various petty-bourgeois groups and regional notables maintain a major weight, building a stable strong federal state is a key objective for a part of the bourgeoisie, the state bureaucracy, and the army.

The oil boom has made it possible to build up a federal army of more than 250,000 men. It has paved the way for an increasing meshing of this force with the machinery of the administrative apparatus. The military regime has increased the number of states in the federation, thereby moderating the polarization between the three big regional-ethnic blocks, the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Ibo in the East, and the Yoruba in the West (14).

A NEW TARGET FOR IMPERIALISM

Even the enormous financial resources that oil has provided for Nigeria have not made it possible for the country to develop in an independent and sov-

ereign way. The temporary drop in oil revenues in 1978, resulting from a decline in the demand for Nigerian light crude, revealed, moreover, how precarious these resources are in the context of intense international competition with North Sea oil. In the third quarter of 1981, Great Britain moved into the place that had been held by Nigeria in oil sales to the U.S.

This evolution is directly linked to wide fluctuations in the price of crude. The Americans shifted to the cheaper British oil. Thus, too in recent months, Nigeria has been obliged to lower the price of its oil, thereby reducing its financial resources (15).

This precariousness of the oil market has not kept the imperialists from making loans to economies centered around the miraculous black gold. In fact, the multinational corporations are in the best position to profit from the imbalances created by such polarized economies. To take the case of Nigeria again, the drop in cereals production opened up an important market for a company such as Flour Mills, which holds a virtual monopoly on imported grain and owns the only silos in the country (16).

The weapon of hunger, as the imperialist monopoly on cereals reserves has come to be called, is not the least of the

10. Johny Egg, "Un effet de la rente petroliere au Nigeria," *le Monde diplomatique*, May 1981. It can also be noted that sales of cacao dropped from 320,000 tons in 1965 to 152,000 tons in 1980.

11. The population of the capital, Lagos, has gone in twenty years from 1 million to 4.5 million under the combined effect of industrialization and the increase in the volume of money circulating in the urban milieu. For the sake of comparison, it can be noted that the industrialized African countries show an annual increase of 18% in the population of their main city. See the "Berg Report," p.203.

12. *Le Monde diplomatique*, November

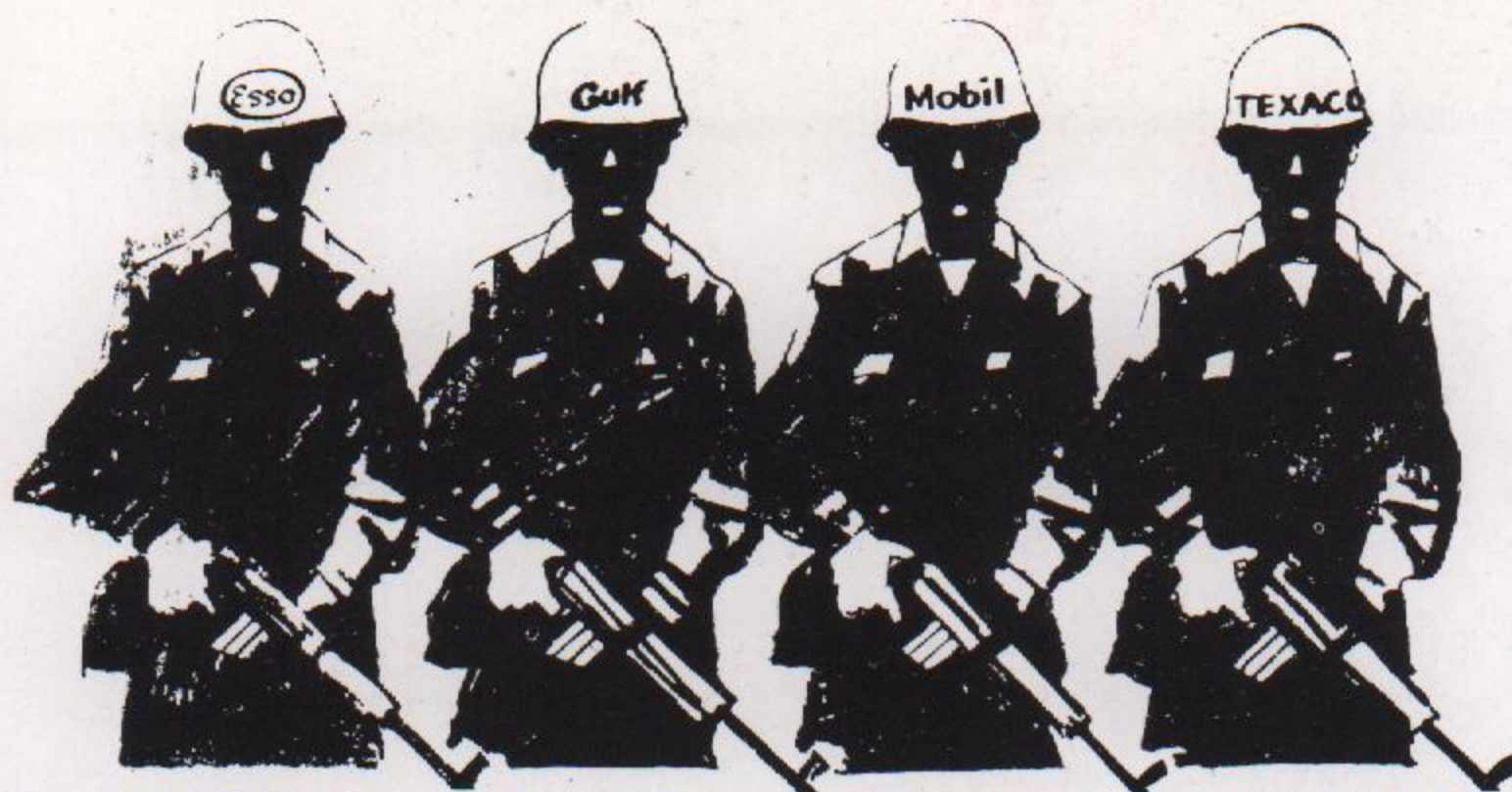
1980, p.27.

13. For example, we might mention copper in the case of Zaire and Zambia.

14. *Le Monde diplomatique*, November 1980.

15. It cannot be excluded that there was also a political basis for the choice the U.S. made, since Nigeria has already shown a desire to use its oil resources as a means of influencing Western policy toward South Africa. Washington in return can use its purchases in Nigeria as a means of blackmail.

16. See Johny Egg, art. cit., *le Monde diplomatique*, May 1980.



advantages the capitalists have gained from the oil business. In time, it is not inconceivable that the food deficits will absorb a considerable part of the income from extractive industries.

The annual growth in the demand for food in Nigeria is 3.5%. But food production increases by only 1%. On this basis, it can be estimated that in 1990, the food deficit will amount to 20 million tons of cereals. At present prices, 20 million tons of rice represents a cost of 10 billion dollars, that is, 50% of the country's oil income (17).

DESTRUCTIVE CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

All the governments concerned—the Nigerian, the Gabonese, the Congolese, the Angolan, and that of the Ivory Coast—swear that they are going to plow back part of their oil profits into agriculture. Obviously it is a long way from words to deeds.

But it is perhaps more important to take a close look at what these agricultural projects involve. For example, the Gabonese "Interim Plan" for 1981-82 calls for transforming the traditional modes of agriculture in order to stop the flight from the land. But this objective is supposed to be achieved by the development of big agri-businesses (18).

Nigeria's "Fourth Development Plan" also calls for building up big agri-businesses in order to attract foreign investment. It says explicitly that it is unfortunate that in the past the planners were more concerned about increasing the area under cultivation than per-worker and per-unit productivity (19).

Such statements make it plain enough that these celebrated oil booms are going to open up the way for more brutal capitalist penetration into the countryside. Moreover, this is by no means going to stop the flight from the land. The big agri-businesses have very little interest in providing work for the rural population as a whole. And the growth of agri-business in the countryside is going to break down the village social structures at an increasing rate.

The cumulative effects of these changes will increase the stimulants for the youth to move to the cities, seeking crumbs of oil income in often marginal jobs working for the parasitic layers of the state apparatus.

In the Congo-Brazzaville, the northern part of the capital, the Bateke plateau, is already a virtual human desert. And there is every reason to assume that

at the same rate as the few families in power devour the oil income, the influx of youth from the land into Brazzaville to live off this artificial economy will continue to swell (20).

It is not decisive, moreover, how big a share one or another government takes in the deals it makes with the imperialist countries. Zaire has taken 76% in its agreement with Gulf Oil and could claim, on this basis, to be more "progressive" than Angola, which has also entered into partnership with Gulf Oil in the Cabinda enclave.

Oil income for these African countries is like a magic potion that becomes a poison when misused.

Some 80% of Angola's income from exports comes from oil. It is not decisive whether it is the Angolan state or the companies that make the biggest profit. On the other hand, it is disturbing to see that an entire economy depends on the oil market.

No more than other commodities does oil represent a weapon for achieving economic independence. The producing countries do not wield monopoly control of this resource, despite all the attempts by OPEC since 1973.

The imperialists were able to turn the circulation of petro-dollars to their advantage, just as in the present situation of fluctuating prices they have been able to organize the market to maximize their profits.

Those governments that claimed that they were going to free themselves from imperialist domination without breaking with the laws of the market have been the first to fall into the trap. The Angolan government is clearly dependent on the oil market, rather than being able to control it. In the U.S. itself, certain circles see this quite clearly, and understand how to reinforce this situation and take advantage of it. Gulf Oil and Texaco did a lot of lobbying in 1981 to keep congress from repealing the Clark Amendment, which since 1976 has banned aid to the Angolan opposition movements without congressional approval (21).

17. *Marches tropicaux et mediterraneens*, February 12, 1982. From 1970 to 1980 food imports increased by 1,200%.

18. *Ibid*, November 27, 1981, p. 3137.

19. *Ibid*, February 12, 1982, p. 369.

20. On the nature of the Congolese regime and its economy, see Claude Gabriel, "Un masque progressiste pour un Etat neocolonial," *Inprecor*, May 13, 1981.

21. Recently, David Rockefeller, former president of Chase Manhattan Bank said, referring to Angola, where this bank is active, that he thought African Marxism was more "a matter of labels and appearances," than reality. *Le Monde*, March 6, 1982.

AGGRAVATION OF UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

In conclusion, we can predict that the African oil business is going to increase the unevenness of development in Black Africa in two ways. There will be a growing unevenness in the producing countries between a modern capitalist economy and a peasantry left out in the cold. There will be uneven development between the countries that export oil and the others.

The four countries most mentioned in this article will soon be joined by the Ivory Coast, which is expected to begin exporting oil in 1983, and later, perhaps, by the Cameroons.

There is more and more prospecting for oil in Mozambique, Mali, Senegal and other countries. According to a recent study published by the Italian oil company AGIP, the northern edges of the Gulf of Guinea may prove to be one of the seven largest Saudi-type oil fields in the world.

Between 1975 and 1979, the land leased in Africa to the twenty biggest international oil companies totalled 1.8 million square kilometers, or more than 52.2% of the total area leased for oil operations in the world in that period (22).

Oil extraction in the Black African countries is a new outlet for the multinational companies. Since these countries have some other natural resources, and are also an important area for industrial restructuring, imperialist interests may focus on these countries. The classical colonial superprofits are combining with an increasing inequality in the relations of trade. The industries that are growing up on the basis of oil production are appearing at an opportune time to meet the growing needs of the imperialist centers to export producers goods.

With the Ivory Coast already selling refined products to Mali and the Upper Volta and Nigeria doing the same to Benin and Ghana, we can see a new stage in the uneven development of Black Africa taking shape. Oil may thus become a trigger of a movement of capital toward a few countries to the ruin of the hopes of the others.

There is no doubt that the oil age in Black Africa will pose still more clearly the question of who profits from natural wealth (23). The graphs showing the growth of budgets and the means of payment do not take into account what is the essential factor for the African masses, that is, that the ruling classes are draining off the bulk of this income in a parasitic way.

22. Nicolas Sarkis, director of the Arab Petroleum Research Center, speech at the seminar in Luanda, May 1981. See footnote 8.

23. On two occasions, Nigeria has passed through traumas in which the oil question did not fail to play a role. The first was the Biafran secession during which the main imperialist countries tried to stabilize an Ibo state around the oil fields. The second was the Kano uprising in the North in October 1980, in which an Islamic sect launched a holy war, recruiting its followers among the masses marginalized by the oil boom. So, the advent of the oil bonanza has not failed to pose grave problems for the federal institutions.

'A million on the streets in 1983'

The year of the missile in Britain

Penny DUGGAN

1983 will be a crucial year in Britain. It is the year in which US Cruise missiles will finally be deployed, and probably the year of a general election. The question of nuclear missiles and disarmament has become a crucial one.

The anti-missiles movement in Britain made massive new strides in 1982. During the Malvinas war it mobilised thousands of people on the streets in opposition to this bloodthirsty imperialist war. In June over a quarter-million demonstrated against nuclear missiles on the occasion of Reagan's visit to Britain.

In October the annual Labour Party Conference voted in favour of British unilateral disarmament by over two-thirds majority. The organising centre of this movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) now has over six million affiliations through the trade unions.

Despite vigorous attacks by the Thatcher government, and the right-wingers in the Labour Party, such as Deputy Leader Denis Healey, who announced he would never serve in a government committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, the anti-missiles movement transformed itself from a strong minority viewpoint to a majority viewpoint. By the end of the year, polls showed that 58 per cent of the population opposed the introduction of Cruise Missiles into the country, and 56 per cent opposed the Trident nuclear submarine programme.

WOMEN FOR PEACE

A marker in the significant change of attitude towards the anti-missiles movement was the reporting of the women's demonstration at the Greenham Common site for Cruise Missiles.

This grew out of a fifteen-month long protest camp outside the base organised by the group 'Women for Life on Earth'. The camp had twice been evicted, suffered numerous arrests and imprisonments of protestors. Police harassment had reached the point of refusing to allow camp to have tents, instead the protestors had to sleep under plastic sheeting.

A national women's demonstration was called at the camp on December 12, 1982, bringing 30,000 women to add their voice to the protest, and their child-

ren's toys, which they hung on the fence around the base as a symbol of their commitment to fight for world safe for the future generations. The women formed a continuous chain nine-miles long around the base.

This event proved the truly mass nature of the anti-missiles movement. Of course all the events of CND are open to both sexes, and many women are leading activists of the movement. Greenham Common however brought thousands of women who were not otherwise active into the major political movement in Britain today. Thus, far from being a diversion as some sectarian left groups like the British Socialist Workers Party suggest, this women-only demonstration proved to be extremely effective.

PLANS FOR 1983

The national CND conference took place on the weekend of November 27-28 1982 to map out plans for 1983 — to strain every nerve to finally stop the installation of Cruise missiles.

This conference demonstrated the growing radicalisation of the movement. Despite the speech of the E.P. Thompson, one of the leading spokespersons of the movement, the conference voted to maintain the campaigning slogan 'Britain out of NATO, NATO out of Britain'. Moves to link this to a struggle against the 'two superpowers' and their 'blocs' were rejected.

There was a forceful debate over tactics for the movement. The heroism of the Greenham Common protestors caught the imagination of the delegates and ensured overwhelming support for the tactics of 'non-violent direct action'.

A much sharper debate took place over the relationship of this to attempts to win and mobilise the mass support of the labour movement as the crucial ally for the movement, and over mass political action as an indispensable instrument in the struggle.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Labour Party have jointly called for a mass demonstration in August 1983, to mark the anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima.

Some speakers opposed this being a central action for CND this year — arguing that it was partisan to support a call

from labour movement organisations. (There is a small group of members of Thatcher's Tory Party in CND). But the conference overwhelmingly supported this call — indicating the vast majority understand that the labour movement is the real ally of the anti-missiles movement — and aimed to mobilise 'a million in the streets' by the end of the year.

SABOTAGE BY THE LABOUR BUREAUCRACY

Despite the majority opposition to Cruise missiles, the Thatcher government is continuing at full speed with their introduction. However, the Labour Party leadership have been less than forthright on their position.

The left-wing Labour newspaper *Tribune* pointed out on November 26, 1982, 'Only Labour Deputy Leader Denis Healey has been straightforward. He has said that he would not serve in a government committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Since everyone expects him to be part of the next Labour government, we are entitled to ask — what does he know that we don't?'

The Labour Party is committed to refusing Cruise, and sending back the missiles if necessary. But the leadership have not said what they will do about the other US missiles already stationed in Britain.

The combination of the continuing growth of the movement — which can be expected to reach a peak this year, when Cruise missiles are scheduled to be installed — and the approach of a general election will make these central questions in Britain.

Given the mass sentiment on this question, the Labour Party would be immeasurably strengthened if it went to the polls campaigning on the basis of its opposition to nuclear weapons. But the Labour leadership knows only too well that unilateralism is absolutely unacceptable to the British bourgeoisie, whose entire military strategy is built around nuclear weapons.

This contradiction highlights the importance of the strategy widely supported in CND of continually working to win support and mobilise active support in the labour movement to force the leadership to carry out the policy of the Labour Party Conference. ■