

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

February 1993 – issue 242



CLINTON :
hope and
illusion

PALESTINE :

the Brothers' new clothes

CONTENTS

3 EDITORIAL

4 USA

Clinton, hope and illusion — *David Finkel*

6 SOMALIA

Arrogant crusade — *François Piguet*

Restoring despair — *Document*

10 ex-YUGOSLAVIA

Resisting ethnic cleansing

— *Catherine Samary*

14 FRANCE

Towards the bitter end — *Daniel Bensaïd*

16 GERMANY

Opposing the neo-Nazi onslaught

— *David Müller*

DOSSIER: ISRAEL VERSUS ISLAM?

19

Guilty because innocent
Interview with Lea Tsemel

21

The Brothers' new clothes
Dalal Bizri

25

Women and fundamentalism
Manar Hassan

30 MANDEL /GYSI DEBATE –

The legacy of October — *Document*

32 EL SALVADOR

Hegemony and power

— *Interview with Mario Lopez*

35 URUGUAY

Voters reject privatization — *Ernesto Herrera*

36 AROUND THE WORLD

Hong Kong ● Sri Lanka ● Northern Ireland

International Viewpoint is a monthly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC).
2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil, France.

Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte.
Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 1294-2925.
Imprimé par Rotographie.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

WELCOME to the first issue of the new monthly *International Viewpoint*! We look forward to receiving your comments and criticisms regarding the new format. And we hope that many of our readers will be inspired to encourage their friends to subscribe! —The Editors ★

OUR THANKS go to Yusef Abdelke, designer of *International Viewpoint*'s new cover page and this month's cover graphic.

Yusef is of Syrian origin and has spent the last ten years in Paris. In Syria he was imprisoned and faced torture; his case was taken up by Amnesty International.

His work has been shown in exhibitions across Europe and in the Arab world. Recently, the British Museum acquired two of his pieces. ★



TO SUBSCRIBE

(one year — eleven issues)

■ All surface mail and EEC airmail: 280FF; £28; \$48

Airmail (non-EEC):

■ Europe outside EEC: 300FF; £30; \$51

■ Middle East, North Africa, North America: 340FF; £34; \$57

■ Asia, Africa, Latin America: 380FF; £38; \$64

■ Oceania: 420FF; £42; \$70

(Dollar prices all US dollars)



(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

Last name..... First name.....

Address.....

City..... Country..... Code.....

Renewal ☐

New Subscription ☐

Means of payment.....

Make cheques payable to PEC. French francs preferred. Postal transfers to PEC, CCP No. 2 322 42T Paris. Bank transfers to PEC, BNP Robespierre, Account 230179/90.

IMPORTANT: ALL BANK OR POSTAL TRANSFERS MUST ALSO BE NOTIFIED BY LETTER

Subscriptions and correspondence to *International Viewpoint*,
2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil, France

The state of the world

A counter-report

THE Clinton generation, the Clinton effect; a mighty publicity machine is working overtime to create a myth around the "sax-symbol" who has just become president of the United States of America, the most powerful state on earth.

Right now, the US establishment needs myths. Faced with persisting recession and the spectre of a worldwide depression, American decision makers are still drifting in the wind, as they have been for a long time now.

THIS is a textbook scenario. The range of rational choices open to the capitalists are all equally uninviting. Each option seems likely to produce a malign counter-effect which will cancel the intended result (a budget deficit plus high interest rates or budget cuts plus deflation).

Furthermore, the US economy lies at the heart of a world capitalist system in which interdependence is greater than ever and whose key locomotives are all sputtering alarmingly at the very time when the world economy's need for financing is at an all time high.

At such a moment, the worshippers of the money god have little else to rely on than blind faith. Today blind faith is called Clinton.

The hope is that his relative youth will be mysteriously infused into the veins of a capitalism which is showing growing signs of senility. However, even where economics are concerned, more than a belief in miracles is needed for miracles to actually occur. In reality, the new president has little room for manoeuvre, even assuming that he is planning to do anything very radical. As our correspondent David Finkel explains this is far from being the case; behind the appearances, Clinton has little new to offer in terms of economic and social policy.

The appointment of Washington insider Warren Christopher to head US foreign policy is a clear signal that there will be no surprises in store in that department. The foreign policy ambitions of the new tenants of the White House are modest — summed up in the term "continuity".

This is already being put into practice.

As one satirical journalist put it, William Clinton's inauguration ceremony cost a lot less than the fireworks of the real bombs falling on Iraq — George Bush's farewell gift to his successor.

This last minute escalation — which has caused tensions in the anti-Iraqi Holy Alliance between Washington, Moscow and Paris — expressed the concern of the outgoing president to ensure the preservation of what history will see as his administration's main "achievement" — the renewal of American military interventionism.

Aim of Somali intervention

This is also the unstated but main objective of the sending of US troops to Somalia. Bush has left his successor to deal with the complexities of the Yugoslavia issue (analyzed here by Catherine Samary). Here, intervention involves far greater risks than in Somalia or even Iraq — if only because Yugoslavia and "orthodox Serbia" are close to the hearts of Russia's "conservatives" for whom pan-Slavism appears as a means of propping up their dilapidated army. Thus, Bush made do with Somalia to continue on the path first entered on in Panama.

Somalia was chosen as a target because here maintaining "continuity" will not present Clinton with too many problems. The real impact on Somalia of this supposedly humanitarian intervention, rubber stamped by the United Nations, is discussed in the article by two experts on that country, Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal, that we have translated for this issue. The final bouquet of Cruise missiles for Baghdad is a further demonstration of the real extent of Washington's concern for so-called

led "international legality".

However, the selection of Somalia is not arbitrary. It also has a strategic significance in relation to the Gulf oilfields and their geo-political environment. Somalia is on the frontline of the advance of Islamic fundamentalism, as François Piguet emphasizes. The US has chosen this mighty movement to replace "Communism" in the role of the new world "enemy number one".

This is why Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin thought he could get away with the deportation of 417 Palestinians suspected of being fundamentalist activists. To his surprise the operation has backfired. Far from isolating the fundamentalists, he has given them an unhopd for international platform while his government has found itself internationally isolated.

What Rabin failed to understand, and what the dossier in this first number of our new formula *IV* clearly demonstrates, is that the rise of fundamentalism is first and foremost the result of the failure of other currents who have laid claim to lead national struggles. In Palestine, the fundamentalists have made their spectacular comeback by returning to the national terrain which they had previously abandoned. By singling them out for repression, Rabin, the embodiment of the national oppression of the Palestinians, has only served to increase the fundamentalists' prestige and popularity among the Palestinians.

A time of troubles

If there is a common factor in the resurgence of fundamentalism in the Muslim world, as well as the proliferation of a multitude of other forms of fanaticism across the globe, it is the great political weakness of the workers' movement as the century draws to a close. As the "objective conditions" begin to rot and the "subjective factor" of historical progress is in crisis, menacing clouds gather over our planet.

We will do our utmost to assist our readers to better understand this world so that they can act more effectively to change it. ★

Clinton, hope and illusion

THE election of Bill Clinton produced euphoria in diverse quarters, from trade union bureaucrats and mainstream liberal leaders, to ordinary people frightened by the influence of the fanatical religious right in social policy during the Reagan-Bush era, to sectors of the economic and corporate elite.

DAVID FINKEL — Detroit, January 15, 1993



RARELY has so much expectation been so little justified. Even in the US bourgeois political spectrum Clinton is nowhere near the “left” and never pretended to be. During the campaign Clinton did make two significant human rights’ pledges; to stop the monstrous (and illegal) Bush policy of mass repatriation of Haitian refugees without hearings and to lift the ban on gays and lesbians in the military. The week before taking office Clinton had already reversed himself on the first, was retreating on the second, and was fully supporting Bush’s renewed bombing of Iraq.

The new dispensation

By the eve of Clinton’s inauguration, the new political dispensation was coming into clearer focus. A glance at Clinton’s cabinet appointments makes the point clearly enough.¹ Warren Christopher, Clinton’s designated Secretary of State (responsible for foreign affairs), apparently received army intelligence reports on antiwar and Black activists during the 1960s when he served in Lyndon Johnson’s administration. He subsequently misled Congress on this point during the 1970s when testifying as a Deputy Secretary of State for Jimmy Carter, in which capacity he was deeply involved in Carter’s support for the Shah of Iran and the disastrous confrontation with the Islamic revolution.

The critical economic policy appointments have gone to the likes of Lloyd Bentsen, designated Secretary of the Treasury who is known for his political conservatism, his connections with Big Oil and his commitment to lower taxes for business and the

“discipline” of budget cutting. So popular was this appointment in capitalist circles that Bentsen was recommended for confirmation by the Senate Finance Committee before asking him any questions.

An elite liberal Harvard economist, Robert Reich, associated with proponents of moderate economic stimulus and a vague version of “industrial policy” (investment in economic infrastructure, worker training and so on) had been considered a candidate for the Treasury position. Interestingly, Clinton appointed Reich instead as Secretary of Labour, a position which in “traditional” Democratic administrations has gone to someone with union connections. Reich’s only — indirect — link to labour is a seat on the research committee of a labour-funded Economic Policy Institute, but he has been friends with Clinton since their Rhodes Scholar days in the 1960s.

Having made sure that the core of his cabinet would be welcomed by corporate capital and the investment houses, Clinton set out to redeem his promise to create “a government that looks like America”. The results suggest what his own America looks like. Ron Brown, an African American who chairs the Democratic National Committee and who by profession is a paid lobbyist for corporate and government clients, is to be Secretary of Commerce.

The designated Secretary of Health and Human Services and Attorney General² are women with feminist reputations and therefore not to the liking of the right wing; the latter appointment is also a top attorney for the insurance giant Aetna Life and Casualty.

This entrenchment of “corporate feminism” in the administration will serve a double purpose. While affording a pretence

of representing women, it will also lend support to the highly touted “medical insurance reform” that Clinton has promised to unveil within his first 100 days in office.

Far from the kind of national health programme that people in most advanced capitalist states take for granted, Clinton’s anticipated “managed competition” proposal will enrol the 37 million people currently without insurance in rock-bottom programmes with minimal benefits and no choice of doctors, administered at great profit by the existing lucrative insurance corporations. Meanwhile, those people, especially unionized workers, enjoying health care benefits above the minimum care level will pay tax on them.

An observer in New York described the atmosphere that prevailed just prior to election day as “a tremendous atmosphere of anticipation and mobilization around the gay community with Clinton/Gore buttons all over, especially in the gay bars, torchlight parades, voter turnout drives, you name it”. Partly there was a real expectation of what Clinton “will do for us” partly a real sense that if Bush were re-elected “we will be rounded up for the concentration camps”.

The cover of the Communication Workers of America union newspaper *CWA News* for November-December 1992 carried a picture of Clinton on the cover waving,

1. In the US government system with its strong presidency, the Cabinet positions are the equivalent of ministerial portfolios in a parliamentary system, but Cabinet officials are themselves not elected legislators. They are subject to approval by the Congress, which is generally granted after some ritual mudslinging.

2. Since this article was written, Clinton’s nomination for Attorney General, Zoë Baird, has been forced to withdraw following the disclosure that she had illegally employed undocumented immigrants as domestic servants.

with a quote from his victory speech: "This victory was more than a victory of party, it was a victory of the people who work hard and play by the rules... who are ready to compete and win in the global economy but who need a government that offers a hand, not a handout". The whole centrefold was devoted to the CWA's mobilization effort for Clinton. This spectacle was typical of the union press, notwithstanding Clinton's stated support for the North American Free trade Agreement (NAFTA) which the labour movement opposes, his support for the law banning the union shop in Arkansas³ and his pointed refusal to issue a mild statement in support of the unions when challenged to do so during the Democratic primaries.

Enthusiasm on the left

The enthusiasm carried deep into the left, in the US and internationally. The left-liberal/social democratic weekly *In These Times* ran Clinton banners on the cover of its post-election "sixteenth anniversary issue". *The Nation*, which has taken an editorial line critical of Clinton, received numerous letters from angry readers taking the editors to task for failing to recognize the election as a major victory for the left.

It wasn't just the gay community, African Americans, workers and liberals, however, who supported Clinton. To mention a few others: Arthur Laffer, the economist of the "Laffer Curve" and the so-called supply-side Reagan revolution, supported Clinton because Bush had raised taxes and, said Laffer, because Bush was fixated on the deficit. Milton Friedman, not known for his leftwing economic prescriptions, also favored Clinton.

William Safire, the guru of conservative opinion, also supported Clinton in this election. The neo-conservative and ardently Zionist Safire had his own axe to grind, because Bush had failed to carry out Yitzhak Shamir's programme of dismembering Iraq and had quarreled with Israel over a settlement freeze, but he was also reflecting the general conservative view that Bush had failed. A media report that Ronald Reagan himself had voted for Bill Clinton was only weakly and obliquely half-denied by the ex-President's press secretary.

The social crisis, which continues unabated by the shuffling of power within capitalist political elites, played a role in the outcome of the election. There was a certain trickle-up effect, especially from the social explosion in Los Angeles, whereby some privileged layers began to understand the presence of a crisis in this society that ultimately threatens them.

Mike Davis, a Marxist writer specializing in the urban crisis, put his finger on this

phenomenon in an interview after the L.A. uprising in the journal *Social Text* in response to a question on the national implications of the uprising:

"Well, I think the national implications for the surviving, embattled and very few traditional liberals left in the Democratic Party is that this is the time to go on the offensive. This is part of the death agony of our cities. First deindustrialization, and then fifteen years of winding down federal aid to the cities which have been made the repository of our national social problems. This is the time to go back on the offensive and to make rebuilding of the cities the central national goal, to use the peace dividend for the cities.

"This has a terrible urgency. Middle class people have been working on a false political calculus for the last ten to fifteen years, and the calculus is that they can allow the decay of one third of the society and never have to face any consequences because of their ability to move to gated suburbs, to move beyond the big cities — the chickens will never come home to roost. This is showing that they will. One of the major outcomes of this riot is the new visceral sense of white, middle-class insecurity... It certainly puts the big cities, and the state of the big cities, back in the forefront of national politics."

Davis' insight points out that South Central L.A. put the system, and some of those who have benefited most during the 1980s, on notice about the depth of the crisis. The election of Clinton (and the pseudo-populist Perot phenomenon among the white electorate) reflected a combination of popular discontent and a decision within the ruling class that Bush had failed.

Popular illusions

At the base of society, Clinton's election has given rise to both hope and illusion. The socialist responsibility is to address the hope, and politicize it without building the illusions.

That the incoming administration feels pressure neither from right nor left was symbolized by Clinton's announcement that he would lift the ban on lesbians and gay men in the US military. This represented primarily a statement to the right wing and the religious fanatics that they no longer wield power and that their services are no longer wanted.

Winning the right of gay people to serve in the army will be a democratic victory. At the same time, military service hasn't been the leading demand of the gay movement. Rather, this movement has mobilized people in the street fighting for massive funding for AIDS research and full civil rights protec-

tion. Such things cost money and require legislative fights whereas the military ban can be lifted by simple executive order, although even on this issue Clinton is now seeking a "compromise".

Clinton can and probably will do a number of things that don't cost money. He can lift the "gag order" — the infamous Bush directive that prohibited federally funded family planning clinics from mentioning abortion to their clients — and remove other petty brutalities of the Bush regime. Programmes that cost money are another matter, and that's where the Cabinet appointments are teaching the liberals their place — that is, outside the halls of power.

With one exception, no fighting movement will come from the liberals. That exception is the abortion rights movement. They will demand a Freedom of Choice Act and there probably will be such a bill — one which, however, will leave states plenty of room for imposing restrictions and encumbrances on the right to choose. The pro-choice leadership may find itself forced to be critical of Clinton, yet also dependent on him to fight rightwing blocking amendments or a filibuster.

Except on abortion rights little should be expected in the way of struggle from the liberals. They are, on the one hand, afraid of a Clinton failure and a revival of the rightwing and, on the other, of the social explosion from below. They backed Clinton precisely to defend them from those two dangers. Tragically, the left remains too small and ineffective to fill the vacuum of opposition.

The most important commitment of this administration, in fact, will be to free trade, labour-management cooperation and other schemes to enhance US capitalist competitiveness. Some of the most sinister of these policies are easier for a Democratic administration to implement, given the cooperation of the labour bureaucracy, than for Republicans.

One example was cited by railroad worker activist Lynn Henderson, who spoke at a conference of Labor Party Advocates⁴ in Detroit as the editor of the rail paper *Straight Track*. Henderson discussed how proposed legislation to abolish "permanent replacement workers" will include binding arbitration to settle strikes. So, to protect themselves from losing their jobs to scabs, workers will sacrifice their right to negotiate their contract.

These measures were contained in the so-called "Packwood amendments" to anti-strikebreaker legislation that died in Congress last year. This year the legislation will be proposed again. While the AFL-CIO

3. This law, perversely called "right to work" in Arkansas and other states mostly in the US South, makes it illegal for unions to negotiate a 100% union shop with an employer.

will try to resist the attachment of the amendments — whose author Senator Robert Packwood is currently embroiled in a sexual harassment scandal — its efforts are unlikely to be either vigorous or successful.

Clinton's watchwords for labour will be "competitiveness", "flexibility" "cooperation" — all meaning that union leaders must impose new concessions on their members in return for the appearances of "consultation" with the new government. The steelworkers union has already proposed to the basic steel companies a long-term contract including binding arbitration, more cooperation and "workforce restructuring" (job losses).

Bill Clinton's election promise to "focus like a laser beam on this economy" resonated strongly with voters who felt that Bush seemed distracted and bored by domestic issues.

While the Reagan administration came into office actively looking for international confrontations to solidify its political base and Bush left the same way with the renewed bombing of Iraq, Clinton and company would have preferred to avoid such potentially divisive distractions.

Nonetheless, the significant reduction of American militarism has no part in Clinton's agenda, as shown in the appointment to Defense Secretary of Les Aspin, a Wisconsin Democrat who gave the Reagan-Bush administration invaluable aid in pushing through the Star Wars Programme, contra aid and the B-1 bomber.

In any case, Clinton will instantly confront what former President Jimmy Carter describes as "the most difficult international situation inherited by any president in my lifetime". This includes a complex intervention in Somalia, likely to become less popular as Marines begin to be killed, and the prospect of total chaos in the former Soviet Union.

Some observers have been tempted by the appearance that George Bush has left behind international crises as booby traps for his unwelcome successor, who so rudely short-circuited his presidency. In essence, however, capitalism itself has mined the US economy and the world arena. The biggest immediate loser is likely to be Bill Clinton's image. The space for pseudo-liberal pretence has vanished before he could occupy it. ★

4. Labor Party Advocates: an educational and organizing initiative to build support within the labour movement for the creation of a labour party. It is led by Tony Mazzocchi, an official of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and a long-time left labour activist. LPA is very far from being a mass movement as yet, but it does tap some of the profound political disaffection among workers. The meeting in Detroit, organized by Cleveland and Detroit LPA chapters, was the first regional educational conference of its kind.

Arrogant crusade

ON December 9, 1992, fortified by resolution 794 of the United Nations Security Council authorizing intervention by foreign armed forces, American troops disembarked in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. A French contingent, recruited from a Foreign Legion unit based in Djibouti, soon followed.

**FRANCOIS PIGUET —
January 17, 1993**

THE following day Mogadishu was quiet as most of the armed bands evacuated the capital. Some literally vanished into the bush. There was even a sudden fall in prices on the local arms market; the price of a Kalashnikov rifle dropped from \$160 to \$70.

Many fighters have simply got out of the way of the American-French forces. Others have hidden their arms and will bring them out at the first opportunity. Many arms and vehicles have been hidden in the villages and in some Mogadishu neighbourhoods. According to Somali refugees in contact with their families, other armed elements have passed over into Ethiopian territory with their vehicles. In this situation time is working in favour of the robbers who have made small fortunes in hard currency through their dealings with the international agencies.

The media barrage surrounding the Western intervention has tended to give international public opinion an image of a charitable crusade in the Christmas spirit. A *Le Monde* editorial on December 10 found that this "humanitarian interference" in Somalia would redound considerably to the US' moral credit. The image-obsessed media have skirted round the debate posed by the US' new "Shoot to Feed" foreign intervention strategy.

This doctrine, born out of the debris of the East-West balance, perpetuates the world's premier military-industrial complex. The latter has subordinated the United Nations to its own command structure and passed on the costs of its interventions to the main international fund donors — in the first place Japan and the Gulf oil monarchies.

The media has long failed to give attention to the unfolding Somali tragedy. Now, the priority given to this one dramatic event and its stage-management are presenting a degrading picture of a Somali people thrust back into the stone age by a savage tribal war. The hordes of journalists arriving in Mogadishu for the big show have brought new inflationary pressures to bear on the fragile fabric of a subsistence economy. The upward spiral of prices of services and consumer goods has reached the point where it is beyond the budgets of many of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who are facing ever increasing problems in dealing with the logistics associated with their work.

While at first almost everyone accepted the intervention as an inevitability, tensions soon appeared. The chain of perverse effects of outside intervention is being felt. A month after the start of the operation, hardly a day goes by without sporadic clashes between armed groups of Somalis and the foreign troops. And outside the zones controlled by the Americans and French the conflicts continue.

When the marines arrived, the militia of General Aydeed from the main Hawiye clan (Habr Gedir) who have been fighting the supporters of interim president Ali Mahdi (Hawiye Abgal) in Mogadishu moved north towards Gaikayu where they have clashed with groups connected to the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) which controls the north east of the country.

To the south, the arrival of the Americans in the port of Kismayu was preceded by the massacre of at least several dozen people attributed to the troops of Colonel Omar Jess, leader of the Ogadeni (Darod) of the south and of the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). Finally, the Marehan, the tribe of former dictator Mohamed Syad Barre, led by Barre's nephew General Morgan, remain in firm control of their Gedu stronghold and have recently retaken the Bardera region on the Kenyan frontier from the forces of General Aydeed.

It is a bit late for the Americans to wake up to the complexity of the situation. If we are to believe the American press, some of the proposals being made in the ruling circles would make the South African secret service blush. The *International Herald Tribune* has been an anthology of American arrogance — on

December 4 it offered us one Pentagon official's advice: "You invite those war-lords in, bring out an M-1 tank, let it blow one of their armored pickup trucks to pieces and say 'Any questions?'"

Furthermore, on the first day of their deployment, American military officials closed air space to small planes, grounding the humanitarian organizations and disturbing the trade in *khat* — a widely used drug flown in from Kenya. While the prohibition has not yet aroused open expressions of anger, that may soon develop since the guidelines concerning the trade in and possession of *khat* in the American-controlled zones are fluid and sometimes contradictory.

On January 15 an American helicopter-borne detachment descended on a smugglers' airfield 50 kms to the southwest of Mogadishu. This involves the two nerve centres of the war — the traffics in arms and *khat*. One wonders how the population might react if the American authorities took it into their heads to forbid *khat*.

The armed groups both in and outside Mogadishu exploit the slightest chink in the foreign military disposition. It is currently risky to travel along the roads, including the highways between the regional capitals, only the crossroads of which are controlled by the intervention forces. "This is an unstable and unhealthy situation that puts us and our employees in danger" according to a representative of an Italian NGO.¹ The escalation continued in January 1993 and two foreign representatives of humanitarian organizations were killed in the first two weeks of the year.²

Armed bands are carrying out exactions in many regions. Once such bands robbed or ransomed caravans; now they do the same with the humanitarian convoys making deals to ensure their safety. We can estimate total international assistance at about \$45m a month — that is \$10 for each of 4.5 million people. Some observers believe that "the funds basically serve to feed a war economy which effectively prolongs the suffering".³

According to assertions in the press, 80% of the humanitarian aid is going astray. While the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has challenged this figure, it admits that this may be true for the World Food Program convoys which only carry dry rations.

Extreme distress and famine have not afflicted the whole country; however, about 30% of the population is affected. Thanks to food from the CICR's kitchens, some peasant smallholders have been able to sustain agricultural activity. A rainy November — there were 133 mm of rain



— made it possible for the seed provided by the CICR to be planted. Sorghum, tomatoes, melons and onions have created pockets of food production, endangered though they are by the fighting.

Some big plantations have escaped the pillage and continue to produce at a low level owing to the breakdown of their commercial connections with the outside world. Their produce — in particular bananas — is too expensive to sell easily on the local market.

Thus, in the Somali fertile crescent between the Wabi Shebelle and Juba rivers the peasants under-exploit their land because their income from the nearby markets is too low to pay the costs of fuel, pesticides and seed grain on the big farms. But most of them suffer from poor supplies of inputs in a situation of instability that makes it impossible to store produce.

The cultivators are often of Bantu stock, former serfs or clients of stockbreeding clans who despise work on the land and they have been the least in danger because they do not belong to any of the Somali clans. However, while they may have been spared the worst of the bloody vendettas that have marked some episodes of the Somali war, they have suffered from repeated extortion which has reduced many to poverty.

Here the assistance provided to combat malnutrition has allowed many to better last out the gap before the next harvest expected to start at the end of February. Such a development is a precondition for any social and economic reconstruction programme.

Plight of Ogaden population

The majority of the population of the Ogaden region, which is now part of Ethiopia, are Somalis — two to three million strong, the estimate being vague owing to the problem of counting a largely nomadic population. The Ogaden is totally landlocked but is the true heart of the Somali country of nomadic stockbreeders.

This is a region of sanctuary for many of them, mainly the Darod and the Issaks for whom this is the point of access to the Haud to the north.

The region is where the Darod confederation of tribes — the most numerous Somali people — had its origin. For example, the Marehan tribe has traditionally controlled a space straddling the ill-defined border between Ethiopia and Somalia. This frontier has never been enshrined in an international treaty and has been the object of a permanent competition which erupted into open war in 1977-78.

On the Ethiopian side the black out concerning the Ogaden, a region totally cut off from both Mogadishu and Addis Ababa by inter-tribal and ethnic conflicts means that only a trickle of contradictory information gets out. It seems that the troops of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) only control the urban centres, in particular Harar and Dire Dawa, while bloody clashes have taken place between Oromo militia and the Issa-Gurgura Front. We may note in passing an intervention from Djibouti in the Dire Dawa region by the Isa-Gurgura Liberation Front (FLIG), created by the Djibouti government to give it a means of gaining access to the Somali Issa's representation in the Addis Ababa parliament.

Outside the urban centres, the Ethiopian government has little or no presence. The Ethiopian state rests on local ethnic forces. The new Ethiopian authorities of the EPRDF who came to power in Addis Ababa after the fall of the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in May 1991 have faced great difficulties in putting their regionalization policy into practise — the regime of President Meres Zenawi has

1. J. Helene, *Le Monde*, December 12, 1992.

2. On January 2, Sean Devereux, the UNICEF representative in Kismayo, was shot down — a scene which was repeated on January 14 in Bardera when the Red Cross representative Kurt Lustenberger died from a bullet wound to the head.

3. Stephen Smith, *Libération*, November 27, 1992.

decided that there should be 14 autonomous regional administrations. Currently, post-Mengistu Ethiopia has to deal with open opposition from the Oromo grouped in the Oromo Liberation Front (ORF).

At the same time, in the midst of the total anarchy, Islam is highly active politically in Somalia. In June 1992, fundamentalist fighters were repulsed by the SSDF when they tried to take control of Bosaso in the north east region of Mijirtin. Subsequently, the Al Itihad militia has become a weighty player in the Somali conflict. They control the port of Merca, offering protection to the humanitarian agencies in exchange for hard currency and sacks of food. They are, furthermore, present in other ports where they take part in commercial transactions including those affecting the distribution of food aid.

In the Ogaden, the Al Itihad militants are already involved in large-scale operations. In this forgotten and inaccessible region of famine, Al Itihad seizes humanitarian aid from the convoys and distributes to "good" Muslims in the refugee camps where hatred for the "egotistical West" is on the rise.⁴ It seems that they share with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) a perspective of independence for the Ogaden and southern Somalia.

Having looted the government depots and sacked the bases of the humanitarian organizations, the armed militia are now threatening supplies to the Somali refugee camps and the local population. A little more than a year ago *Le Monde* claimed that the new Ethiopian regime had no control of the eastern province of Harar which was in the grip of tribal struggles and brigandage. Furthermore, a significant proportion of Ethiopia's supplies come via Berbera and Djibouti, most going from there to the capital by truck. Thus the lack of security on the roads means that the Ogaden is cut off from the rest of the country while access to the coast is made difficult by the conflict prevailing through the south of the country.

However, exports from the Ogaden Plateau of cattle through the natural outlet to the north east (Bosaso) have seen a spectacular improvement (100,000 heads a month). The Ogaden nomads are benefiting from the vast zone of peace represented by north east Somalia. Bosaso's traders have been striving to re-establish networks in the Gulf, Kenya and Yemen.

By securing the main highways and pushing the armed bands out to peripheral regions, the American army has made it

easier for the food aid to get through. However, "progressively deprived of their sources of booty as the foreign troops are deployed, the militias of the various Somali factions are tending to become privatized, definitively escaping their leaders' control".⁵ Even in Mogadishu insecurity is resuming in the neighbourhoods with the inevitable effects on supplies.

The setting up of a Somali police force, expressly announced in the UN plans, is yet to begin. At a time when everything resembling a public authority seems to be dissolving, Islamic fundamentalist elements supported by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Sudan have recently made a breakthrough.

Since the foreign intervention two sources have told of women being lynched or stoned for adultery or contact with the white foreigners, the *gal*. These movements can draw strength from reinforcement of anti-Western sentiment which has been sharpened by the behaviour of the military and civilian invaders who contemptuously ignore the local population while drawing Somali leaders frequently responsible for

the suffering and robbery of the population into the diplomatic ballet.

American policy in the Islamic crescent that spreads from east Africa to the Indian sub-continent — taking in the strategically crucial Middle East — takes as its pretext the aim of containing Islamic forces; in this optic the main enemy in the medium term is Iran. From this point of view the Somali intervention may turn out to be perfectly counter-productive, as the foreign presence, their arrogance and the difference in ways of life sharpen hatred of the *gal* and strengthen the influence of Islamic fundamentalism in a Sunni Muslim population whose religious moderation has often been underlined.

It would seem then that we must look more deeply at the roots of Muslim fundamentalism in the poverty and crying injustices experienced in a country like Somalia which belongs among the group of the 44 least developed countries, according to the classification of international development agencies. ★

Restoring despair

"THE American military operation in Somalia has had the exact opposite results for those in that country who long for peace to those promised by its name, Restore Hope".

This is the opinion of Rakiya Omaar, a Somali lawyer who was sacked from her job with Africa Watch, a US-based human rights organization, on December 2 for her opposition to the American intervention, and Alex de Waal who resigned as director of the same organization when the parent Human Rights Watch organization backed the US initiative.

The following article, which first appeared in the Flemish paper *De Morgen* on December 24 gives these two experts' views on the real effects of the US operation in Somalia.

DOCUMENT

A FEW weeks before the intervention there were an increasing number of hopeful signs. Throughout the country, Somalis were acting to take their country's future back into their own hands. Of course there were plenty of problems and much frustration but there were also striking successes. Thus on October 5, 1992, Somali clan leaders signed a peace agreement that put a stop to a conflict that had lasted for months. The warlords found themselves marginalized by a group of clan elders who had resolved to restore peace to their country.

In the south events were less dramatic, but thanks to local agreements humanitarian aid was being successfully delivered in several regions. In the town of Baidoa, in the middle of the famine stricken territory, these local agreements had made possible the transport of food aid from the airport to the town and the surrounding villages; looting of food convoys was more or less halted.

In the region around Baidoa, the trucks were able to provide maize and sorghum in quantity and at a low price. While serious incidents still took place, overall the situation was improving. The death rate fell by 90% between July and November.

4. Stephen Smith, *Libération*, December 15, 1992.

5. Stephen Smith, *Libération*, January 16, 1993.

6. PNUD, *Rapport mondial sur le développement humain*, Economica Paris 1992, p. 225.

On the political level also, there were encouraging developments. For the first time in years clan elders and intellectuals were having meetings at which a consensus was emerging that it was necessary to isolate the warlords and create social structures that would give people back their confidence. The leaders of the Hawiye clan, who had at first supported General Mohamed Farah Aydeed, realized that it was in their own interest to break with him. Aydeed's power declined as the clan leaders became more alert and independent.

Another striking initiative was the organization by the European Community of a series of meetings of intellectuals and clan elders. This initiative was the first victim of the American intervention. As soon as Bush announced his intention of sending soldiers to Somalia the situation became so unstable that all the meetings were cancelled.

While Somalia lacks a central government, meaningful political, social and economic structures exist even if they have been seriously damaged. Without the practical knowledge, political understanding and efforts of clan leaders, doctors, nurses, emergency workers, truck drivers and Somali volunteers, the international aid programmes would have never had the slightest chance of success.

However, no clan elders, experts or volunteers were consulted about the American operation. Those we talked to were appalled by the prospect of foreign troops landing in Somalia without any coordination or thought out plan for political reconciliation, disarmament and reconstruction.

The lack of consultation is more than just an insult. It undermines the credibility of those overlooked and can only damage the prospects for rebuilding civil structures in Somalia. A week after the American intervention it is clear that many peace initiatives have been halted. The fragile net-

work of local initiatives that had improved the situation in the Baidoa area has collapsed.

There are two reasons for this: the first is that the militia of General Aydeed, in flight from the Americans, is once again sowing death and destruction there. The second is that each politician or militia leader is seeking to draw the maximum advantage from the intervention and in these conditions patiently negotiated agreements are quickly abandoned.

Baidoa has seen an orgy of violence, with at least 70 deaths, thousands fleeing the town and a breakdown of aid programmes. The national death rate has risen from 40 to 100 persons a day. However the most worrying development has been the much vaunted diplomatic coup that brought General Aydeed to embrace the self-proclaimed interim president Mohamed Ali Mahdi. People who know something about Somalia have pointed out that the seven-point peace plan they signed is without real meaning.

The armistice announced by the agreement was in fact agreed nine months ago while establishment of free access to all parts of Mogadishu had already been accomplished by the American occupation. The surveillance of the so-called technicals — trucks equipped with heavy weapons — is an empty gesture since most have been evacuated as the US troops approached.

Furthermore, the announcement of a conference of national reconciliation is a repeat of an agreement previously made. The real sticking points in the convocation of such a conference, such as the status of the participating parties, has not, however, been addressed. Furthermore, Ali Mahdi has effectively thrown the agreement straight in the bin by announcing that, in any case, he will stay president.

Most Somalis view the militia chiefs as war criminals and were revolted by the

sight of them being welcomed on TV. It is highly disturbing that just a few days after their arrival the US troops decided to talk to these two bandits.

Both Aydeed and Ali Mahdi are after international recognition. Until now the only success registered by all the international pressure has been that they have been denied such legitimacy, giving credible pro-peace forces in Somali society room for manoeuvre. Now, in their greed for media success the US have undermined these efforts and reinforced Aydeed's murderous grip on some parts of Somalia.

Warlords cozy up to UN

The American occupation has drastically changed the ground rules. Since it will almost certainly lead to the installation of a United Nations controlled zone, the warlords are going to work hard to ingratiate themselves with the neo-colonial authorities.

The UN, through its incompetence and negligence, bears a heavy responsibility for the Somali catastrophe. The American occupation may give the UN some breathing space — if a UN zone is created this will give that organization a good opportunity to expand its influence and avoid direct criticism of its disastrous policies.

One significant cause of the recent deterioration of the situation in Somalia has been the forced resignation of UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnun, who enjoys great prestige in Somalia. He had the brilliant idea of involving the Somalis themselves in the effort to resolve their country's problems. He worked closely with clan elders, women's organizations and intellectuals. Unfortunately, his successor Ismat Kittani has shown no interest in such alternative structures.

During a recent visit to Somalia, Kittani behaved in the brutal and undiplomatic way that Somalis have often seen from UN officials. In an arrogant speech to a committee of clan chiefs who had succeeded through patient negotiation in bringing to an end months of bitter fighting, he ordered them to reach a complete agreement in two hours. The clan elders expelled him from their territory.

If the UN feels itself in danger of being upstaged by the success of clan chiefs it will surely react, as it has in the south of the country, with a mix of militarist exhibitionism and inept diplomacy which will be exploited by the opportunists who are quite willing to throw themselves into the arms of American generals. ★



Resisting "ethnic cleansing"

THE mainstream debate about the tragic events in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina is framed in terms which only add to our sense of confusion and powerlessness.

For the establishment the question is "for or against Western military intervention?". There is then a subsidiary debate about the aims of such an intervention — should it go all the way to Belgrade to remove Serbian nationalist dictator Slobodan Milosevic.

In fact, any such intervention would only add to the bloody confusion in the former Yugoslavia as the powers involved pursued their own strategic and diplomatic interests in alliance with their favoured forces on the ground. New discriminations would be installed and already existing ones upheld.

However, that does not mean that nothing can be done, as becomes clear when we look closer at the political and social forces at work in the crisis.

In the following article, Catherine Samary, recently returned from a visit to the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, takes up the challenge.

CATHERINE SAMARY — January 19, 1993

THROUGH an examination of the forces at work in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we can start to map out an approach to the problems of the whole territory of ex-Yugoslavia. Bosnia-Herzegovina's fate will be played out in the Croatian and Serbian capitals of Zagreb and Belgrade. Indeed, a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) — where there is no "ethnic" majority, where "everything is mixed" — can simply not survive in a wider context of never-ending conflicts.

Bosnia-Herzegovina now faces the threat of being divided up through an agreement between the nationalist powers in Zagreb and Belgrade. As such, the nature of the regimes in Croatia and Serbia will be determined by the outcome of events in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If the idea of a multi-ethnic and multicultural Bosnia-Herzegovina wins the day, this will cement the idea of reciprocal guarantees as a way to overcome the logic of hatred exploited by the nationalist regimes.

The very existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina demands the guarantee of each citizen's rights and rights for the different communities. If these rights are recognized in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this will have repercussions in Croatia and Serbia. This could be used to counter the Greater Serbian and Greater

Croatian chauvinist logic — not to mention the logic of "ethnic cleansing" — in Serbia as in Croatia.

In short, the central issue is whether the defense of the national rights of the various communities of ex-Yugoslavia implies the formation of ethnic nation-states or, on the contrary, if a new union of sovereign multi-ethnic and multicultural states is necessary.

The old Yugoslavia is finished; its name has been usurped by the Serbo-Montenegrin Federation and is in any case unsatisfactory from the point of view of the non-Slav peoples, such as the Albanians. All the states that have emerged from the break-up — including Macedonia — must now be recognized. However, they all contain peoples that are dispersed beyond their own borders.

A Balkan Confederation

A Balkan Confederation which includes at least Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania (and Bulgaria and Greece?) is the only alternative to "Greater Serbia", to "Greater Croatia" and "Greater Albania", which could only be built through endless wars and displacements of population.

The proposals on the dividing up of Bosnia-Herzegovina contained in the agreement recently reached in Geneva are at best



ambiguous. There are problems with the short text of the agreement, and its relevance to the actual situation on the ground. The international bodies — through the intermediaries of the British representative Lord Owen and the American Cyrus Vance — are negotiating with those responsible for the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, before the carving up on maps even took place. In other words, the application of the agreement will pose more than a few problems.

In an interview with the French daily *Le Figaro* on January 18, the Croatian president F. Tudjman gives his interpretation of the agreement: "I do not consider Bosnia to be a nation [...] This plan presumes that Bosnia will remain (sic) a confederal state, made up of three constituent nations. If Yugoslavia was not able to survive as a federation, how can we expect Bosnia to be able to survive on such a basis..."

In other words, Tudjman now supports the idea of the "cantonization" of B-H into three ethnic entities; like the Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and the Serbian regime, his attachment to the word "nation" reflects his desire to cut Bosnia up into actual republics with the right to separate. The Croatian representatives are happy with the agreement, since it cuts off Herceg-Bosna, a region adjacent to Croatia.

The concentration of Croats in western Herzegovina does not mean that it is a homogeneous territory; there have been growing conflicts with Muslims, sometimes leading to massacres (as in Prozor, with Croat tanks). This has been accompanied by a purge in the HDZ — Tudjman's party — in Bosnia, where the paramilitary far-right wing of the party has ousted the most "Bosnian" of the leaders like Stepan Kruzic.

The Croats of the Party of Law (Ustashe) and their militias, who wanted to

annex Bosnia-Herzegovina in its entirety to Croatia, have been brought to heel and absorbed — because Tudjman has chosen to present a “moderate profile” and to divide up Bosnia-Herzegovina with the Belgrade regime.

The Serbs in B-H are more dispersed than the Croats; thus the policy of a corridor of “survival” and the discontent with the proposal made at Geneva of provinces not linked with one another.

This means that the proposed text is being interpreted as a cantonization into three entities. On the other hand, the idea of multi-ethnic provinces, a decentralization of power towards the local level, of a presidential college (with representatives from the three communities and the right to veto) is positive.

This idea has been taken from proposals drawn up by, for example, Zdravko Grebo, a very popular Sarajevo intellectual. But the three national (or ethnic) communities do not have “territorial” rights in his plan: he proposed a system with two chambers, a citizens chamber and a chamber of ethnic communities including “Eskimos” (those who do not identify themselves as belonging to any nationality) with equal representation and the right to veto. Further, he proposed that this system of two chambers be replicated in the provinces and localities in order to avoid the logic of ethnic majorities in the definition of power while protecting collective rights.

Unfortunately, what counts today is the relationship of forces on the ground and not the text...

A Greater Serbia

The project for a “Greater Serbia” is defended in the most coherent fashion by Seselj, leader of the Serbian Radical Party which received 30% in the last elections. It is without a doubt also the “raison d’être” of Karadzic and in general that of the extremist leaders of the Serbian Autonomous Republics proclaimed in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (and soon in Macedonia?). It is supported by the far-right mercenaries and paramilitary forces, and has some support in the poorest, peasant quarters of the Serb diaspora.

The responsibility of the regime in Belgrade and of the army (formerly Yugoslav, now Serb) is hidden behind a cloud of hypocrisy — Serbia has never been at war with Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina, they claim. The intervention of the army was never made against the Croats’ or Muslims’ right to self-determination — but in the name of what is presented as the Serbs’ right to self-determination: “If the others no longer want anything to do with Yugoslavia and separa-

te, we too will separate from them to remain together and form our own state, because we don’t want to find ourselves in a minority position in a hostile state”.

This was the substance of the 1986 Serbian Memorandum of the Academy of Sciences, which inspired Milosevic (including his project of affirming Serbian sovereignty in the Serb Republic, to the detriment of the rights acquired by its provinces).

One could easily make a direct link between this Memorandum and the “Greater Serbia” now being carved out on the ground. But this is not an official policy. “Yugoslav” President Cosic, the real force behind the Memorandum, explicitly wrote that he was against “Greater Serbia” and for the recognition of the identity and rights of the other communities. His half-support for Milosevic’s “moderate” rival Panic, like Milosevic’s attitude in Geneva, can be interpreted as a bluff intended to gain time and as a “division of labour”. But more likely it is a sign of differentiation within a conflict-ridden alliance with the nationalist far-right.

In any case, we must judge these forces by their actions. Real disassociation with the “Greater Serbia” project and the warlords who carry out ethnic purification, would imply a halt to all logistic support to the Serbian army in Bosnia, an open conflict with the far-right groups and the outlawing of paramilitary formations. Milosevic and Cosic have thus far been playing the sorcerer’s apprentice; they risk becoming hostages of the extreme right which has grown stronger under their cover.

When a majority of the Serbs of B-H voted for Karadzic it was not throwing its weight behind the idea of “Greater Serbia”.

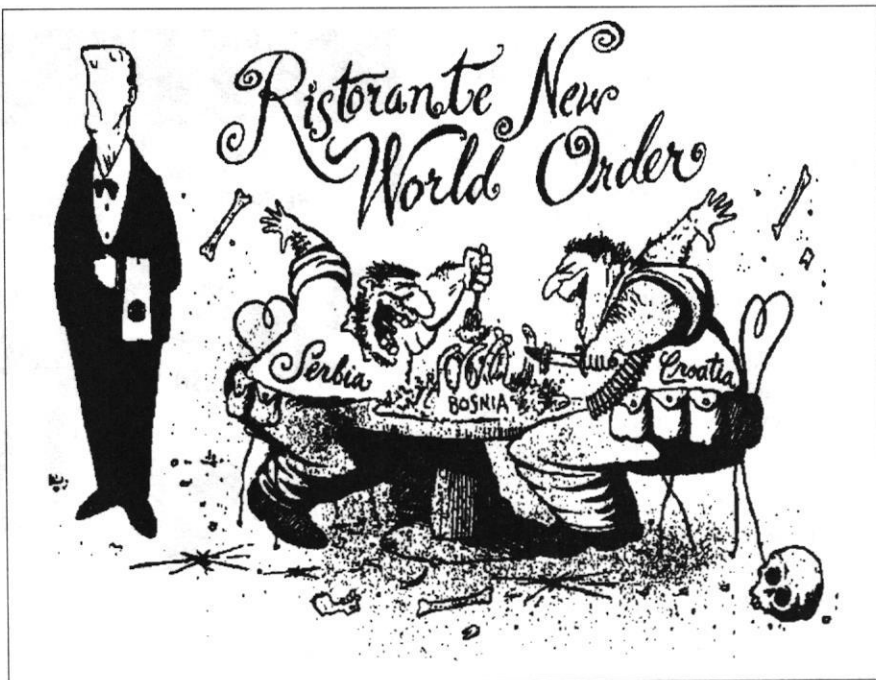
They were voting primarily against the break-up of Yugoslavia which they feared. Thus, in order to unmask Karadzic any agreement has to meet demands for guarantees for all communities and citizens.

In France, the media speak mostly about Serbian aggression. It is more accurate to underline the agreement that has been made on the backs of the Muslims — and of the mixed populations of the cities in general — between the Serbian and Croatian regimes.

Moreover, in this conflict, the very use of the term “Muslim” demands some explanation. Serbian and Croatian nationalist propaganda spread the idea that there is a danger of a Bosnian fundamentalist republic, and hope in this way to push through their carve up of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Croatian regime has been secretly negotiating with the Serbian nationalists while formally recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina to the point of concluding a military agreement with its president A. Izetbegovic.

In Sarajevo today, the Muslims are saying, “God save us from the protection of the UN forces (FORPRONU) and the (Croatian) HVO”. In private — though not yet in public, for fear of jeopardizing the refugees on Croatian territory — they denounce the “two demons, one which devours our souls and the other which devours our bodies.”

Those who make up the Muslim population are part of a Slavic community which converted to Islam at a distant point in the past, and are now in their majority non-religious and atheist. The Ustashe Croats count them as Croats and the Serb nationalists also deny them any specific national identity. Many of these “Muslims” (heavily urbani-



zed and therefore often in mixed marriages) prefer to be called "Bosnian" — a label which has the merit of invoking the long history of Bosnia, whose medieval state had a "heretic" church which was neither Catholic nor Orthodox. Serbs and Croats living in Bosnian cities, unlike their rural counterparts, also call themselves Bosnians.

A multi-ethnic army

The Bosnian army in the cities — in Sarajevo and the industrialized region of Tuzla, for example — reflect this reality. The High Command of this army in Sarajevo is composed of three officers — one Serbian, one Croatian and one Muslim — who are all from the former Yugoslav army and in the tradition of the World War Two partisans.

The victims of this war are the Muslims and the mixed populations of the cities — intimately related to one another since, for historical reasons, Muslims are largely concentrated in the cities. While the Muslims have a relative majority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with 40% of the population, the villages are much more homogeneous and dominated by the Croatian and Serbian far-right; as a result, these latter forces have the upper hand in terms of control of territory.

That said, in the campaigns of territorial "cleansing", many villages have been razed; in the Serb strongholds, it is often Serbs who do not accept ethnic cleansing that are the first victims of the heroism of the fascist militias.

This is not simply a military conflict, but one which involves a terrorist policy of massacres, rape, torture. This policy is aimed at ripping apart all the ties made in Bosnia-Herzegovina — in terms of territory, buildings, families and networks of friendship. Once you want to create a Serbia or a Croatia that is in conflict with this intricately woven fabric, it is necessary to stir fear in people, to incite flight through a combination of massacres, aggression and various forms of terrorism.

Then we come to the question of foreign military intervention. First of all, we are faced with a process of creeping fascism which is not only limited to Serbia or to Serb forces in Bosnia; it can also be seen in the Croatian camp. No left movement of organizations linked to the workers movement, which could command the support of international brigades, exists to oppose the far right. Analogies with the international brigades in Spain in the 1930s are wide of the mark.

As soon as we talk about intervention, two questions arise: who and why? We can not be content with a purely pacifist position and place all the warring camps on an equal



footing. Further, there are particularly worrying developments in the "Greater Serbia" policy that must be stopped — or else we risk seeing a phenomenal increase of violence in the Serbian province of Kosovo, whose majority is Albanian, which would spread further afield into Macedonia.

But behind the term "foreign intervention" there are several realities. A foreign intervention already exists with the presence of UN troops. The UN troops have met a lot of criticism in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, for good and bad reasons. For bad reasons, because certain forces on the ground want to "resolve" the questions of nationality and territory solely through the use of force. For good reasons, because if the UN is present after the process of ethnic cleansing, they will only serve to consolidate it. Neutrality in such a case merely covers the unequal military relationship of forces which benefits the Serbs — which is clearly unacceptable.

At the same time, the UN forces which protect the humanitarian supply routes, have made it possible for the people of Sarajevo to eat, since they can only do so thanks to these supplies. Indeed, the Bosnians have demanded that further humanitarian corridors be established in Bosnia-Herzegovina, among other places in the east where there are many refugees who risk death from hunger and the cold. This should be taken into consideration when it comes to taking a position on the presence of UN forces.

We must be against any imperialist intervention, which would totally escape the logic of a political settlement of the conflict by those concerned. If the Serbian government was the target of such an intervention, it would only strengthen Serbian nationalism.

The request for military and logistic aid — for a limited foreign intervention — against the heavy artillery that surrounds

Sarajevo and other big cities, holds out the danger of a military spiral and the pursuit of policies that do not correspond to the interests of the concerned populations, but rather those of the United States and Europe in the Balkans.

The military question needs to be viewed according to the following political approach: for a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina, against its dismemberment. The Bosnian resistance which is fighting in the cities, made up in large part of mixed populations and of Muslims, must be supported. This mixed resistance is still a reality; it runs the risk of perishing if it does not receive some support — and with it will perish the possibility of a multi-ethnic and multicultural Bosnia-Herzegovina. This resistance finds its most concrete form in the Bosnian army.

There are two different political currents among the Bosnians. Everybody has been hoping for outside intervention, but from two different angles. In government circles one can hear appeals for a US military intervention against Milosevic. On the left the demand is rather for limited logistical aid — supplies of arms or help in breaking the encirclement of towns but not foreign ground forces.

This current also hopes to see the back of the United Nations force before too long, even if they do not call for it to be immediately withdrawn. There is considerable bitterness towards and tension with the UN force. Aside from frequent comments on the forces involvement in trafficking in besieged and deprived Sarajevo there are also inter-related humanitarian and defence issues. An often heard remark in Bosnian Defence circles is "if we had enough arms we wouldn't need the convoys".

A lot is said about what has been happening in and around the industrial town of Tuzla which has an ethnic mix close to the

Bosnian average (about 45% Muslims, 33% Serbs and 20% Croats) and where the nationalist parties lost the last elections. A mixed Bosnian defence force has been organized with the full support of the town authorities and with the arms of the Territorial Defence which had been kept. The town is at the centre of a heavily industrialized region of a million inhabitants.

The Tuzla army is headed by a Croat officer who has refused to support the Croat HVU. It controls an airport which has two runways and good conditions of access. An aid corridor could be established to Tuzla to help besieged towns which have so far remained without assistance. However, the UN has refused to open this corridor since they cannot get the agreement of the Serb extremists who think it would reinforce Bosnian positions. We must go to Tuzla and make links with other working class towns and insist on the need to open the airport for humanitarian aid.

Military aid

We should therefore make a call for military aid to this multi-ethnic Bosnian force within the political perspective I have outlined. The demand for lifting the embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina, made in an unspecific fashion, is dangerous — such arms could well fall into the hands of Croatian paramilitary groups which pretend to be in a military alliance with the Bosnian government, while at the same time betraying the Bosnian cause.

Arms destined for Bosnia are now held up at Split. Thus, the lifting of the embargo must be subordinated to the task of aiding the Bosnian resistance to free the mixed cities. We must demand full information on the camps and their conditions through the massive dispatch of missions from independent organizations; all the camps must be opened up and all their occupants freed. We must demand that tribunals be put in place in order to judge the crimes of war and the rapes.

Criminals must not believe that they can continue to act with impunity. The crimes exacted by the militias, or by the fascist forces, in which psychopathic criminals play an important role, should be brought to heel by such tribunals.

This would, moreover, force the governments of Belgrade and Zagreb to disassociate themselves from these actions, which would, even if their actions were only of a diplomatic nature, facilitate the task of those seeking to put an end to such crimes.

As far as the prison camps go, we must demand full information on their existence. We must treat Belgrade and Zagreb in the same manner, and we must demand that the

camps be opened up and all the prisoners be released. A concrete policy supported by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and official missions can advance work in this direction.

At the outset, nobody wanted to believe the atrocity stories but then they were forced to open their eyes — although the risk remains of being taken in by one or another falsification operation used for various unstated goals.

The hastily drawn analogies between Serbian president Milosevic and Hitler are false and counter-productive. The force of the condemnation of crimes and rapes committed is much greater if it is based on the real situation and not on inflated statistics. Furthermore, these crimes must be denounced in all the camps even if a disymmetry exists between Serbians and Croats.

Beyond that, we have to re-examine the question: we are clearly torn by the need to denounce the present-day reality of the UN and the forces that control it on the one hand, and the need, on the other, for an intervention force that is not the tool of various states. There is certainly a debate to be had there and "transitional" formulas need to be found — bringing together the demands of Third World countries on the UN, against the Security Council, for full transparency and a control of its mandates on concrete questions.

There are many things to do, such as help for the Bosnian Defence, and pressure around the questions of the camps and the International War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity Tribunal and on the fact that rape should be considered amongst such crimes. However nothing effective or long-lasting can be achieved without linking up with people and organizations in the Republics. Every collective should try to make such journeys to make political and humanitarian links.

I myself went to Sarajevo at the New Year with a group of 15 French people organized by the Montpellier collective of the European Citizens Assembly. We had several aims: firstly to simply be with the people of this town where everything is short owing to the siege but to which foreigners can bring aid. But also we wanted, in partnership with the city's peace centre permanently installed in the Town Hall, to set up a permanent and properly equipped office to deal with links up and trips by antiwar organizations.

We also had meetings and discussions with Church representatives, journalists from the independent press and radio, politicians, local officials, the school and hospital services, artists, services dealing with refugees and others. Everyone can come up with forms of aid appropriate to their profession.

As far as the refugees are concerned we must continue to demand broad and non-exclusive access to our countries in forms which help families and friends to stay together. The Bosnian government official responsible for refugees, Ms. Omersoftic can be met with. She insists on the government's basic desire to re-establish contact with (and do a census of) all their fellow citizens to help in developing a dialogue and encouraging them to return.

There is anxiety about the situation of Bosnian refugees in Croatia, specifically, fears about both Islamist and Catholic religious pressure, that the refugees may be encouraged to emigrate instead of going back to B-H in an attempt to change that country's ethnic composition, and of a loss of skills to the West.

Time to act

We must not forget the need to make links with the civic movement in Serbia, help to the independent press there, establish links with organizations dealing with refugee problems and women's organizations. To counteract nationalist brainwashing operations we have to develop our sources of information and links amongst all nationalities.

In particular, a new working group has been set up in Belgrade in liaison with the antiwar movement in Serbia. It aims to keep track of all the crimes and civil and minority rights' violations in the war in former Yugoslavia. It works through an analysis of the press and evidence from witnesses. Young people also have specific work to do in support of the student movement in Belgrade.★

Useful addresses

INFORMATION on the course of the war is available from WAR Report, Yugo Fax, 1, Auckland St, London SE11 5HU, UK.

The Sarajevo bureau for contacts and visits can be reached via the European Citizens Assembly in Montpellier, France, tel: (France) 87 60 84 05 or in Paris at 31 rue de Reuilly, 75012, France, tel: (France) (1) 43 79 09 23; fax (1) 43 79 32 02.

The organization in Belgrade keeping an account of war crimes is called the Humanitarian Law Fund. It can be contacted at 11000 Beograd, Terazije 6/III, tel (Yugoslavia) 11 658 430; fax 11 646 341.

Its executive director is Natacha Kandic. ★

Towards the bitter end

FRANCE goes to the polls on March 21, a victory for the right over the ruling Socialist Party of president François Mitterrand already seems more than likely.

DANIEL BENSÂÏD — Paris, January 20, 1993

SPECULATION centres more on the scope of this victory than on its likelihood. The anticipated defeat of the left in general and the Socialist Party (PS) in particular, will constitute the end of an era.

When the PS won the 1981 presidential and parliamentary elections it announced that it intended to effect sweeping change. Twelve years later, the passage of time has cruelly exposed the hollowness of such ambitions.

Little remains of their promises. If we look at the abolition of the death penalty, the Auroux laws on workplace democracy, retirement at 60 and decentralization, we find that decentralization has merely decentralized corruption, the Auroux laws have done little to stem mounting unemployment, and retirement at 60 is already threatened. This leaves only the abolition of the death penalty.

This is not much to set alongside the catastrophic record on unemployment, the reappearance of urban poverty, the rise of racism and xenophobia, the contaminated blood affair and a long list of scandals, including the contaminated blood affair.

This started in 1984, when French doctors warned the responsible government officials of the danger of infection with the AIDS-producing HIV virus through the use of untreated blood for transfusions. Rather than buying in treated blood from the USA, the authorities opted to continue using untreated blood until French industry was itself able to carry out the de-contamination process. As a result many patients were infected with HIV.

The moral debacle of the left is practically total. It is more so since these are not honorable defeats registered in the heat of battle with powerful opponents, but self-inflicted defeats dealt by the left's rejection of its own values and adoption of those of its opponents. Such defeats leave lasting demoralization.



Champion of the strong *franc* and promoter of the stock market, the Socialist government has tried to be more effective than the right in managing the needs and interests of capital. This conversion to a tempered liberalism is not merely the end of the well-trod path of reformists without reforms. It marks the utter exhaustion of a social democratic project involving the administration of the welfare state and the representative mechanisms tied to it.

This is the essential problem facing the PS. The so-called "turn to realism" of 1982-83 when the government bowed before the constraints of the international recession and abandoned its proclaimed social priorities — particularly full employment — was far more than a momentary wobble in adverse circumstances; it involved taking on board the conviction that traditional Keynesian politics have lost their relative efficiency in a strongly internationalized economy, at least unless they were applied in an extremely radical manner with rigorous price controls, outlawing of lay-offs, and breaking with the world market framework.

The road of even modest reforms was increasingly narrowed in the anticipation of being able to bring the instruments of enlightened intervention out of the cupboard at a

higher level, within the European context. Delor's pro-European activism after 1984-85 was closely connected to the 1983 "turn" in France.

Nearly ten years later, the political and institutional framework for a EC-wide neo-Keynesian framework has yet to be put in place. The difficulties of financing the plan to relaunch Europe and the difficulties of the European Monetary System work against this. What journalists here like to call the moral or political crisis, in which state corruption is seen as associated with the rise in electoral abstentionism, is in reality directed connected to the decline of postwar redistributive policies and the effective social compromise that resulted.

Everywhere in Europe, the legitimacy of the system of representation been based on a coherent set of relations, involving a central role for a powerful social democratic or Stalinist party, a vigorous union movement, and the allegiance of the majority of the working class to its organizations, seen as more or less adequate guarantors of its social rights.

However recent years have seen massive industrial restructuring, fragmentation, increasing inequalities and the segmentation of the labour force. This has led to a crisis of the system of representation, a dissatisfaction

Some French politicians

JACQUES Delors, a member of the Socialist Party, is the President of the European Commission. **Alain Madelin**: a member of the UDF (French Democratic Union) who favours devaluing the franc. **Philippe De Villiers**: right wing ideologue and politician. **Charles Pasqua** and **Philippe Seguin**: leading members of the neo-Gaullist RPR who opposed their party's official support for the Maastricht Treaty on European union. **Bernard Kouchner**: a minister in the Bérégovoy government; **Bernard Tapie**, a millionaire businessman who resigned a ministerial post following a financial scandal, but was subsequently, named minister of urban affairs last December by the same Bérégovoy government. **Eduard Balladur**: ex-finance minister in the Chirac government in 1986-1988 who has been promoted in business circles as the future prime minister following the right's anticipated victory. ★

with the traditional apparatuses which are increasingly incapable of playing their role, the search for sectoral forms of expression, and a sea change in electoral behaviour.

One system (or mode of regulation) has become outdated. But a coherent alternative system is not on the horizon. This malaise is at the root of the insecurity and identity panics which nourish the new far-right movements. Behind all the varieties of such movements and the fluctuations of their electoral scores, there lays a tenacious reality. In France, the traditional liberal and Gaullist rightist formations are undergoing a systematic weakening analogous to that of the social democracy.

Historical Gaullism (or Christian Democracy in Italy) have had a clientelist relationship with their electorate based on post-war economic growth. The more far-sighted leaders of this right understand that they have played the role of sorcerer's apprentice in promoting unbridled liberalism and singing the praises of Reaganism and Thatcherism. The result is economically disastrous, socially costly, and politically disturbing. A space has been opened up for a populist right and, if the situation were not so serious, one could derive much pleasure from the sight of erstwhile liberal zealots such as Madelin today supporting an urgent relaunch of state intervention.

This is the explosive paradox of the situation. Faced with a defeated left which no longer has any clear plans or identity, the poorly unified right is trembling at the spectre of its likely victory. The prospect of

having to manage galloping unemployment in an uncertain international context is not alluring. More so, as a system of domination that has worked relatively well for the past half century is compounded by an international leadership crisis.

Since the break up of the Soviet Union, the United States has missed no chance to affirm its diplomatic-military hegemony in the world, most obviously via the Gulf War. But its role is in contrast with its economic decline and the continuing financial disorder. No dominant power exists able to fulfil the economic and military role formerly assumed by Britain and then by the United States.

In this context, the electoral campaign takes on the allure of a guerilla war. Given the gravity of the situation, one might have expected clear statements from the dominant forces on the most burning questions such as employment, social protection, the future of Europe or the crisis in Yugoslavia. But each of these issues divides the right as much as the left. The debate has crystallized around the eternal question of the possibility of "left-right" cohabitation or on the president's plans for institutional reforms.

These latter issues are not without tactical importance. François Mitterrand can in effect benefit from a social and economic situation that will present a right wing government with many difficulties and the need for constitutional changes to shake out the party system and redesign the landscape before the 1995 presidential elections. Nonetheless, given the depth of the crisis the politicians' ponderings on the pleasures of cohabitation look pretty irrelevant.

Electorally, political formations which appear as outside the traditional pattern can take advantage of this impasse. This is particularly the case with the Ecologist coalition. The neo-fascist National Front (FN) which had at one point attained 14% seems to be marking time, having failed to make a breakthrough in the 1992 regional and cantonal elections. Le Pen's party built its image on an impression of an irresistible rise and the voter may deduce that those who don't advance are declining.

Over the last year, the National Front has had problems finding a second wind, conducting a low-key campaign around Maastricht. After having benefitted from calculated media promotion, it finds itself today receiving much less media attention. But above all, the traditional right with the initiatives of De Villiers or the populist activism of the Pasqua-Seguin team, are stealing its themes and clientele. Nonetheless, it must not be forgotten that the electoral setback was relative to its ambitious targets. At the same time as it declined in its southern

fiefs, the FN consolidated its presence in the Paris region.

Rise of the ecologists

It is rather the ecologists coalition between the Greens of Antoine Waechter and Dominique Voinet and Generation Ecologie launched a year ago by the ex-minister of the environment Brice Lalonde, which is likely to make electoral advances — polls currently indicate that it enjoys the support of 17% of the electorate. The electoral system however will not assure it more than a handful of seats in Parliament.

This may make this current the principal electoral victor without it having to immediately assume the responsibilities which flow from such success. In fact, the environmental coalition is no less divided on the big questions of the future as the left or the traditional right. Divisions are found not only between the Greens and Generation Ecologie, but also

A real left

THE Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — French section of the Fourth International) has decided to participate in the legislative electoral campaign by running approximately 75 candidates under the banner "A Real Left" and on the basis of its own platform. A pamphlet explaining its arguments and proposals on employment and unemployment is being produced.

At the same time, the LCR has joined with other forces — notably dissidents from the Communist Party (PCF) and the PS — in a "Pledge to change the left". The signatories of this accord had taken note of their agreements on united action around important events like the Gulf War and the referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, as well as on the need to respond to the rise of racism and fascism.

The Pledge is not a common programme nor the outline of a new organization, but rather, a realistic assessment of the possible scope of collaboration. Thus, the candidates will use the Pledge as a reference point, and attempt whenever possible to avoid competition and work together in the spirit of reciprocal support.

It is vital that electoral competition does not destroy the united dynamics that have been forged and that periodical polemics do not obscure the greater stakes involved. Towards this end, a round of meetings and debates has been organized throughout the country before the official opening of the campaign. ★

within each of these formations. Their electoral rise is very much a media phenomena completely disproportionate to a weak activist base and lack of well-known personalities. Brice Lalonde has openly declared his intention to contribute to the building of a modernist (or Democratic in the US sense) alliance between centrists, ecologists, and enlightened Socialists. In spite of their stated aim of engaging in a new type of politics, the two partners have already become involved in the traditional shady political games.

More generally, the fragmentation of the electoral landscape and the fact that nearly 40% of the electorate may have no parliamentary representation owing to the two-round electoral system will only add strength to Mitterrand's promotion of the need for an institutional reform, a scheme that has divided the right.

This reform could also be the occasion for Mitterrand to fine tune his agenda. The former Socialist leader and minister of education Alain Savary said ironically that François Mitterrand is an honest man in that he has given the Socialist Party back in the state in which he first found it over 20 years ago — that is, shrivelled up.

Mitterrand today seems no longer interested in the future of this party and has been encouraging a range of transitional initiatives such as Generation Ecologie, the promotion of Bernard Kouchner, or the extension of Bernard Tapie's Energie-Sud into a national Energie France. These are components of an eventual coalition or "Democratic" formation built around a core from the current PS.

But such a situation is still a long way off. With the disappearance of the red peril in the East, the end of the liberal mirage of the 1980s, and the abandonment of the social democratic reformism of 1981, the time has come to make hard choices. The president has set the tone for the next months. Resigned to the inevitability of a return of the right, the president has posed as the guardian of social rights.

The threshold of three million unemployed has been officially crossed and a wave of lay-offs is feared, with indications that the recession will last into 1993 with disastrous effects for the youth. In his blunt manner, Bernard Tapie has already declared on television that everything has been tried as far as government measures go, and only imagination and the good will of all concerned remain. The right finds itself in the same situation. Balladur's speeches are as empty as Bérégovoy's: in order to recreate jobs, growth is necessary; but how can this be done without deepening budgetary deficits and cutting social security? ★

Opposing the neo-Nazi onslaught

THE murder by racists of three immigrant workers in the German town of Mölln on November 23 last year made headlines around the world. A German correspondent, David Müller, looks at the background to the attack and assesses the massive anti-racist protest movement in his country.

DAVID MÜLLER — Hannover, January 19, 1993

AFTER the mass anti-racist demonstrations at the end of November, in which some one million people took part, the debate on racism in Germany is today dominated by two events. The first is the agreement between the main political parties, the SPD, the FDP and the CDU, over the restriction of asylum rights. More important, however, has been the murder of three immigrants, who died in an arson attack by fascists in Mölln in Schleswig-Holstein on November 23, 1992 which has had a decisive effect on the mood in Germany.

The vision of blazing asylum hostels and deaths raises the question of the roots of this terrible racist wave. In fact, both long-term and more immediate factors are at work.

Racism exists in all imperialist states. However, racism in Germany has two peculiar characteristics. Firstly, German citizenship is fundamentally tied to "race membership". Anyone from the former Soviet Union who can prove themselves to be of German origin can become a German citizen when they move to Germany — while the same is not true, for example, of Turkish immigrants who have lived in Germany for many years.

The other is the fact that the German trade unions and the mass workers party, the social democrats of the SPD, no longer bother to give even verbal adherence to a socialist perspective. In the former East Germany (German Democratic Republic — GDR) the experience of Stalinism is a supplementary factor. The outlook even of union-organized workers cannot be described even as reformist in the classical sense. It is at the most democratic. They are thus more open to a reactionary perspective than in the 1920s.

This circumstance also affects the social composition of the far right and fascist organizations. The base — and voting support — of the far right Deutsche Volkunion (DVU) and the Republicans are still largely from the lower middle class. However, the classic fascist organization, the National Democratic Party (NDP), has 50% workers in its national leadership. The social change is even more striking in the former GDR, where the fascist shock troops are mainly high school students. Further inroads into the working class cannot be ruled out. In any case it is not true that today's Nazis are overwhelmingly marginal "declassed" types.

Reactionary vanguard

Overall it can be said that the militant Nazis have for the time being succeeded in creating a racist atmosphere through direct terror. Their role is that of a reactionary vanguard. However, the Nazi terror has only been able to reach such dimensions because since 1986 the government has been campaigning against refugees in order to distract attention from its own failures and social cutbacks. Furthermore, the defeat of the public sector workers strike at the start of 1992 meant the loss of a crucial opportunity to mount a progressive opposition to social decay and falling wages.

And let us not forget the behaviour of the social democrats, who have done nothing to defend refugees. The way to the December 7, 1992 agreement on this question was paved by the decision of the SPD special conference of November 14-15 allowing the party to take part in changing the constitution.

Just before the special conference it seemed possible that the SPD rank-and-

file would reject the change. However, the SPD leadership, and in particular the head of the party's parliamentary fraction Klose and party chairman Engholm succeeded in two weeks of manoeuvres in assuring a big majority for their policy at the special conference.

Klose made it clear even before the conference that, while the SPD deputies would take its decisions into consideration, they would continue to negotiate over the asylum issue with the government. Engholm made an opening speech which contained much anti-fascist rhetoric as a sop to the rank-and-file, but made no mention of the little matter of the constitutional change. The SPD leftwing, meanwhile, did not put up much resistance.

The inter-party compromise is a big blow for the anti-racist mobilizations, whose central demand was for the maintenance of article 16. The agreed changes to paragraph 16 of the German Constitution on asylum and the associated package of laws amount to a comprehensive dismantling of asylum rights.

The central point is that refugees who have travelled across so-called non-persecuting states (that is, states that the German government decides are not involved in persecution) can be sent back to those states. Poland and the former Czechoslovakia are numbered among them. Gypsies from Romania could find themselves sent back to that country, which may likewise be designated non-repressive despite clear evidence that Gypsies are persecuted there.

We should recall in this connection the prolonged campaign needed to persuade the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party which now dominates the German government, to abandon its definition of Turkey as a non-persecuting state.

More than 150,000 people turned out for the demonstration around the SPD special conference on November 14, a significant number given that this was a demonstration against the SPD leadership. The coalition which organized the march stretched from the anarchist autonomists to the Jusos (the SPD youth organization) and it was attended mainly by the left and high school students.

However, public opinion was affected far more dramatically by the murders on Mölln than by the anti-racist demonstrations. For the first time the victims of the attack were immigrant workers who, unlike refugees, have a real social weight and some collective political experience. Furthermore, while the ruling class has an interest in using the refugees as scapegoats, they also want to keep the immigrants as a class of workers with few

rights. They do not want to see a massive outflow of such labour.

Thus, we heard the Opel car firm, a third of whose workers are immigrants, promoting "tolerance and peaceful neighbourliness" through the mouth of Kevin from the American hit film *Home Alone*. Fear of radicalization among immigrant workers also played a role. They have more than once shown themselves to be the most militant and politically aware section of the working class in Germany. Thus there is a broader consensus against terror against immigrant workers than that ready to defend the refugees.

The murders inspired both fear and anger among immigrants. It was noticeable that when interviewed many immigrants went beyond defensive demands. While older immigrants tended to appeal to the state to defend them, the youth often talked of organizing self-defence.

However, the Turkish-Kurdish immigration is very diverse. Among the youth there is a small vanguard which is oriented both to the autonomists and towards (moderate) "multi-culturalism" but which also defends its own independence. On the left of this layer are the Turkish youth

groups who have taken militant action against the Nazis.

The Greens have played a different role among immigrants than in other movements, including the ecological movement. In most movements the Greens have an ideological rather than an organizational influence. Things are different with the anti-racist movement. Lists connected to the Greens frequently get the biggest vote in elections for the immigrant councils — this is true for example in Hannover.

These councils are elected by immigrants at local level. They can make proposals to the town councils but have no decision-making power. Few immigrants actually vote. Nonetheless the Greens have gained real mass influence among immigrants — for example, in Berlin — and can mobilize them.

The first signs of the initiating role of immigrant workers in the working class have already been seen. Symbolic strikes took place in several enterprises (in some cases with the support of the management).

Ambitious appeals and action circles have also been set up in enterprises. A

"Decency First"

THE demonstration "Decency First" was the biggest mobilization in Austria's postwar history. More than 250,000 people joined the Lichtermeer ("Sea of Light") organized by SOS Mitmensch. Though boycotted by the media, a demonstration organized by Platform gegen Fremdhaß und Rassismus ("Platform against Xenophobia and Racism") gained the support of 10,000 people. The occasion for these actions was an "anti-foreigner" petition campaign by Jörg Haider's far right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ).

Haider thought he only had to harvest the prevailing xenophobic climate assisted by the racist laws of the government coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats as well as the deployment of troops on the borders with Slovakia and Hungary.

However, in nearly every community in Austria initiatives have arisen to oppose xenophobia, with hundreds of public meetings and many demonstrations. In provincial capitals such as Klagenfurt — one of Haider's strongholds — 4,000 people turned out. In Salzburg, Linz and Innsbruck there were marches of more than 100,000. And in the capital Vienna, 250,000 filled the city centre with torches and candles in their hands.

While SOS Mitmensch uses liberal and humanitarian arguments and avoids criticising the government, the smaller Platform takes up social problems such as unemployment (around 8%) deteriorating educational standards and so on. The Platform has therefore been largely boycotted by the media, while SOS Mitmensch received ample attention. Furthermore, the latter formation manoeuvred to undermine the Platform, which was nonetheless able to get 4,000 to its demonstration and 10,000 to the rally outside a government office.

Haider has been aiming at a million signatures on his petition — one fifth of those entitled to vote — but the impact of these demonstrations may prevent him achieving this aim as the respectability of xenophobic prejudice has been challenged. If the FPÖ fails to get over 500,000 signatures — a figure comparable to its vote of 782,000 in the last general elections — this will be considered as a defeat for Haider. *Hermann Dworczak* ★



meeting of these different initiatives took place on January 17 this year on the initiative of the shop stewards' committee in the Hösch enterprise in Dortmund and the Initiative Movement of Unionists against Racism and for Friendship of the Peoples. The meeting brought together some 100 union functionaries, above all from the IG-Metall union. They issued an appeal to the leadership of the DGB union confederation and the individual unions to organize anti-racist actions on January 29 including industrial action. A campaign for a general stoppage on May 3 is underway.

After Mölln there was a change of mood; there is now a prevailing sentiment in the population against racist terror (but not against all forms of racism) and the first stirrings of a movement amongst immigrants.

In recent weeks almost all the big cities have seen so-called "lines of light" in which more than a million people have taken part. These involve people holding candles for half an hour in the city centres. They are either silent as in Munich or listen to Bible readings and stories as in Hannover.

The lines of light have been mainly organized by bourgeois forces, up to and including the *Bild* newspaper which has been violently attacking refugees for years.

While they certainly express the change in mood they also have the effect of

channeling and restraining the possibilities for more profound anti-racist activity. A line of light has little in common with the collective experience of a demonstration; people stand around alone or in small groups without any encouragement of a sense that they can take some action to further the goal. The organizers often make a virtue out of the "non-political" nature of the action. Anti-racism is reduced to an expression of feeling.

However in many places the left has also taken initiatives — for example leafletting campaigns in Hannover (the Greens) and in Munich (the local anti-fascist committee) calling for equal rights and denouncing the compromise on asylum. These actions are often very well received.

Another novelty is that the reformist organizations have become heavily involved in the movement.

Previously the demonstrations were mainly made up of high school students among whom the reformists have little weight. However the same is not true of the immigrants. The Greens, who are represented in many immigrants councils, are seen by immigrants as a force that consistently defends their interests. The SPD is anchored amongst the immigrants via the trade unions. They have to watch out for pressure from their rank-and-file Turkish and Kurdish workers.

The reformist organizations have worked tirelessly in these mobilizations. There

are two sides to this development. On the one hand, it is a good thing that the reformists are backing and taking part in mobilizations. As immigrants begin to get involved, reformist participation is unavoidable and also desirable. In recent years the influence of the revolutionary groups among immigrants has fallen constantly and the possibilities for wider mobilization are welcome.

Call for state ban

However the orientation of the reformist organizations presents problems. They call for a state imposed ban on the Nazis, a line which will tend to sideline the massively raised demands for self-defence. Furthermore, they will not welcome attempts to draw the links between social and anti-racist demands.

Another problem inherent in the new situation is that, while there have been huge demonstrations, there is as yet little in the way of long-term organization. Some groups have arisen but they are very weak. There are a handful of coordinations at local level which usually bring together the traditional left groups — the remnants of the Communist Party, left Greens, autonomists and small communist groups — and high school student activists. There is less activity in the universities than during the Gulf War.

There is a crying need for nationwide coordination based on the activists. Only the reformist and bourgeois forces are organized on a national level. But these do not do a lot. On the left the dominant force in the anti-fascist movement are the anarchist autonomists the majority of whom are opposed to common national link-ups.

The goal of socialists should be to work towards the building of a united front. Simply to issue propaganda calling for this is not much help. Practical steps need to be taken on two fronts:

- The setting up of grassroots' organizations which can activate all those who want to fight racism. Actions and mobilizations are needed which can provide a credible guarantee of the physical security to immigrants and refugees. There must also be a consistent orientation towards self-defence rather than state defence.

- Coordination of the radical forces — something that is feasible with some of the radical immigrants and autonomists — around an approach of promoting a united front of workers, immigrant, refugee and other progressive organizations.

Finally, socialists face the task of exposing the social roots of racist oppression and linking up our movement with allied movements in other countries. ★

Guilty because innocent

INTRODUCTION — On the night of December 17, 1992, the Israeli government under Itzhak Rabin deported 417 Palestinians accused of belonging to the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas (the name is the Arab acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement) to southern Lebanon.

Rabin may have thought he was executing a master-stroke but in fact he has only succeeded in gratifying his predecessors in the Likud government.

He has carried out an action which only makes sense if it is seen in the light of an option that Likud cherished but never dared to implement — the annexation of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and the expulsion of much of their population in the framework of a go for break game with the rest of the "international community" including Israel's godfather, the United States.

However, this is not the option of Rabin and co. who are supporters of a "negotiated solution" — meaning the move towards the formation of a Palestinian *bantustan* with the blessing of the US and its Arab acolytes. It thus seems that the deportations are simply a huge blunder on Rabin's part.

The effect of the deportations, furthermore, is quite the opposite to that intended — the weakening and isolation of the Palestinian fundamentalist movement. Thrust onto the front page by Rabin's action, Hamas finds its ability to cloak itself in the legitimacy of the Palestinian national movement and to force others — including the PLO — to show their solidarity with it — enhanced.

The following dossier is devoted to the Palestinian fundamentalist movement. By pure coincidence our three contributors are all women — apt, given that all varieties of religious fundamenta-

lists, even when they themselves suffer repression, remain oppressors of women.

Lea Tsemel, interviewed here, is known to everybody who has taken an interest in the Israel-Palestine question. A lawyer who has defended the Palestinians oppressed by her own nation, she has for many years stood up to the chauvinist and sexist exasperation of Israeli society and its political and judicial establishments. The well-known Israeli writer, David Grossman has devoted an entire chapter to Lea in his fine account of Palestinian life, *The Yellow Wind*, which appeared on the eve of the eruption of the *intifada*.

Dalal Bizri is a teacher at the Lebanese University. A sociologist by education and a feminist by conviction, she has specialized in the study of Islamic fundamentalism. The article published here is a shortened version of a longer text sent us by the author.

The Arab original, which deals with the whole of the Palestinian fundamentalist movement will be published in full in the forthcoming issue of our Arab language sister publication *Al-Mitraqa*.

Manar Hassan is a Palestinian feminist militant from the State of Israel and a founder of the Al-Fanar movement. Her contribution is the text of a presentation to a feminist conference in Bologna last September. Large parts of this text, which we are publishing in full, have appeared in *News from Within* (Jerusalem) — **Salah Jaber ★**

LEA TSEMEL is the Israeli lawyer who succeeded in holding up for 20 hours the convoy of 417 Palestinians that the Israelis were hoping to discreetly deport to Lebanon. The delay completely changed the impact of the Israeli government's act.

Subsequently, confronted with international disapproval, the refusal of the Lebanese state to accept this new violation of its sovereignty and the determination of the deportees to leave the no man's land in which the Israeli state has dumped them, despite cold and sickness, the Israeli government has started to try to find a way out of the corner it has backed itself into. We spoke to Lea Tsemel on January 15, 1993, two days before the Supreme Court hearing on the case.

WHAT precisely is the legal issue that the Supreme Court will be dealing with tomorrow?

When it authorized the deportations a month ago, the Supreme Court told the government that it had thirty days in which to provide a legal justification and in particular to demonstrate the legality of the new military decree that allowed the deportations to take place.

In our view, there is no doubt that the decree allowing the deportations is not only against international law and respect for the most elementary human rights, but is also

illegal in terms of established procedures in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

What were the Israeli government's aims when it ordered the deportations on December 16 last year?

Firstly, we must remember that this is not the first wave of deportations. Since 1967, hundreds of Palestinians have been banished from their homeland. Under pressure of public opinion the volume of deportations has declined in recent years — from hundreds to dozens.

Apart from its repressive aspect, deportation expresses the often unconscious dream of the great majority of the Israeli population

— the dream of waking up one fine morning to find the Palestinians no longer a part of our reality.

What is known in Israel as the Transfer is not a plan; it is a fantasy, which is perhaps even worse.

Furthermore, there is a notion that the Palestinians are not legitimate residents in this land but tenants with limited and always provisional rights. If, for example, a Palestinian leaves the Occupied Territories for a few years, the Israeli authorities can withdraw their right of residence. I deal with dozens of cases of this kind.

To return to the decision to deport 417 alleged members of Islamic fundamentalist organizations; here the aim was first of all to satisfy a section of public opinion that wants

drastic repression in retaliation for the wave of attacks in recent months.

For Rabin the worst insult is to be considered "soft". So he decided to be hard, even harder than his "rightwing" predecessors, Sharon or Shamir.

And apart from that?

That's all there was to it. Yitzhak Rabin's political thinking is not terribly sophisticated, to put it mildly. Like many other politicians here he was educated in the Palmash school [the shock units of the Zionist Hagannah militia in 1947-48] and he thinks in terms of lashing out.

If you look at the decision to deport alleged Hamas militants, you see a total lack of foresight. Domestic public opinion, the reaction of the international community, the legal angle, the reaction of the Lebanese government, the response of the deportees themselves — nothing had been seriously taken into consideration.

However the Supreme Court ratified the deportations. Does this mean that legality is being observed?

The Supreme Court applies the laws passed by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. Since there is no constitution in Israel, the Court cannot rule laws unconstitutional. Existing emergency legislation allows banishment, even though the Geneva Convention quite explicitly prohibits any form of banishment or deportation of individuals and groups. The Supreme Court has for a long time claimed that the Convention does not apply to the occupied Palestinian territories.

Thus, from the point of view of international law, these deportations and those that preceded it are war crimes. However, even under existing Israeli law, the new military decree that authorized the deportations is highly problematic, in particular in that the deportees were not allowed to appeal against the decision before it was carried out. Furthermore, there were a whole series of omissions that make this decree and its application wholly illegal.

Who are the deportees?

Nobody knows, not even the authorities. Until now, and without any of them being able to appeal, the authorities have admitted to having deported 16 by accident, including a 16 year old boy. The estimate in the Occupied Territories is that more than a hundred of the deportees have had nothing to do with Hamas or the Islamic Jihad.

This is the first reason why we are demanding the right to appeal before deportation; especially when there are large numbers of people there are inevitably going to be mistakes.

As for the militants of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations, the authorities have no precise or concrete charges against them. The best proof of this came last week when a Hamas commando was arrested and admitted under interrogation that three or four of the deportees had been involved in attacks. The authorities then stated that they would do their utmost to bring them back to Israel and put them on trial. That is to say, they were deported by mistake, since they are suspected of a crime — meaning that to be deported they had first to be presumed innocent of any crime!

Why Hamas?

There are two main reasons. The first is because Hamas has recently carried out some very effective operations above all against military objectives. Neither the government nor public opinion can accept seeing the army outwitted. Secondly because a new bugbear has to be invented and Islamic fundamentalism fits the bill splendidly. For two decades the PLO was the bugbear used to frighten domestic and international public opinion. The Palestinian national movement was portrayed as a gang of terrorists motivated solely by a desire to massacre Jews wherever they might be. But this doesn't work any more. The PLO's legitimacy and image have rendered efforts to demonize it useless. Now Islamic fundamentalism will take the place of Palestinian nationalism.

But isn't it the case that Hamas was created by the Israeli occupation forces?

No, Hamas is the expression of a revolt by the youth inside the Muslim Brothers movement after the start of the intifada. The young Muslim Brothers responded to the challenge of the popular mobilization that launched the intifada in 1988 and rejected their movement's traditional anti-nationalism and opposition to militancy. Thus was born Hamas.

The Israeli ruling class felt a strong temptation to use Hamas as a counterweight to the PLO. This was Shamir and Rabin's position. However the security services were opposed to such a policy, claiming that it would backfire. For a time the authorities left Hamas alone and allowed it to increase its influence, until they came to the conclusion that they were build-

ing up an enemy that could become a real danger. This was when the decision was taken to arrest Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin and sentence him to life imprisonment.

How do you explain the line of the left ministers in the government, who have given total support to the deportations?

The notion of "left" is strictly relative in the Israeli context. Let us quote Amiram Goldblum, the spokesperson for Peace Now a few days ago on the radio: "There are in our movement leftists for whom human rights are absolute values. But not for us! Human rights are important, but the peace process is even more important."

The notion of the "peace process" is an excuse for everything as the notion of security once was. It is an alibi for every revolting act. It is on this basis that people like Shulamit Aloni and Dedi Zuker (members of the Civil Rights Movement) were won round; they argue that the Rabin government wants peace and must therefore be supported at all costs. Hamas is opposed to the "peace process" and must be destroyed whatever the cost.

What will happen now?

Everything depends on the resolve of the Palestinians, both the deportees and the PLO leadership. What happens at the Supreme Court is quite secondary. The deportations are a political act and the future of its victims will be determined by the balance of political forces. If the Palestinians are sufficiently firm and refuse to negotiate until the deportees are allowed home they can win over a substantial segment of Arab and international public opinion and force the hands of the Arab and US governments so that they compel the Israeli government to back down.

The fundamentalists will come out of this stronger.

They will be strengthened yet further if the PLO agrees to resume negotiations before the deportees are back with their families.

Will the Supreme Court cancel the deportation orders?

I have represented almost all the Palestinians deported since the end of the 1970s — that is more than 50 people — and the Supreme Court has never overruled a deportation order. ★

The Brothers' new clothes

After two decades of silence on the national question, Islamic fundamentalists in Palestine have made a noisy entry back onto the terrain. Why did this current, which upon its foundation in 1935 centrally addressed the question of Palestine, cease to do so in the 1950s; and why has this question now once again become their major preoccupation?

DALAL BIZRI

To speak of the fundamentalist current between 1927 and 1980 one must return to the Muslim Brothers. This organization which was founded in Egypt in 1927, was the core of the fundamentalist formations set up at that time in the Arab East. These formations defined themselves by their opposition or collaboration with the Muslim Brothers.

The founder of the Muslim Brothers, the Egyptian Sheikh Hassan El Banna, stressed the importance of the Palestinian question early on. In his letters to members of the movement, he advanced a domino theory which put great emphasis on the Palestinian question both from a strategic and a doctrinal point of view. This question also gave the Brothers an opportunity to break out of the confines of the Egyptian borders.

Thus, in 1935, the leadership sent two of its members, Abdel-rahman Saati and Mohammed Assad Hakim on an official mission into Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, where the first collaboration between El Hajj Amin Hussein¹ and the Muslim Brothers took place.

This lasted until the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 when the Muslim Brothers were forced to retreat to Egypt where their organization was disbanded and they underwent their first test with the assassination of their leader, Hassan Al Banna in 1949.

The 1935-1948 period saw the establishment of support committees and groups of armed volunteers for Palestine and the participation of the Muslim Brothers of the Arab East under the organizational and political leadership of the Egyptian Brothers.



Between 1949 and 1953, the Brothers' activities on this question were dispersed. The last was the 1953 campaign against the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Sinai.

Afterwards, the Palestinian question fell out of sight and the preoccupations of the Palestinian Brothers shifted towards problems far afield from their national identity. For example, until recently, they participated in the war in Afghanistan on the side of the fundamentalist fighters. The Palestinian Muslim Brothers contributed ideological and material support to the Afghan cause where many of them enrolled in the anti-government forces. Sheikh Abdallah Azzam and his sons died at Peshawar the base camp of the Afghan *Mujahedin* in Pakistan.

This Sheikh, who had been known for his membership of the Muslim Brothers, assured the logistical support of Arab groups who fought there with the Afghans.

Morality campaigns

Another example illustrates how the activities of the Palestinian Brothers and the Arab Brothers resembled each other: the "morality" campaigns, the best known example of which was known as the "croissant campaign" because of the attacks perpetrated by the Brothers in the West bank and Gaza against cafes and stores that sold alcoholic beverages, and cinemas. They hoped to force the inhabitants to renounce Western music and jewelry.

There are other factors that inspire scepticism towards the current interest shown by the Palestinian fundamentalist current in the national struggle against Israel. The most telling is the fact that the Israeli government closed its eyes to the growing activity of the Brothers in the mid-1980s believing that their competition with the PLO would weaken the Palestinian ranks.

We should also mention the material support that came from Arab countries with little desire to fight against Israel, and finally the persistence of a tendency in the Brothers that considered interest in the Palestinian question as suspect. This tendency is currently represented by Mohammed Ali Qotb, the successor of Sayyid Qotb, the leader of the Egyptian Brothers executed during Nasser's rule, who declared in 1980 that "Arabs or Muslims who are interested in the Palestinian question and make it a key element in the struggle against Zionism, imperialism and western capitalism, have short memories. They forget that the fall of the Ottoman state was the principal political objective of the destruction of the eastern gateway and of the aggression against the Islamic world."²

While it is useful to recall such facts which cast doubt on the sincerity of the fundamentalists in their fight against Israel and

1. A leading Palestinian figure in Jerusalem during the period of the British mandate. He defended the interests of the big Palestinian landowners.

2. Ziad Abu Amru, *Le Mouvement Islamique en Cisjordanie et à Gaza*, Beirut, 1989.

to show the political complexity of the politics of the Arab East, they do not detract from the importance of two essentials of the current situation.

Throwing doubt on the stated intentions of the Palestinian fundamentalists is not enough for us to know the dynamic of this movement now that it has got involved and is under pressure to maintain its legitimacy and support.

The present strength of the fundamentalist current in the Occupied Territories and the extension of its activities against the occupation are corroborated by the facts. These include the participation of the fundamentalists in the *intifada*, their victimization in the wave of arrests, including of Brothers, the banning of their movement by Israel, their slogans against Israel, their first public political attacks on the policies of Jordan's King Hussein in 1988, to the point that even the non-fundamentalist nationalist tendency has avoided confrontations or public demonstrations against them.

For the first time in the Occupied Territories, two forces lead the *intifada*: "the national movement and the fundamentalist movement; each can back up words with deeds and receives in return the support of the people".³

Why the shift?

Why have the Palestinian Brothers made such a shift? There are two main reasons. The first involves the experience under the nationalist Egyptian leader Nasser, the second relates to the specific features of the *intifada*. These two interconnected reasons were at work both in the cessation of the struggle against Israel and in its resumption.

Two aspects of the relations between the Muslim Brothers and the Nasser experience are relevant here. On one hand, the bloody struggle between the Brothers and the regime, and the other, the cultural and ideological hegemony of Nasser and the effects of this hegemony on the action and thinking of the Brothers.

After the 1952 overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy by Nasser's Free Officers, a two-year struggle for power between the Brothers and the regime ensued. Peaceful at first, it became bloody, ending in a wave of repression that saw many Brothers sent to prison.

The Palestinian Muslim Brothers were not spared from each wave of repression of the mother organization, which automatically led to a hunt for Muslim Brothers in Gaza (from 1948, Gaza was under Egyptian administration while the West Bank administration was returned to Jordan — both territories were seized by Israel in 1967).

With Nasser's victory the Brothers lost all organized existence; they no longer had branches, offices, propaganda campaigns, youth trips and so on.

Between the first wave of repression in 1954 and the second in 1965 a negative vision of Nasser developed among the Brothers which achieved its apogee in the person of Sayyid Qotb. For him, it was no longer possible to consider Nasser as anything but a competitor opposing Arab nationalism to the Brothers vision of Islamic states. Furthermore, Qotb proclaimed the impious character of *Jahiliyya* (originally the name given to pre-Islamic Arab society), but which he defined as "any society that is not devoted to the adoration of the one and only god... that is, all of today's societies";⁴

In using this term he had certainly Nasser's regime in mind, summing up his doctrine in a single slogan: "Islam or *Jahiliyya*". Later the Brothers would use this term in different and often confused ways. But what is important in the adoption of this formula is the fact that it rose together with the rise of Nasserism, whose central concern was the Palestinian and Arab national causes in opposition to the West and its support for Israel and the strangling of Arab aspirations for liberation.

The rise of Nasser's struggle against the West occurred at the same time as the repression of the Brothers and involved Nasser's ideological and cultural hegemony over all the nationalist currents in the anti-Western camp: the Communists, the Baathists and the Arab nationalists whose relations with Nasser himself changed according to political circumstances but who did not break with the Nasserian overall ideological framework.

This influence spread even to the Brothers themselves and to some of their groups outside Egypt. During the third aggression in 1956 the Brothers in Jordan, Syria and Iraq sent letters of support to Nasser.⁵

At the same time, the Brothers inevitably came under the wing of those Arab regimes most opposed to Nasser like Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The West Bank Brothers, attached to the Jordan section since 1948, had excellent relations with King Abdallah. The latter considered the Brothers as an "attractive religious movement for the youth" which contributed to "holding back the influence of communism".⁶

The relations between the Jordanian Brothers and the regime was often tense and difficult. Nevertheless, this was the only organization legally tolerated. They participated under various guises in political life, including legislative elections. Though there were concrete changes in this practice which will be dealt with below, it is impor-

tant to stress that the Brothers' justification of their alliance with the throne since the 1950s revolved around the "Nasser problem".

In this regard, Yussef Azzam remarked, "We allied ourselves with the King because if Nasser had entered Jordan and installed a friendly regime, it would have meant the liquidation of the Brothers".⁷

Saudi Arabia put itself forward as the polar opposite of Nasser and the Brothers found physical, political and economic asylum there. The Saudi kingdom and all the countries in its orbit were considered both as a source of funds unavailable in Egypt and Gaza, and as a source of political succour since they shared a common enemy. Saudi aid to the Brothers is well known.⁸

It suffices to note that through the influence of Nasserism over the hearts and consciences of all the enemies of Israel, the Muslim Brothers found themselves automatically on the other side.

In government camp

In memoirs circulated in Bahrain in the 1950s a leader of the Palestinian brothers held that "The Brothers found themselves isolated, accused, persecuted because of their hostility to Nasser. They did not hesitate to oppose the popular movement, which led them to automatically join the government camp."⁹

What arguments are there to justify giving special importance to the relations between the Brothers and Nasser on one hand, and the impact of the Nasserian experience on the other, as an explanation for the eclipse of the Palestinian Brothers inside the national movement in the 1950s, 60s and most of the 70s?

Here, three of the most salient points will be discussed. These are the founding of Fatah and the circumstances surrounding it, the self-justification of the Brothers as to their own silence in the face of the bloody repression of the Palestinian resistance by King Hussein of Jordan in 1970, and finally, the nature of the precise historical moment at which the Brothers and the fundamentalists reappeared in Palestine

3. Ibid.

4. Sayyid Qotb, *Maalem fi-t-tariq*, 1967.

5. This was a joint attack by Israel, Britain and France on Egypt in October three months after the nationalization of the Suez canal.

6. Iyad Berguti, *Les Armes et la Politique dans les territoires Palestiniens Occupés*, Centre Zahra d'Etudes et de Recherches, Jerusalem, 1990.

7. *Le Mouvement Islamiste* (op cit). On these links see Zanad El Khatib Iyad: *Les Courants Politiques en Jordanie et Texte du Pacte National Jordanien*, Amman 1991.

8. "Le Mouvement Islamiste Arabe Contemporain et la Guerre du Golfe: Esquisse de Deux Concepts Eclatés" Dalal Bizri, *Peuples Méditerranéens*, November 1991.

9. Abdallah Abu Gaza: *Avec le Mouvement Islamique dans les Pays Arabes*, Kuwait, 1986.



"As the intifada enters its sixth year..." Arrow: "Washington negotiations"

making clear their determination to fight against Israel.

The memory of the clash between the Brothers and Nasser was certainly present amongst the militants who founded Fatah. The document presented at the time by Khalil El Wazir (Abu Jihad) to the leadership of the Muslim Brothers calling for the creation of a parallel organization to fight against Israel, stipulated that "this organization will not hoist the Islamic colors in its slogans or activities".

Addressing members of the Brothers who were interested in joining him he called on them to "cast off their distinctive clothing and put on Palestinian garb". He stressed that the organization would "establish links between the Brothers and the masses and break out from the Nasserite ostracism".

Anyone who knows the background to the foundation of Fatah knows that its first leaders were members of Abu Jihad's fundamentalist organization — Slim Zaanun, Salah Khlaf (Abu Iyad), Assad Saftaoui and Yasser Arafat. This led the Egyptian Brothers to believe that this was a movement of the Brothers. In fact, Fatah's foundation created so much confusion in the ranks of the Palestinian Brothers that they forced Fatah's founders to state explicitly that they had broken with the Brothers.

Thus, when some members of the Brothers decided to found a fighting organization against Israel, they knew that they had to take their distance from their parent organization and were for a long time after accused of opportunism by the Brothers for having broken with them.

With the passage of time, it is now clear that this was a realistic and far-sighted choice resting on an analysis of the impact of Nasserism on all anti-Israeli forces.

The pretexts advanced by the Brothers in refusing to enrol under the Fatah banner in 1957 are likewise quite revealing. They

were of two kinds: the first is in contradiction with their current determination to lead the fight against Israel: "The confrontation with Israel will not be the work of a small portion of our nation, which amounts indeed to less than a thousandth part; all its forces must be mobilized for the struggle. . . we must change the situation, either by convincing our governments to change their position, whether by exercising popular pressure which will force them to change, or by setting off a popular general revolution which will bring down these governments who have capitulated to colonialism and replace them by good governments."¹⁰

This argument is in contradiction with the current readiness of the Brothers to fight since it is obvious that the conditions for the struggle posed here are no more fulfilled today than in Nasser's time.

The second type of argument in the name of which the Brothers refused to enroll in Fatah clarifies their basic position. These arguments are connected to their conception of hegemony. "The possibility that Fatah can develop and attract many members and sympathizers, implies that this popular support will not go to the Brothers and to Islam, but to the project of the liberation of Palestine". The solution is for "the Brothers to redouble their efforts in order to realize the victory of their project, to promote their movement, for if the latter triumphs, this will liberate Palestine."

We will see that the Brothers calculations were right. When the struggle against Israel was led by Nasser or by movements that were culturally and ideologically inspired by it, the Brothers refused to participate as one of its components. But, with the decline of Nasserism, in all its different aspects, the Brothers raised high the national flag and placed themselves at the head of this struggle.

As noted above, the West Bank Brothers received friendly treatment from Jor-

dan's King Abdallah, and they became part of the Muslim Jordanian Brothers.

In the framework of this alliance which became ever firmer over twenty years, until 1967, the Brothers in Jordan were "natural" allies of the crown in its fight against various leftwing forces: nationalists, communists, Baathists, Arab nationalists and Nasserites; they did not restrict themselves to giving ideological backup to this campaign, but also physically participated on several occasions. At the height of the clash of "Black" September in 1970 between the king and the anti-imperialist forces, the Brothers explained their support for the throne in terms similar to those advanced to justify their reasons for refusing to join Fatah: "The Palestinian Brothers considered that the struggle against the invaders (the Israelis), must at that stage (1970), have two prongs: on one hand, there must be resistance to the occupation inside led by the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories, with all that that involves in terms of the preparation of arms and so on; and on the other, action from the outside to attack the enemy in order to make it leave by force."

As far as Nasser in particular is concerned, they held that "the general climate in the Arab world is hostile to the Muslim Brothers because Nasser and his regime are hostile to it. In spite of the blow against this regime represented by the defeat in 1967, it retains a certain influence in Jordan and in Palestine. And all the organizations are hostile to the Brothers".¹¹

The revival of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism dates from the beginning of the 1970s; that is from the time when the failure of the Nasserian project to produce an Arab revival became obvious, coinciding with the resurrection of a fundamentalist current and its capacity to tackle most of the burning questions, even if in its own special way.

Only the Palestinian branch was absent from this process. "Hamas", the incarnation of the Brothers fighting against Israel, was founded only in 1987 and waited until August 1988 to unveil its programme. The lag was due in part to the "Nasser problem" and its consequences, in the name of which the Brothers did not participate in the struggle, and in part to the reasons for its return to the Palestinian scene.

It is useful to compare the late arrival of the Palestinian to that of the Lebanese fundamentalists. I have shown in another article that one of the specificities of the

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Dallal Bizri: "Parole Libanaise de la Langue Islamiste" in *Le Liban Aujourd'hui*, ed. CNRS, Paris 1992.

Lebanese current was related to the conditions at the time of its emergence back in 1982, that is, soon after the departure of the Palestinian factions from Lebanon following the Israeli invasion and the subsequent weakening of the Lebanese national movement.

The alternative responses which arose after the June 1967 defeat had lost the initiative in the national struggle, creating a vacuum that was soon filled by the fundamentalist current which emerged strengthened.

PLO suffers defeats

The reasons for the Palestinian delay are similar: The PLO, the popular alternative power for the Palestinians, suffered a series of defeats which led it to progressively move away from its founding political and military objectives. In addition to the departure of all its factions from Lebanon, followed by another defeat when it tried to return (Tripoli 1985) there was a split inside its biggest organization, giving rise to "Dissident Fatah" in 1985.

The PLO made a turn towards seeking a political solution, in a context that offers no guarantees, but has encouraged "tactical" prudence and tantalizing diplomacy. This retreat coincided with the rise of the Lebanese "religious resistance", especially at the beginning of 1983. It targeted the Israeli occupation forces and also the centres of the multinational forces and was characterized by an offensive and suicidal profile that had a big impact.

The operations of the "religious resistance" gave a new boost to the Palestinian fundamentalist current inside Israel, and stimulated the foundation of Palestinian organizations that resembled one of the principal Lebanese factions, Hezbollah.

The failure of Palestinian nationalism, and the growth of its fundamentalist equivalent in Lebanon underscored the local vacuum that the Palestinian fundamentalist current was to fill with astonishing rapidity, as if, during all these years, it had been preparing itself ideologically and organizationally as an alternative to the lay nationalist current.

A remark by Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, expresses this situation well: "When all the doors close, those of God open", in other words, when non-Islamic ideologies experience a leadership crisis, ideological Islam remains. The same was said in a pamphlet distributed by the Brothers in Gaza and the West Bank entitled "The Absent Truth" which held that "the currents that have failed in the course of twenty years in Palestine can today no longer claim a monopoly on the Palestinian struggle".¹³

This is the lesson drawn by all the texts written by Muslims that appeared in the Occupied Territories, all of which affirm that once the failure of the nationalist, liberal and socialist ideologies had become evident, the time had come for the return of Islam.

The fundamentalist current could not put forward its claim to be forging a new leadership without the changes created by the establishment of its hegemony over the embers of Nasserism.

The hegemony of fundamentalism has taken various forms since the start of the 1970s. In the Palestinian case the signs of this change of fortune have not been limited to the obvious institutional religious activities — religious services, libraries, book sales, universities, mosque building, collection of contributions and so on. Fundamentalist hegemony shows itself in the fertile terrain in which such activities can flourish and the popular welcome they have received. The rebirth of religious identity has been grafted onto the Palestinian national identity and religious references have increased their weight.

The marriage of the religious and national identities gave the *intifada* a particular character, revealed in many studies done in the Occupied Territories. A poll of Palestinians from the Territories found that 55% considered that religion must be part of their social life, 76% considered Islam to be their frame of reference and that 26.5% wanted a regime based on the Islamic Sharia.

Before dealing with the *intifada* as the catalyst in the resurgence of the fundamentalists, I want to make two points:

The first is that, contrary to what has subsequently been suggested, the *intifada*'s origins were entirely autonomous. Neither the PLO, nor the Arab regimes nor pro-fundamentalist forces organized the uprising, which came from the depths of the Palestinian people itself, sometimes with an amazing spontaneity shown in the extraordinary boldness of the first waves of demonstrators. An Israeli writer has described their audacity: "they do not give way in the face of gunfire, fiercely attacking tanks and trying to tear the weapons from the hands of the soldiers".¹⁴

This leads us on to a second characteristic of the *intifada*: it has seen the explosion of long suppressed despair among the Palestinians. This is to some extent the product of the setbacks of the PLO; the Palestinians of the interior, tired of counting on this "external leadership" took their fate in their own hands.

The second reason is the social despair of those who formed the first wave of the *intifada* — the deprived of the camps, especially in Gaza and in particular in the Jaba-

liya camp.¹⁵ Their first cry was "why do you not let us act? It would be better to die".

Spontaneity and despair

Paradoxically, the spontaneity and despair which sparked off the *intifada* also gave it its national character and made the "Palestinianization" of the Brothers inevitable. The paradox here is that the Brothers' see themselves in terms of the whole Islamic 'Umma while the *intifada* appeared from outside as nationalist.

All the political currents, including the fundamentalists with their global ideology, became Palestino-centric both in their grasp of the problems and in their activity. If they had not made this turn they would have lost influence.

There is ample evidence that the Palestinian fundamentalists in general are organized around the Palestinian axis.

For example, Hamas asserts in its founding charter its total opposition to all initiatives, peaceful solutions and international conferences aimed at solving the Palestinian question, since they believe that conferences cannot meet demands nor give back stolen rights. Conditions are put on positive collaboration with the PLO: including the rejection of UN resolutions 181 (1947), 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the demand for Hamas to have 40 to 50% of the seats in the Palestine National Council.

These positions can be compared with those of the Egyptian Brothers who once formed the ideological, political and even organizational leadership of all the Arab and Muslim Brothers. Today, the Egyptian Brothers have totally different positions on the Palestine question to the "Brothers" in Palestine itself. They have welcomed the various peaceful solutions, accepted the US and its regional role and they support the creation of a Palestinian state on some parcel of land.

The Egyptian Brothers have maintained good relations with Arafat and the PLO, against whom Hamas is waging a struggle for power. They recognize the PLO as the leadership of the Palestine struggle and organized a campaign of material aid in the winter of 1988.

The second item of proof that shows the centrality of the Palestinian axis, and the one I consider the most important, is related to Hamas' conception of "levels" and of "patriotism". The Hamas Charter states that "the Palestinian question exists at three levels; a Palestinian level, the Arab level

13. Le Mouvement Islamique., op cit.

14. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada*, 1991.

15. It was at the Jablaya camp that the *intifada* started on December 8, 1987.

and the Islamic level. And each level plays a role in the struggle against Zionism".

In some of Hamas' political writings, one can even read that the Palestinians represent the vanguard of the anti-Zionist struggle. This re-ordering of the circles contradicts what Hassan El Banna wrote in his celebrated theory which made Egypt the first circle or key link in the chain, "concept-rule" which made that country the leadership of the Islamic world. El Banna believed that the first step towards realizing the Islamic project was the construction of an Islamic state in Egypt "which unites the voice of the Arabs, works for their benefit and protects the Muslims of the whole planet from any aggression and propagates the word of God and his message".¹⁶

For Hamas, patriotism is a "part of religious doctrine", while for El Banna that doctrine embodied the deepest and most stable elements of patriotism and could not allow the latter to be fulfilled at religion's expense. One could also compare here the concepts of levels of nationalism used by Hamas and in the tradition of Sayyid Qotb. This latter considered national adherence as a blasphemy related to the ideology of *Jahaliyya*, the enemy of Islam..

My answer to the question posed at the start of this piece, is an answer which itself leads on to a series of other questions which do not concern Palestine alone, including:

Was the bloody struggle between Nasser and the Brothers inevitable? And does Nasser bear the sole responsibility for it or are the Brothers themselves partly responsible, or was it a product of a social and cultural structure that requires further study?

If the resurgence of Islam has taken place by the alternation of its hegemony with that of other currents; will the third wave of hegemony that succeeds that of the fundamentalists be a melange of the two or something else of which we now know little?

Will Palestino-centrism resolve the problem of alternating hegemonies (and perhaps of power) or will it exacerbate it and mark out the limits of the fundamentalist perspective and lead us back to the national question but in new forms?

In the absence of a single fundamentalist reference point, but of several connected to particular regimes with different perspectives, will the movements have to make alliances which will modify the meaning of political Islam or will they pull back from such involvement and abandon their recent aggressive dynamism? ★

Women and fundamentalism

FUNDAMENTALISM in Palestine is an offshoot of Sunni fundamentalism in the Middle East, and essentially constitutes a political party which is nourished by the real hardships suffered by the masses — while revealing the inability of other parties and organizations to respond to their distress.

MANAR HASSAN

The other political parties do not pretend to provide a comprehensive solution, applicable to every facet of communal and private life, and therefore fundamentalism, which has a ready and clear answer for every question of this sort (for example, in the field of education, in family life, inheritance, art, etc.), is received by the disappointed masses as a magical cure for all the ills of society. Its comprehensiveness captivates all of those who had despaired of even a partial solution to their difficulties.

Like fascism in the 1930s and 1940s, fundamentalism has arisen against the backdrop of a socio-economic crisis accompanied by a severe crisis of expectations, and is characterized by xenophobia, and hostility towards culture, rationalism and individualism, while its aim is the preservation of the existing social order through political change.

Barbaric regression

It constitutes an integral part of the barbaric process of regression which humanity is going through today, and in this Islamic fundamentalism is identical to its Christian and Jewish counterparts. The only solution it proposes is returning to medieval values while retaining modern technology.

Fundamentalists of all religions see themselves as "the chosen", and abhor the values of equality and democracy, asserting in so many words the inferiority of women to men, the advantage of tradition (and backwards tradition especially) over

thought, of obedience over freedom, and of belonging to the herd — be it the Islamic nation, the Jewish nation or the Christian community — over any association based on free choice.

The basic assumptions of fundamentalism are the following:

● The crisis in Arab society — which is Islamic by nature (according to the fundamentalists) and even constitutes a "naturally Islamic society", arises from its having distanced itself from the divine commandments of Islam, and from its elites having been infected with a *Jahiliyah* of western origin. Although the term *Jahiliyah* is usually thought of as meaning the pre-Islamic era, it does not refer to a specific historic period, but rather to a society ruled by "man-made" laws and not by God's laws.

● Arab society can only be saved through the struggle for an Islamic state, whose nucleus will be the Arab peoples; a state where *Shari'a* (Islamic law) will be the only law, and its interpretation will be up to the Supreme 'Ulimah, and not a secular government.

● Democracy, equality, national liberation, socialism and Communism are the agents of "cultural Imperialism", whose objective is to destroy Islam so that the materialistic, hedonistic and individualistic *Jahiliyah* may rule.

● All of the movements which adhere to the abovementioned principles (democracy and so on) are the enemies of Islam, and, therefore also of Arab society. The proof of this, from the fundamentalists' point of view, is the fact that Muslims and members of other communities work together in these movements. The struggle for these values is corrupt and rotten and must be defeated.

● The peak of Western corruption, in the eyes of the fundamentalists, is Feminism and the women's liberation movement, which combine egalitarian and democratic values and applies to women. Not only are the women who are active in these movements corrupt, licentious, and apostates whose blood it is permissible to spill, so is everyone who supports them.

Informed by these assumptions, fundamentalism works for the preservation and strengthening of the patriarchal society and its institutions; and especially of the

16. *Lettres d'Hassan El Banna*, Beirut, 1984.

patriarchal family, which constitutes the fundamental unit of the patriarchal social order based on private property. This relationship can be seen clearly in fundamentalism's demagogic call, on the one hand, for equality and for people to be satisfied with little, and on the other hand, its demands for charity and for the rich to support the poor. In other words, charity will take the place of the need to change the existing social order.

Israeli oppression, accompanied by cultural arrogance and the attempt to erase Palestinian national identity, is a permanent factor both within Israel's 1948 borders and in the territories which were occupied in 1967. It is important to point out that this oppression is also accompanied by a consistently positive attitude towards the traditional patriarchal leadership and towards patriarchal social values, and even allows the traditional leaders to autonomously enforce traditional practices on their communities, at least in the spheres of religion and family law.

Stifling of national identity

This practice definitely helps prepare the ground for the absorption and acceptance of fundamentalist ideas within Palestinian society, the expression of whose national identity is stifled by the oppressive system.

However, this is only one arm of the pincers in whose grip Palestinian society finds itself. The second arm is the behaviour of the Palestinian political parties which are active in this sector of society within the 1948 borders — who have developed a sure recipe for thwarting the national struggle: They have always confined the struggle against land-expropriation to local events; on Land Day (commemorating anti-expropriation demonstrations in 1976, during which 6 unarmed Palestinians were killed and many injured by the police), they sent their monitors to prevent — by force if need be — any expression of nationalism, such as the waving of flags, etc. . . ; and turned these days from times for giving expression to the national struggle, to days of festivities, speeches, and Coca Cola — finally burying Land Day in an impressive ceremony called "the Israeli Arab's national Holiday".

Likewise, the Palestinian leadership outside the 1948 borders, in their conception of the role of the Palestinians inside the State of Israel, confined them to the limits of the rules of the parliamentary game, assigning them the objective of putting pressure on the Israeli government from within — sometimes even avoiding calling them Palestinians. These leaders

fear the formation of a social perspective as part of the national struggle, and all cling, in one way or another, to different versions of the doctrine of stages, which places national liberation ahead of social liberation.

The struggle of the peasants whose lands were stolen, the struggle of the workers both of whom suffer from a double oppression, and of the women whose oppression is three-fold: national class, and sexual — they put off until the morning after national liberation is achieved. The surrender of these leaders to backwards tradition due to their distorted view that Islam is the most fundamental stratum of Palestinian national identity, plays directly into the hands of the fundamentalists. To the neglected masses, the fundamentalists seem more reliable, more honest, and armed with a more comprehensive outlook.

The massive influence of Hamas was actually established by the authorities, who nurtured it and allowed it to act without interference for a long time. Up until the increase in the waves of murders inside the State of Israel by Hamas members, the number of fundamentalist prisoners being held in detention camps and prisons was the lowest in relation to the size of the organization, compared to the other organizations. Except for Sheikh Yasin, no Hamas leader has been jailed.

The Islamic Movement inside the 1948 borders rated a similar nurturing, if with different conditions. They were allowed to set up a cable TV station for the dissemination of their opinions, the publication of their newspapers meets no interference, unlike those of Abna' El-Balad and other nationalist groups, which are closed anew every morning.

In retrospect it is clear that from a strategic point of view, fundamentalism did justify the hopes which the Israeli government pinned on it, when it cultivated Hamas as an opposition to the national liberation movement. Although indeed, from a tactical point of view, Hamas did join the struggle against the occupation in the territories occupied in 1967, mainly in order not to lose its influence on the youth, all of whom supported the objective of national liberation.

However, the fundamental motivation for their joining in was to give the uprising — which was by nature a tremendous democratic process, opposing all forms of oppression — the direction desirable to both fundamentalism and the Israeli authorities. The murder of Jews just because of their Jewish ancestry led to the opposition of liberal groups within Israeli society to the Palestinian liberation movement. Fundamentalism's distorted values, especially in regards to the status of women and of women's liberation within the national liberation process, were adopted by the strike committees of the other Palestinian organizations.

Murder of women

Tens of women were murdered as alleged "collaborators" just because their personal behavior was not compatible with the norms of the patriarchal tradition. The prevention of political activism by women, the return of the veil, and the proclamation of the culture of mourning brought about the decline of the mass movement, and its utilization as a tool in aid of Israeli oppression. Thus the tremendous revolutionary process was turned into a social counter-revolution.



Logo of women's organization, Al-Fanar

Just as Hamas has demonstrated its pragmatic character, its populism and chameleon-like traits — which has allowed it to bask in reflected glory from the struggle for national independence, despite its hostility towards all of the nationalist movements, so has the Islamic Movement within the 1948 borders succeeded in taking on the coloring of democracy and equality ostensibly in response to the masses' aspirations towards these values, but with the aim of thwarting them and emptying them of all content.

The movement's fundamental objective is to gain the Israeli regime's recognition of their right to rule culturally over Palestinian society within the State of Israel, through the strengthening of the patriarchal family and of the values of backwards tradition, along with complete separation between Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus, for example, the Islamic movement established Muslim soccer, judo and karate teams, which are closed to non-Muslim Palestinians. And thus it did away with liquor stores in areas where it won control of municipal councils, and above all, they brought in separation of boys and girls in the schools in these areas.

The services they have rendered to the Israeli authorities are many and varied. Their leader, Sheikh 'Abdallah, declared that it is permissible to give up some of the land of Palestine to the Jews, and he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Madrid Conference. But with characteristic Jesuitical hypocrisy, he also defines those who oppose it as good Palestinian patriots. He also announced publicly his rejection of the Fatwa (Islamic religious legal pronouncement) legitimizing the killing of members of the Palestinian delegation.

But his primary service to the Israeli authorities is in preserving a policy of apartheid in accordance with the fundamentalists' original ideology of "separate development". He opposes any joint activities of Jews and Arabs, including meetings between Arab and Jewish school-children, which have been carried out in the sparsest manner, mainly as lip service to a commitment to democracy. Thus he aids the apartheid regime by not compelling it to employ force in its efforts to impose apartheid.

An additional contribution to the authorities took the form of an obstruction of the founding, during the last election campaign, of a unified Arab party. In August of 1991 the Sheikh declared the necessity for a unified Arab party with the objective of weakening Rakah (the Communist Party) whose ranks include both

Jewish and Arab members. Later on, when it became clear that an Arab party would not be able to arise without the inclusion of Christian Palestinians, the Islamic Movement desisted from supporting it, and even announced that it viewed Shas, a Jewish fundamentalist party, as preferable. The campaign of whispers and defamation, which the fundamentalists carried on, blocked every attempt to unify the parties led by Mi'ari and Darawshe, reopened the nationalistic debate with Rakah, and resulted in more than half of the Arab electorate supporting nationalistic, Jewish parties.

We have seen that on many questions, the fundamentalist movement — because of its populist character and its being nourished like a tape-worm by the real hardships of the masses — is prepared to bypass its "sacred" principles, and to cultivate a pragmatic policy. Its rejection of nationalism does not prevent its support for elections, and its rejection of the principle of national equality does not stop it from utilizing this argument when the masses are striving towards it. The principle of rejection of luxuries does not prevent it from financing its newspapers by publication of advertisements for western consumer goods such as luxurious automobiles and men's underwear, and its hatred of sport, as representing "barbaric western values", doesn't prevent it from setting up Islamic soccer leagues.

No compromise on women

However, on the question of women's liberation and equality, the fundamentalist movement is not prepared to compromise at all. It applies its claim that the status of women in Islam is the most correct and the best ("provided she knows her place") unhesitatingly and uncompromisingly. For them, the women's liberation movement is the central enemy, because the entire patriarchal society, whose existence fundamentalism has gone to the defense of, is built upon the oppression of women.

There is something ironic in the fact that, outside of the feminist movements themselves, the only movement which daily devotes hours and hours to discussions, debates, decisions, summations and the setting on policy on the question of women is the fundamentalist movement. No issue occupies so much space in the consciousness of its activists as the question of women: their character, behaviour, dress, traits, and especially their power to tempt and seduce.

This fact is so obvious that even a blind person can see that for the fundamentalists — that is, for the patriarchal

society — this is a life and death matter. The centrality of the issue of women's liberation in Palestinian society — as in Arab society as a whole — must make it clear that the question of backwardness versus progress, democracy versus despotism, and liberation versus oppression are directly connected to that of women's liberation, and anyone who disregards this fact is, in objective terms, an ally of the Islamic fanatics. Therefore, there cannot be any compromise or armistice between the movements for women's liberation in Arab society, and fundamentalism, whatever the circumstances may be.

Lies, deceit, gossip and defamation of character, theoretical distortion, coercion and even violence are the weapons which fundamentalism employs against women — who are fed up with their oppression. Thus it rests upon characteristic male anxiety, while nurturing and reinforcing it. We mentioned earlier fundamentalism's victory in banishing women from the public and political spheres in the course of the uprising, but even "Al-Fanar", an organization which was founded a year and a half ago in Haifa, has rated not a few defamatory, mud-slinging sermons in Islamic Movement mosques inside the state of Israel.

The Al-Fanar organization, whose perspective is based upon the basic assumption that Palestinian national liberation will not be truly achieved without women's liberation and equality, and which was the first to expose the connection between the backward traditionalism of Palestinian society and the authorities' support for it, quickly became the focus of attacks by the fundamentalist fanatics. The struggle which Al-Fanar initiated against the murder of women because of what is called "desecration of family honor", the organization's opposition to marriage between close relatives — which leads to the birth of retarded children and victims of other genetic disorders, its struggle against forced marriage, which constitutes rape with the blessing of tradition and the religious establishment, and its denunciation of the barbaric custom of circumcision of Bedouin girls by the severing of the clitoris — seemed to the fundamentalists to be the most terrible threat.

Feminists under siege

The Islamic Movement's spokesmen proclaimed that there is no place for such an organization and its claims. But worst of all, other organizations and parties did not rise to the defense of this young feminist movement, and some of them even joined in the attacks on it. This state of

things calls for clarification and analysis, as we must not simply address the evil, enviousness, or stupidity of various organizations and parties. This phenomenon has extremely deep social, cultural and political roots.

As mentioned, all components of Palestinian society suffer from a variety of forms of oppression and discrimination. Besides the concrete features of the oppression, the Israeli regime practices a cultural *selectia*, whose objective is the erasure of Palestinian national identity, something which finds expression beginning with the curricula in the schools, continuing through the mass media, and culminating in the prohibition of any form of national expression or symbolism, from the censorship of nationalist poetry to the forbidding of the Palestinian flag.

Thus Palestinian society is pushed into viewing its past as the true expression of its nationalism and tradition as a fundamental component of this past. And so nostalgia becomes part of the Palestinian national ethos and any criticism of it constitutes a serious injury to the nation. The Palestinian feminists' criticism of the patriarchal tradition and of the oppression of women, which perpetuates the society's backwardness, creates a cognitive dissonance for all the political streams and most of the intellectuals. They are worried that the disclosure of their society's weaknesses and backwardness will be used as ammunition by the enemies of the nation,

and so they attempt to silence and eradicate it.

Therefore, even though some of them declare their opposition to fundamentalism, they see it as a legitimate ally — with principles — unlike those who hang their dirty washing in public. Thus for example, former Knesset member Mi'ari claimed that he advises women (members of Al Fanar) "not to attack the issue of murder of women in such a blunt and strident manner, but to be more self-restrained". When asked what his attitude was towards the fundamentalist movement, which attacks members of Al Fanar and slanders them, he answered: "they have a principled position and they are expressing it".

Guilt and illusions

Against this backdrop the fundamentalists are succeeding in spreading feelings of guilt and illusions among all the organizations and political currents which cling to tradition, with claims that the masses are totally religious. These groups are dragged along by the fundamentalists in their struggle against the women's liberation movement.

The nationalists, for example, who know about fundamentalism's general opposition to nationalism, try to appease it and placate it, by banishing the issue of equality and liberation for women from the programme for national liberation and

by postponing addressing it until judgement day.

The democratic liberals make their support for the struggle for women's liberation and equality conditional upon women's observance of tradition and patriarchal values. But worst of all are those leftists who attempt to get close to the fundamentalism because of its critique of the corruption of the regime and its rhetoric about "cultural imperialism".

They are exchanging the democratic struggle against real imperialism for the illusion that their allies in the struggle against imperialism are the fundamentalists — that is, the guardians of the existing social order. And in their awareness of the fundamentalists' sensitivities regarding the subject of women, they view giving in on this issue as a small price to pay for unifying the ranks.

Of course, all the entreaties of the vacillators will not change fundamentalism's attitude towards them, but will only increase the pressure on them. The fundamentalists will not accept the values of the Arab democratic movement even if its leaders pray five times a day and participate in Friday prayers at the mosque, nor will they accept the Palestinian nationalism of George Habash who opens his speeches "in the name of Allah the merciful and forgiving" from the Koran. These gestures will only result in adding contempt to the hatred which the fundamentalists already harbour towards these movements.

It turns out that the strength of fundamentalism is based, not on the religiosity of the masses, but on their sufferings which are the outcome, primarily, of the hesitancy, cowardice and incompetence of the leadership of the so-called political parties be they leftist, nationalist, reformist or pan-Arabist. However, fundamentalism's infiltration into the political realm reflects its inability to provide a social alternative for the masses, and its being drawn to make only those changes in the power structure which have impact upon its religious concepts as well. Some examples:

- In Jordan, King Hussein chose not to directly confront the fundamentalists, but to include them in the government. Within a year, the fundamentalist ministers succeeded in getting themselves hated by the masses, and especially by the urban middle classes. Their demand that women should not be given drivers' licenses and the forbidding of fathers' attendance at their daughters' graduation ceremonies caused them to lose popularity and made it possible for the king to expel them from the government without any public interest.



● In Um al-Fahm and Kafr Qasm (inside the 1948 borders), the fundamentalists won a majority of the votes in the 1988 elections and became the omnipotent municipal rulers. They abolished coffee houses and prevented the sale of hard liquor, separated boys and girls in the schools and compelled women to wear head coverings. The result was that in the 1992 elections the "strongholds of Islam" were the only places where the percentage of votes for the Communist Party rose — in Um al-Fahm by 75% and in Kafr Qasm by 64%. This was clearly a protest vote against the fanatics.

● Hamas' vociferous opposition to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians is nothing but a cover for its true objectives. Hamas proved this by placing as a condition for its joining the PLO, that it be allocated 45% representation in PLO institutions and presumably in the future it would support autonomy on condition that it be given a monopoly on education which would be run according to Hamas' precepts.

Control over education

The Islamic Movement within Israel also aspires to control over the Arab educational system and media. However, it is afraid of making these demands openly

out of concern that its alliance with the Jewish religious establishment in the Israeli government would make them into collaborators in the eyes of the masses. They will let others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them — to struggle for "cultural autonomy" for the Arabs in Israel and then, in exchange for their support, they will demand control of education and media in the Arab sector.

● As a political party, Sunni fundamentalism has reacted in an interesting manner towards the successes of the Shi'ite fundamentalists whom, by the way, they perceive as heretics. The success of Hezbollah in Lebanon in holding out against the Israelis and even causing it casualties, caused "Islamic Jihad" for the first time to adopt methods and organization similar to those of the Lebanese Shi'ites. In July of this year, Hamas called upon (Sunni) Muslims to observe the fast of 'Ashura, the most holy fast in Shi'ite Islam and to give it present-day meaning — as Khomeini had advised in his book *Islamic Government*.

This is not of course, an indication of Shi'ite religious influence on the Sunni Hamas movement, but rather of veneration for Iran, which has succeeded as standing her ground as an Islamic state. Likewise, this is an inevitable consequence of Saddam Hussein's failure to establish him-

self as Sunni Islam's warrior for the liberation of the Arab nation. His bankruptcy in the eyes of the Arab masses highlights the populist basis of fundamentalism and its opportunism.

As we have seen, any attempt to compromise with fundamentalism and to reach a state of co-existence with it is doomed to failure, whenever such attempts are made on the erroneous basis that religion has a central role in public, political and national life.

Unless feminist, democratic, socialist and even liberal organizations do not adopt the fundamental attitude that one's religion is a completely personal matter, the confusion will continue and the fundamentalists will go on gathering strength out of the confusion and hesitation to act of those who oppose them verbally. Because Arab society in Palestine, as in the Arab East as a whole, is built upon the patriarchal tradition, the question of women's liberation becomes the cornerstone of the process of liberation in general. Feminist strategy in Arab society must move along the following axes:

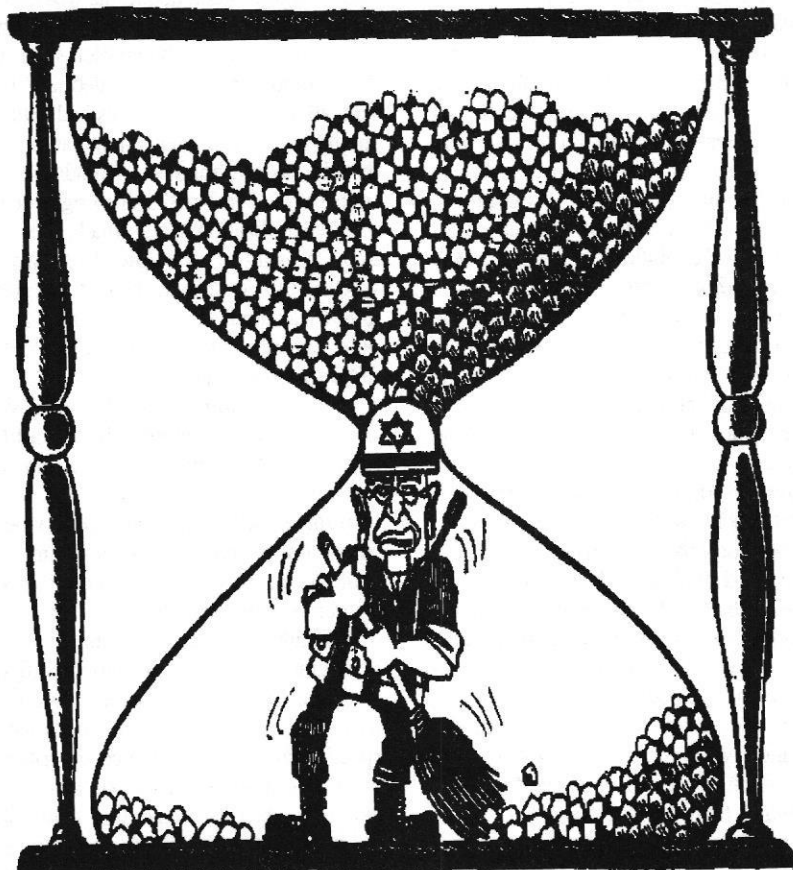
● Absolute independence of the feminist organizations, both from other political organizations and from their programmes, while perceiving women's liberation as a central democratic task in the process of national liberation;

● A struggle for the total separation of religion and state. This separation involves giving believers of all religions the freedom to behave according to their own views, but dismantling all state-affiliated religious institutions. Only the total abolition of state involvement in the choosing of kadis, rabbis and priests and in the payment of their salaries; the total uprooting of religion from the educational system, turning the clergy out to make their living from the contributions of believers, will make possible in Palestine and in the other states of the region, of a democratic, pluralistic and progressive society.

Civil marriage and civil family law are the central facet of legislation required for equality of women.

● One cannot carry on a debate with fundamentalism because it totally rejects a critical or rational approach, such as the attempt to understand society through its material basis or to understand human actions as the outcome of needs or impulses.

We must define fundamentalism according to its precepts: as denying human rights and freedom, equality and democracy — and we must struggle to remove the medium which allows its parasitic growth: hardship, ignorance, inequality and poverty. ★



The legacy of October

"WHAT is your attitude to the October Revolution in 1917 in Russia and what impact has it had on your life? What possibilities did it open up and why were the positive possibilities not realized? What is the relevance of that revolution today?"

These were the questions debated at a public discussion attended by about 800 people at Berlin's Humboldt University on October 25, 1992 organized by IV's German sister publication *Inprekor*.

Participating were: Gregor Gysi, who recently became leader of the parliamentary group of the German PDS (successor to the former ruling East German Communist party) after resigning from the position of party leader; revolutionary Marxist thinker Ernest Mandel; and Oskar Negt, a well-known "1968 generation" left-Socialist intellectual and professor at the University of Hannover.



GYSI: One's feelings about a historic event is always somewhat complicated, particularly when you are looking at it in an emotional way. Still I stick to the words of Rosa Luxemburg, who once said about Lenin, Trotsky, and the others: "They are the only ones so far, who have the right to say: 'I dared'". We have to learn once more to dare, and not let ourselves be put off, even though it looks as if it doesn't pay to take a chance.

But my attitude to this question is a double one: what interests me in the October Revolution is both its emancipatory promise, and the fact that no real emancipation developed from this. While the French Revolution left behind a series of moral categories, which will keep the intellectual world busy for decades to come, I am today uncertain about what (for example) moral categories the October Revolution has left behind.

I think that the October Revolution has also promoted a false approach to the question of power. Now the interpretation of the October Revolution is being provided by the victors: some present it as nothing more than a coup d'état, forgetting the concrete conditions in which people in Russia were living at that time. One can never morally convict people for wanting to liberate themselves; that is their legitimate right, even if they fail in this attempt.

Negt: Bourgeois democracy in Germa-

ny is also a very late occurrence; it took centuries to break through. Could things go quicker, when you promise to abolish the rule of one human being over another and realize socialist democracy?

Mandel: Comrade Gysi said that the emancipatory tendencies in the October Revolution partially failed. I would not put it that way. Developments in Soviet Russia from 1921, or 1923 or 1928 onwards were not the product of the October Revolution, but the product of a counter-revolution, which you cannot blame on the leaders of the Russian Revolution, in the same way as you cannot blame the crimes of the Napoleonic wars on those who made the French Revolution. Those who carried out the October Revolution were killed by the instigators of the counter-revolution. It is wrong to lump together the victims and the culprits.

Gysi: I did not say why the emancipatory tendencies were not realized. In Mandel's opinion this is because of a counter-revolution. I think this idea is too simplistic, because in order to be able to launch their attack the counter-revolutionaries also had to have their roots inside the framework of the October Revolution. That, at least in the period immediately after the revolution, was related to the power structures which depended on individuals and over which there was little control.

The October Revolution gave a big opportunity to distribute power in a quite

different fashion, to achieve decentralization and extensive popular participation. Rosa Luxemburg touched upon this question in her critique of the October Revolution. The discussion about this was absolutely insufficient, including in Lenin's time.

Naturally one of the problems was that the revolution remained isolated in Russia, with all the consequences this had. But one should also ask to what extent can one say that the historic mission of feudalism had been fulfilled in Russia, creating a degree of industrialization which made the bourgeois revolution possible. I ask myself whether the promise of the October Revolution was at all possible to realize at that point and under those conditions, or if its failure was inevitable.

Negt: We must remember that Marx never imagined that socialism could be built alongside capitalism. Socialism was supposed to secure the results that capitalism threatened to dissipate. Only when it sprang out of capitalism in its mature form could a real advance, in the sense of socialist democracy, take place.

Socialist democracy contains not less democracy, criticism and public participation, but more. This was so obvious for Marx that he could not imagine abolishing specific civil liberties, which he criticized even social democrats for doing, for example when they exercised censorship. Lenin also saw himself as a genuine successor and developer of orthodox Marxist

theory as opposed to the Second International.

The Russian Revolution was primarily a product of the First World War. It represented the popular longing to break free from the war. Lenin and Trotsky formulated a practical programme for this: Peace now! All power to the Soviets! All land to the peasants! A domestic and international programme in one.

It was at the same time a programme for democratization and modernization of Russian society, in which now quite contrary mechanisms — grounded in Russia's backwardness — were growing ever stronger. Taylorism was adopted out of necessity, not inclination, because as Lenin insisted the social subjects lacked the work morality that it took 400 years to achieve in Europe.

This meant that the party took on functions quite different from those assumed by a normal socialist party: it became the organizing centre of society and had socializing function as regards labour discipline. The party thus took on more than its health could bear, no matter what Lenin intended. Perhaps we should see the rise of Stalin not simply as an accidental deviation from this line of development.

The question of the Stalinist degeneration is more complex. We need to make clear the internal causes of the degeneration of the revolution and learn from this. The liquidation of public participation and independent trade unions — which are social organizations which must also deal with the state and not only the "infant school" of socialism — shows that there was no real advance here, no "going beyond" (*Aufhebung*) in the dialectical sense; only the negative moment of liquidation took place.

Mandel: I agree that the question of power is central to assessing the destiny of the Russian Revolution. But I have a different approach to this question.

Marx's greatest contribution to revolutionary theory lies in one central concept: the liberation of the working class can only be accomplished by the working class itself. We have to take this literally: the working class. To someone who says "but look at this working class — it will take it a long time" my reply would be "okay, then it will have to take a long time. But there is no other possibility. To replace the working class with some other subject leads to disaster."

This is the main lesson that we have to draw, not only from the historical impasse of Stalinism and post-Stalinism, but also from the historical impasse of social democracy. Stalinists, social democrats, and all kinds of dogmatists and sectarians say the

same thing: The workers are incapable of emancipating themselves. They are backward, corrupted, declassé, integrated. But if this is true then emancipation is impossible.

Here the critics of the October Revolution have a problem: the conditions in Russia were not mature. But who began socializing the enterprises? This was not due to a decision in the Central Committee. This was done by the workers themselves, very often against the will of the party leadership. What was one then supposed to do? To repress the workers and ban them from doing it? That was the choice.

The most positive feature of the Bolshevik party, the democratic Bolshevik party of 1917-20, is that it did not oppose these spontaneous processes in the working class. Trotsky predicted from



1906 onwards what common sense also maintains: that when the workers are the rulers on the streets, and in the state, they will try to express this change in the relationship of forces in the enterprises as well. That is unavoidable under non-repressive conditions.

Negt.: We should once more reconsider the conception of the working class as subject. The notion of the subject is an idealist, not a materialist one; it is a transcendental notion, which has already acted before the individuals who comprise it act. But we should not treat Central Committees or Politbureaus as transcendental subjects. That is one of the lessons to be learned from the deformation of the October Revolution.

I don't believe that the October Revolution showed the only way for emancipation. The results of the French Revolution must also be considered anew; that revolution addressed the human rights dimension, though it still excluded a problem which is even more pressing for us, that of social equality.

There are results of the bourgeois political revolutions, which have to be included in the emancipatory stock of history, for example decentralization and division of power. This also includes the independence of the courts.

One cannot any more base oneself on a subject which, moreover, has changed so much. The working class of the 1920s and that of today are very different. To get in touch with them one must also take into account the different milieus of the workers. You don't reach them with revolutionary pathos. You can't give them an identity which is not theirs.

I think that the decisive reason for the breakdown of "really existing socialisms" was their lack of a subject. By this I mean that such an organization of society cannot only organize and appeal to the already emancipated interests, but that it must also try very hard to organize a process of education that reaches the alienated interests. Involvement must for us mean that people learn to walk on their own feet, as Rosa Luxemburg put it in the *Critique of Social Democracy*. Processes of self-regulation are necessary. I am not sure anymore whether the party-form is appropriate to deal with this problem or whether it requires movements of a compound character, which could participate more intensively in the things that are going on in the population and also in the working class.

Mandel: The working class as a historical subject is a materialist, not philosophical, category.

It has been defined — by Plekhanov, Lenin, Luxemburg, Engels — as those who are under the economic compulsion to sell their labour power. In practically all industrialized and semi-industrialized countries this category includes the overwhelming majority of those active in the economy — in some countries more than 90%.

Any other definition is idealistic and leads to the weirdest conclusions: in this way the Maoists once renamed the majority of the existing working class a bourgeoisie, on the grounds that they thought in a "bourgeois" way, and justified the repression of this working class as repression of the bourgeoisie. I don't subscribe to this kind of thing, and it has nothing to do with revolutionary pathos.

It is absolutely true that there are great fissures among the consciousness of different layers of the working class. The strategic conclusion flowing from this is that the main task of socialists is to bring about working class unity in action. When that has been accomplished 99% of what is necessary has been accomplished. ★

Hegemony and power

THE leftwing Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador is currently involved in negotiated attempts to end the civil war in that country. This process involves a programme of land redistribution and of a reorganization of the country's police and military forces, implicated in bloody attempts to suppress popular movements over past decades.

IV correspondent Eric Toussaint met Mario Lopez, a leader of the FMLN in Europe last October to talk about the progress of the reforms and the FMLN's view of their significance.

INTERVIEW

COULD you give us your assessment of the agreement?

The agreement has two main aspects: demilitarization and land distribution.

On the first, the most significant element is that of the abolition of the National Guard and the Interior Ministry police, although many of the personnel have transferred to the National Police along with personnel from the elite battalions. The Public Security academy, the creation of the new Civil Police, has started to function. However, the matters relating to the purge of the armed forces have not been dealt with.

The other delicate aspect of the agreement is over land distribution. No satisfactory agreement has been reached on this and the two sides have returned to the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) to work on a compromise. This foresees a significant transfer of land. However, the available sums have been reduced while the fixed price per unit is way behind the real market price, being based on the price of the least productive land. There is a problem because the agreements themselves envisage the purchase at market prices and that the sale is voluntary.

In the irrigated zones, the prices demanded by the owners are significantly different from those envisaged by the UN and agreed to by both parties. The same kind of problem does not exist with regard to state land.

Is the United States ready to provide funds for land purchases?

It has expressed its determination to see these purchases carried through, but has not said that it will help. Furthermore, the donors such as the AID and the EEC have expressed their preference for transfer in individual lots, of an average of five *manzanas* according to the quality of the soil. If there is no reaction to this, the measures will increase the parcellization of land. Meanwhile the big properties, the latifundios, will be preserved, in particular owing to article 105 of the constitution which legalized land holdings of up to 245 hectares.

Thus the polarization of land holding into the very big and very small will be increased. There is a risk that the small lots will be bought up once again by the big owner. What is needed therefore is to find ways of going beyond survival to development.

How are these land holdings organized?

We need to see if it is possible to establish broader productive structures based on agreements between the beneficiaries of the transfers. The UN's proposals permit this. The key factor for the development of adequate forms of organization is the consciousness of the new owners.

If the money can be found, the amount of land to be transferred could allow posi-

ve developments. The agreements envisage an increase in the budget for agriculture and small and medium sized businesses.

Is there a danger that the death squads will reappear?

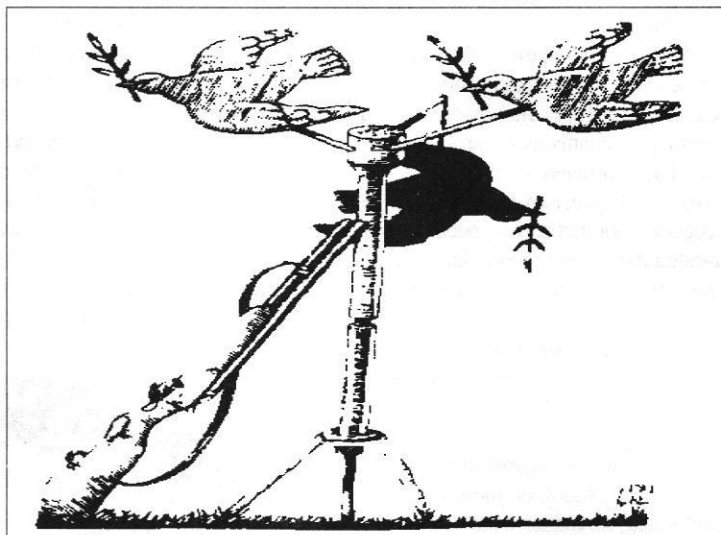
The agreement includes measures on demilitarization and civilian control over the military, but this remains a burning question. The far right is making provocative statements that have been swallowed by the government. The president's press officer has accused the FMLN of preparing a wave of attacks against private enterprises and members of the government, including against some of its own members.

These statements coincided with the appearance of far right publications and the reappearance of the Maximiliano Hernando Martinez squadron that was responsible for the assassination of FDR members. It remains to be seen if this death squad is linked to the armed forces or security forces.

Could this be a signal by a faction in the military?

A step up in the dirty war cannot be ruled out. There have already been attacks: a student, a former fighter of the FMLN, was captured, tortured and then abandoned on the outskirts of San Salvador.

At the same time, the government has tried to keep the Altalacal battalion in operation. This was responsible for crimes and should be dissolved. Its members have been



Government breaks agreement

ON December 15, 1992, the government of the Central American country of El Salvador, headed by President Cristiani of the rightwing ARENA party and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) formally ended an armed conflict that started in the 1970s. On that day the FMLN's 8,875 guerilla fighters officially laid down their arms. A cycle of the revolution has ended but the horizons are cloudy.

Some statements justifying the agreements barely hide the extreme difficulty in which the Salvadoran revolutionaries find themselves. While the FMLN has won significant concessions, the fact remains that the backbone of the dictatorship remains unbroken. An unfavourable international situation had a decisive impact on the FMLN after the failure of its all-out offensive of November 1989.

Only two weeks after the disarmament, the FMLN found out that Cristiani had decided to postpone the completion of the most important concessions imposed on the government's army — the purge promised for 1993 — until May 1994, two months after the March 1994 elections which the left hopes to win.

In fact, it appears that at the start of 1993 some nine high-ranking officers named by the UN report as implicated in crimes against civilians are to be promoted, while only two (out of a total of 224 officially accused of serious human rights violations) are to go into retirement. The meaning is clear: if the left wins, the military hierarchy will be ready to intervene.

The FMLN's response was to halt the destruction of the anti-aircraft missiles still in its possession. At the same time, it has continued the negotiations, calling on the United Nations and the United States to put maximum pressure on Cristiani. Critics on the left have questioned the fact that the FMLN is prepared to negotiate on the issue of the purge. The High Council of the Jesuit University (UCA) has criticized the FMLN for its willingness to negotiate on a matter which concerns the whole of the country's population, who have been victims of the army's systematic brutality for many decades.

While the end of the armed conflict has meant a lessening of repression, real changes have yet to occur and the main issue for most of the population is growing poverty, rising crime and mounting unemployment. The Salvadoran people cannot wait for a possible left election victory in March 1994; immediate measures to alleviate their sufferings are required.

The interview published here, which took place in October 1992, six weeks before the FMLN laid down its weapons, provides a wide-ranging view of the size of the difficulties and sets out a more sober view of the effects of the agreement than are to be found in statements by such leaders of the FMLN as Ferman Cienfuegos and Joaquim Villalobos — *Eric Toussaint*. ★

presented as national heroes and the government has halted the dissolution of this elite battalion. And the Belloso battalion which has been dissolved has reappeared in the National Police.

In general there has been an attempt to criminalize FMLN cadres and we have to ask how far the Cristiani government has been implicated in this. There seem to be far right connections. Furthermore the vice-president has made clear his rejection of the new timetable. Is this the government's position or that of an opposition faction within it? In any case, opponents of the agreement have gained new confidence.

The 1994 elections have great importance for the FMLN. In a poll published in Envio, the far right Arena party would get a good score, since the agreements are seen as its victory,

while the Christian Democrats will suffer. The FMLN would be the second largest group in parliament.

Our aim is clean and free elections. The 1994 elections will be the first after the civil war and will involve three votes: for local mayors and councillors, for parliament and for president.

We are taking the local elections very seriously. Local government is the closest to the masses. There are two opposing policies on offer here: that of the government, which wishes to introduce neo-liberal principles, and ours: we want local government marked by participation and a pro-development approach.

In the parliamentary elections, it would be a good thing if all the forces from the centre to the left win a majority in order to satisfy a number of popular demands. Coalitions could be formed to this end.

Just to mention some themes: the constitution leaves open a number of questions such as participatory democracy and forms of popular consultation such as referenda; the issue of Central American unity is not addressed.

Another important question: article 105 of the constitution upholds the oligarchy's grip on the land and guarantees the existence of latifundios. A reform of this could be carried out in the assembly. We also need to take up the 92 laws affected by the peace agreement, those which remain to be negotiated and those that are insufficient. The assembly would thus face important legislative tasks.

Strategy for the presidential elections has not yet been decided. In my view we should aim at a coalition between a number of opposition parties.

If we can do well in the local elections, if there is a centre left majority in the assembly and if the presidency is removed from the hands of ARENA we will have the conditions for consolidating the changes underway since the negotiations. But this is dangerous ground and a new challenge for the left in El Salvador.

I have just read an interview with an FMLN leader, Ferman Cienfuegos where he talks of the first negotiated, orderly and planned revolution which will show the falsity of "European" schemas about the need to dismantle the state. What do you think?

This is in fact a revolution; it needs to be consolidated. It could on the other hand be stifled, go forward or back. We are in a period of conflict that will be decisive for the history of our country.

Why do you talk of a revolution rather than of a revolutionary process that remains unfinished?

This is a revolutionary process that has not been finished, but with a series of accumulated factors that stimulate further advance. I do not think that the revolution has already happened. On the contrary, I think that the present period is even more difficult than the war from the point of view of consolidating this revolution.

Why do I say that there are revolutionary changes? If we look at Salvadoran society we can see important changes, first of all on the ideological level. New values are being affirmed sometimes in contradiction to traditional values. Let me give some examples:

during the war political and ideological pluralism were practised. The unity of the FMLN itself is an expression of political pluralism; even if we sometimes thought that the FMLN was a monolithic bloc in political and ideological terms, in fact a convergence was taking place that established new rules of functioning. The FMLN's development was a rule-governed process including permanent debate.

If, furthermore, we look at the FDR-FMLN alliance and the FMLN-Democratic Convergence alliance and other informal but real alliances of class and sectoral interests, we find a broad spectrum including participation by sectors of the church.

Another value is solidarity. Of course, this is less developed but it found embryonic organizational expression during the war. Examples are the forms of self-management developed in the refugee camps in Honduras and in the colonies for reintegrating returned refugees and displaced persons.

In opposition to this, the neo-liberal model emphasizes individualism. There is a struggle underway, but the principle of solidarity is gaining ground.

At the same time, there is the formation of COPPAZ, where all the political parties are represented in the Economic and Social Forum, or the opening up of the municipalities.

Nonetheless, Cienfuegos' assertion that it is not necessary to dismantle the state apparatus seems to overlook the lessons of experience that the state apparatus ensures the continuation of the capitalist system in El Salvador.

From the institutional point of view, we should note that some 92 laws are to be changed as a result of the peace agreement, including the electoral, labour and agricultural codes.

At the economic level, new relations of production have made an embryonic appearance, with elements of self-management and of a popular economy. One can say that the emergence of such a sector, surrounded by a capitalist economy, does not change much, but I see there the germ of something new. Let us not forget that about 10% of the national territory is to be transferred to the poor.

There also exists a significant social base that offers prospects for further advance. We have to find how to stabilize this and develop it.

In my view, the FMLN has to tackle three problems. The first is that of the transformation of the FMLN itself, which has now to do more than lead a war.

The second is to bring in the widest possible range of social sectors. The changing of the 92 laws cannot be the sole responsibility of COPPAZ or the Democratic Convergence's deputies. We need to bring in professional sectors, the universities and research centres. At the moment these sectors are totally absent from the political scene.

At the same time it is mainly leadership groups, not the rank-and-file whose interests are actually at stake, that have been involved in the Economic and Social Forum.

How do you explain this?

For the moment the media remains in the hands of the supporters of the old society. Our own media are very weak. The popular organizations have not yet got down to education. The University of Salvador remains lethargic.

The third and final range of problems is that of natural, human and financial means. First we have to properly manage the resources we have and put them to use in a coherent project, then we have to develop these resources.

So, is this a socialist revolution?

Socialist revolution, transformation of capitalism; it is both at the same time. Changes are being introduced into the existing capitalist system and this opens the way for different relations.

Furthermore, there is a void in terms of the socialist project. After the collapse of the Soviet model, the left has to reconstruct one. We have some signposts — new values such as solidarity and pluralism. But these are not yet articulated into a system.

There are two important things to be taken into account here: the revolution must develop the productive forces and it must do this on the basis of new relations between producers. What is happening in El Salvador must be looked at in terms of these two levels.

Here, the forces of the old order have state power at their disposal, while at the international level outside powers interfere in our country, limiting the power even of the state. They dictate policy and apply economic pressure. The problems of payment of the foreign debt and of getting new credit are means of pressure used by the IMF, the World Bank and AID to restrict our room for manoeuvre.

The other problem is that there is no longer a rearguard for the left. I would say that such a rearguard does exist, not geographical in nature but rooted in the populations. It is a question of popular sectors, social and political forces that are being for-

med throughout the world. This rearguard is currently dispersed, and often not even aware of itself.

The level of productive forces is a block. But there are possibilities, for example the current technological revolution, and a certain development of the conditions of access to the technology which are no longer the exclusive preserve of powerful economic interests. The new technologies do not always need big investment but knowledge and educated people. On the other hand, institutions have emerged that contribute in one way or another to transfer knowledge to popular sectors. There is thus room for the development of productive forces available to the popular sectors.

There is also space opening up in terms of the relations of production — self-management projects for example. These are currently weak, but there are possibilities, not only due to revolutionary voluntarism, but to objective conditions.

Thus the revolution is nothing more than the building of these popular sectors of the economy?

The idea of building this sector is developing, at least at the level of an exchange of ideas. However, this would be a small, weak enclave inside the capitalist economy. But the revolution is more than just the seizure of power, and sometimes the seizure of power is not useful for the revolution. I do not neglect the question of power but we have to have a clear vision of its use. It is very important that the state power should coincide with real social power, which means organized participation.

The question of the state apparatus is important — revolutionary work cannot come to fruition without state power — but that should not lead us to think that the only way to advance the revolution is through state power. We have to change our view that the seizure of power is indispensable for the revolution to go forward. The revolution is built before that the seizure; the latter is an important phase in the revolutionary process. We do not have to await it before we can do anything.

So, we can relativize the seizure of power?

Some changes can take place before the change in state power is carried through. The revolution implies the seizure of power. But the germ of the revolution and the development of that germ do not necessarily need power. ★

Voters reject privatization

ON December 13, 1992, 72% of Uruguay's voters rejected a referendum in favour of a privatization programme (euphemistically called "the law on public enterprises") proposed by President Lacalle's government.

**ERNESTO HERRERA —
Montevideo, December 27, 1992**

THE scale of the government's defeat represents a major victory for the left, organized in the Broad Front (Frente Amplio — FA) coalition, even if the victory was "shared" with a faction of the one of Uruguay's two traditional bourgeois parties, the Colorado Party, headed by former president Sanguinetti.

The significance of the result was explained by a leading spokesman of finance capital on December 13. "Uruguayans have said 'no' to a reform of the state which would modernize it and privatize part of its activities... The electorate has clearly expressed its rejection of any continuation with privatization, turning its back on the lessons from elsewhere".

Consistent mass activity, mainly by the Frente Amplio, and in particular the Movement for Popular Participation (MPP) inside it, and by the unions in the PIT-CNT confederation, was needed to get round the obstacles to the holding of this referendum.

First of all 15,000 signatures had to be submitted to win the right to petition the whole electorate for or against the holding of a referendum. Then 25% of the electorate had to vote yes for the referendum to take place. This succeeded on the second attempt; on June only some 20% voted for a referendum, but in October the figure reached 32%.

The government had argued that its programme of economic "disengagement" would open the way to development, in particular through an influx of foreign capital. Finance and Economy Minister De Posadas read the list of the government's achievements: a

yearly growth rate of 7.3%, a fall in the budget deficit to 0.5%, a reduction in the foreign debt to 20.5% of GDP an inflation rate of 1.9% in November.

However, the population experiences another economy to the one they describe — a growth of unemployment and informal working, a fall in real wages of 7% in the past year and enterprise closures as a result of the changes made to prepare entry into Mercosur — the free trade zone including Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Some 700,000 people have no access to healthcare, more people are dropping out of school and university, there is a shortage of 100,000 homes and permanent youth emigration as a result of a lack of opportunities in the country, 41% of Uruguayan children live in poverty and 29% of households lack basic necessities all underpinned by the constant haemorrhage of the national wealth represented by interest payments on the foreign debt.

This lived economy was the cause of the rise of social struggles in the pre-referendum period. Almost every sector has taken part, including doctors, magistrates, police and football players. It is clear that very few people believe in the promised benefits of Mercosur. A recent survey found that 31% had a negative view of the integration process, 35% were more or less unfavourable and 19% had a positive assessment.

Crisis of institutions

The referendum has also revealed the crisis of the country's institutions and the fragmentation of its political parties. The two big parties, the Blancos and the Colorados, split wide open over the privatization and state reform issues.

While the current Blanco government and its Colorado ally Jorge Battile want to prioritize finance capital and the service sector with the idea of turning the country into a tax paradise in the framework of integration with Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, the Colorado faction headed by Sanguinetti has a far more gradualist approach to privatization, favouring support for industry and agriculture aimed at export and maintaining a role for the state and a much more critical attitude to Mercosur.

Apart from the internal crisis in the two traditional parties there is also a crisis of the two-party system as such after the creation of the FA in 1971. The two traditional parties had 77% of the vote in 1971 and 66.3% in 1989. Polls suggest that the Frente Amplio would now challenge the Colorados for second place in an election.

The Argentine review *Clarín* has outlined the post-referendum panorama from the government's vantage point: "Lacalle is seen as a man at the mercy of a compact if not homogeneous opposition, and this requires a degree of complicity to guarantee the governability of the country in a period of strong social conflict".

"Governability" has turned into the main preoccupation of those — including the reformist wing of FA — who want to avoid any change of government. In the same optic, the demand for new elections is of crucial importance for the radical forces if they want to make a leap forward along democratic and anti-imperialist lines.

The Broad Left debates

The debate was opened inside the FA's National Plenum on December 26, 1992. Here the reformist bloc attempted to indicate a way forward that would head off social polarization.

The Secretary General of the Socialist Party was explicit: "The people have not questioned this government's legitimacy... the government should finish the term of office for which it was elected." The referendum result is said to have proven correct the "policy of alliances" — and perhaps also the formation of a "grand national agreement".

However the plenum did not go the way the reformists wanted. A motion calling for immediate elections proposed by the left, which enjoys the support of the bulk of the rank-and-file bodies was narrowly passed.

With the aim of building on the left's success, the Popular Participation Movement (MPP) issued a statement on December 22 containing proposals such as a new minimum wage, tax and rent reforms, a moratorium on foreign debt repayments and the use of the resources thus saved for healthcare, education and housing and a revision of the Mercosur agreement. ★

AROUND THE WORLD

HONG KONG

Strike at Cathay Pacific

SINCE January 13, Cathay Pacific Airways (CPA) flight attendants, represented by the Flight Attendants Union (FAU), have been on strike.

On January 24, thirty-six feminist, labour, student, religious, community and pro-democracy organizations in Hong Kong formed the Coalition in Support of the FAU Strike.

According to the FAU, crew members of CPA have often been required to overwork and operate out of their position. The situation has been deteriorating since August 1992, when for cost-cutting reasons management stopped recruitment. The FAU repeatedly pointed out that this problem would both lower crew morale and create safety problems due to staff shortages.

In November 1992, the FAU said that if the CPA management did not agree to improve the staffing situation, the over 3500 FAU members would start limited industrial action — by working only in their positions — from December 1. The CPA management reacted by selectively suspending three crew members who refused to work out of their positions on December 12 and then dismissed them on December 14.

Subsequently, management announced a 6% pay raise for 1993, falling well behind the 9-11% rate of inflation.

Since the beginning of the strike, management has refused to hold any negotiations while the workers were still out. When the Chinese New Year drew near, in the interest of the travelling public, the FAU agreed to call off the strike immediately if management agreed to reinstate the three dismissed workers and continue to negotiate on the salary and staffing questions.

Management's response was to send warning letters to crew members and refuse to deliver pay cheques. Union noticeboards at the CPA headquarters were torn down.

Yet Cathay Pacific is making money and is one of the most productive long-haul airlines: its profits for the first half of 1992 were US\$1.26b, up 13.3% from the same period in 1991. Union spokespeople say that, in the run up to the 1997 reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, the company is trying to maximize profits before selling a majority share to a mainland concern.

Since January 21, the flight attendants have staged overnight sit-ins outside Governor House and have begun a series of activities



which include demonstrations at the airport, public petition-signing and international outreach.

For the first time in the company's history, its three unions are standing together — with the 1,100 pilots and engineers (AOA) and the 3,800 ground crew (LSU) also involved in a pay dispute.

Those interested in the strike support coalition should contact the Trade Union Education Centre/Apo Leung, 2/F, 101-107 Portland Street, Kowloon HONG KONG; Fax (852) 770-7388. Fax messages of support and information about solidarity actions (for example, pickets outside Cathay Pacific offices) to the FAU at (852) 764-6593. Protest letters should be sent to: D.A. Gledhill, CPA Building, HK International Airport, Hong Kong. ★

SRI LANKA

Lock-out in Colombo

ON December 27, 1992, in a dispute over a union request for a loan, the Sri Lankan Associated Battery Manufacturers (ABM) management locked out their work force, represented by the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (CIWU).

In addition, a local union leader has been barred from the site and three employees have been dismissed. ABM has a monopoly on battery production in Sri Lanka. The major share in the company, previously held by the British Chloride Company, now belongs to the Indian Birla Company.

The ABM work force has a long history of militancy and enjoys the best terms and conditions in the private sector. According to the CIWU, the ABM Board of Directors, represented by the Employers Federation of Ceylon, has used the loan dispute as a pretext to launch a union-busting operation. Letters of protest can be sent to: The Secretary General, Employers Federation of Ceylon, 30 Sulaiman Terrace, Off Jawata Road, Colombo-5, Sri Lanka. Messages of solidarity to: CIWU, 17 Barracks Lane, Colombo-2, Sri Lanka. ★

N. IRELAND

Casement Park Trial

OVER 41 Irish nationalists have been accused of offences related to the killing of two British soldiers in March 1988. Already, five men have received life sentences for abetting murder.

None of the accused were involved in actually killing the soldiers; their conviction rests on an interpretation of the legal doctrine of common purpose, hitherto only previously used in South Africa.

The tragic sequence of events began when three unarmed Republicans were shot dead in Gibraltar by a British "anti-terrorist" unit. The concern and anger that these shootings provoked was demonstrated by the huge turnout at their funeral. At this funeral, the Loyalist Michael Stone launched a hand grenade and gun assault on the mourners; three men were shot dead and over 30 were injured.

The night before the funeral for one of Stone's victims, Kevin Brady, there was yet another murder of an Irish Catholic by a UDA squad. Thus, the cortege set off in a mood of high tension.

At one point, a car drove into the funeral at high speed; as frightened mourners surrounded the vehicle, its two occupants produced revolvers and a shot was discharged.

A group of mourners (all unarmed) advanced and disarmed the two men. The car was searched for bombs and the men were taken to the nearby Casement Park, whereupon it was discovered that they were soldiers.

Sometime later an armed unit from the IRA arrived, took the two men into their own custody and shot them. The members of this unit have never been identified or arrested but many others have.

The burden of the State's case against the Casement Accused is that they had a common purpose with those who actually did carry out the killings. This is particularly absurd in that three of those currently serving life for "aiding and abetting murder" — Pat Kane, Sean Kelly and Michael Timmons — were not even present at Casement Park and could not possibly share a common purpose with an IRA unit of whose existence they were unaware.

Like all the accused, they are only guilty of attending a Republican funeral and defending themselves. Two soldiers were killed and the State is looking for vengeance.

For more information, contact the Justice for the Casement Park Accused Campaign, c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG, Great Britain. — **Steven Hepburn** ★