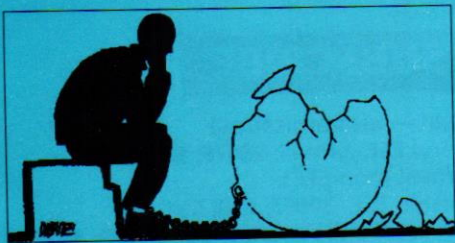


INTERNATIONAL *VIEWPOINT*

March 1993 – issue 243

BOSNIA: the right to live together



DOSSIER
Eastern Europe:
The market mirage

BLACK AFRICA
The liberal deceit



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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors

WHILE the content of the first issue of the new-look *International Viewpoint* which appeared last month was very well received, the cover came in for considerable criticism.

Among the harshest critics was our friend Yusef, who designed the cover to specifications that our technical resources made us unable to respect.

We are using the same cover design for this issue but will be making changes for the April issue.

ERRATUM: there was an important mistake in the translation of David Muller's article on Germany in the last issue; in the second column it is stated that the "shock troops" of the far right in Eastern Germany are "mainly high school students". This should have read "young skilled workers".

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A bull in a china shop

WHAT began as a comic television remake of the American landing at Normandy seems to have culminated in a tragedy, judging by the course of events in Mogadishu in the last days of February. The Marines have demonstrated once again just how trigger-happy they really are, not flinching at the idea of firing upon a hostile crowd.

OUR television screens have provided ample proof that when it comes to their treatment of young Somalians, American soldiers are in the same league as Israeli soldiers who regularly deal in the same way with young Palestinian stone-throwers.

A strange humanitarian intervention, indeed, in which the "heros" look more and more like an army of occupation! And on account of an entirely paradoxical, though foretold, "turn of events", the good deed-doers of the American army now imperil the work of all the genuinely humanitarian organizations.

The result is that the Somali people now face the prospect of being even worse off after the departure of the American troops than they were before the intervention. It seems that the Pentagon's soldiers are about as comfortable doing humanitarian work as a herd of bulls would be tending a china shop.

From Somalia to ex-Yugoslavia

Yet now we find them putting these same belated humanitarian pretensions to use in the former Yugoslavia. And this time it's because they dare not try anything more audacious.

In the Iraqi desert, a vast stretch of flat emptiness, the American war resembled a gigantic war game with a real life playing field and real life victims. The Pentagon's soldiers were lions, taking no risk and reaping no glory.

It's another story altogether in the former Yugoslavia. There, the so-called "surgical strikes" carried out by the war machines have to be guided by divine mercy and not by computers.

There, even all the military knowhow of that great conqueror of Saddam Hussein's decrepit army, General Schwarzkopf, would not be sufficient to let his boys get away unscathed — that is, unless their tanks and their carpet bombing pummel not

only civilians in uniform, but also those in civilian clothes, including women, children and the elderly.

The Vietnam syndrome

The Pentagon, no matter what claims are made to the contrary, is still heavily traumatized by the quagmires of Vietnam and Beirut (recall the mass graveyard of Marines created by the suicide operation of the Islamic Jihad). It is this same Pentagon which — with the help of its friend, Defense Secretary Les Aspin, and the support of the Secretary of State Warren Christopher — has advised the White House's new tenant, more proficient in matters of the saxophone than those of international affairs, to change his tone regarding the former Yugoslavia.

Hence, the grandiose threats of military intervention have produced...yet another humanitarian intervention, at least for the moment. This has more to do with Clinton's desire to not totally lose face and to be able to pretend to have done "something".

From the idea of giving aid to Bosnians under siege, we now see aid going to all sides without distinction. This is not only to conform to the humanitarian organizations' code of conduct, but also — indeed, primarily — because "surgical" drops are not yet technically possible in a region where the "ethnic groups" are so inter-mixed.

The former Yugoslavia appears more and more, for the new rulers in Washington, as a hornets' nest from which it is best to keep one's distance.

And this is crowned by yet another worrying threat — that the Russian army, in an advanced state of decay, will burst forth from its imposed silence in an impassioned defense of its Serbian Slav brothers. This is a Russian army that could perceive an American intervention against the Serbs as an intolerable affront to its already much-maligned dignity.

And so Clinton suddenly embraced the very Vance-Owen plan for the division of

Bosnia which he had previously — and quite rightly — denounced for its ratification of "ethnic purification". The official line is that it would be impossible for the different "ethnic groups" to live together again after all that had occurred between them.

How easily hypocrisy comes to those whose principles vary according to calculations of interest and risk. We've seen it all before in Lebanon: for fifteen years the Lebanese Christian right-wing insisted that it was impossible for the Christians of Lebanon to live together with their Muslim compatriots. They called unceasingly for the cantonization of the country — which everyone knew would produce a de facto partition and not something along the lines of the Swiss model.

Lebanese Muslims — alongside the left and all those allergic to fanaticism, from all the different religious communities — rejected outright the proposals of the Christian right-wing who, moreover, were faced with an unfavourable regional and international situation.

As a result, for more than two years now, since the ending of the war thanks to the regional shake-up precipitated by the Gulf crisis, the country is rebuilding itself and its different regions and communities are progressively reintegrating themselves.

Fifteen years of a vicious fratricidal war, fed by fanaticism, have not prevented the majority of the population from co-existing once again in peace and in confidence — as attested to by the daily intermingling of the different communities.

Of course, Lebanon could very well be the scene of new explosions provoked by a resurgence of regional conflicts. But it would take a lot for the population itself to be mobilized in the way it was before. In any case, there is now proof that when the fanatics' militias are neutralized, civilians want only to peacefully live together based on mutual respect for one another's differences.

It is in this way that we should today be working for the "Lebanonization" of Bosnia and the whole of the former Yugoslavia. This can be achieved if the world declares itself resolutely opposed to ethnic segregation and dissuades the fanatics from continuing their murderous adventures — by strengthening the embargo on arms destined to the latter, and arming those who support the idea of living together. ★

"The right to live together"

THE United States has finally thrown its weight behind the Vance-Owen plan on Bosnia-Herzegovina, initially criticized by the White House for supporting the practice of "ethnic purification". The US troops now intervening in that country will therefore be furthering the aims of that plan — if necessary with the use of force. In the best of cases, the Americans will request that a greater amount of living space be accorded to the "Muslim part".

CATHERINE SAMARY — February 18, 1993

I AM a Muslim, both my first and last name are Muslim, but if they create a Muslim state I couldn't live there," declares Zlatko Dizdarevic during a visit to Paris. This journalist at the Sarajevo-based *Oslobodjenje* ("Liberation") newspaper describes how their unaltered team of Serbs, Croats and Muslims stubbornly continues its work of providing information.

"Sarajevo and its institutions are like our paper. There are 80,000 Serbs, 100,000 Muslims and 30,000 Croats. In the Bosnian army there are 30% Serbs and 15% Croats who do not support the

party of Croatian president Tudjman. It is through the hearts of families and apartments that any lines of ethnic division would have to be drawn. This mix is our ethnic identity and our ethic."

He regrets the American decision to support the Vance-Owen plan: "Bosnia-Herzegovina is not really an issue for them. Macedonia might have a better chance to survive because it has a border with Greece, a member country of the European Economic Community (EEC)... However, we have a much more valuable resource than oil or gold: our community and its values. In their name we reject the plan to divide up the

territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is no guarantee for peace; it means the continuation of the policy of 'ethnic purification'".

Nevertheless, there are those who accept the logic of this plan: in the first place, the Croatian nationalists who have already signed it. The provinces that have been allocated to them correspond to those where a Croat flag already flies, under the control of the HVO, the militia linked to Tudjman's party, the HDZ.

"There is, in spite of the formal alliance, a fundamental disagreement between Bosnian president Izetbegovic and Croatian president Tudjman; for all intents and purposes the latter is carrying out a policy which is identical to that of Milosevic, and has come to an agreement with him for the dividing up of Bosnia-Herzegovina," claims Dizdarevic.

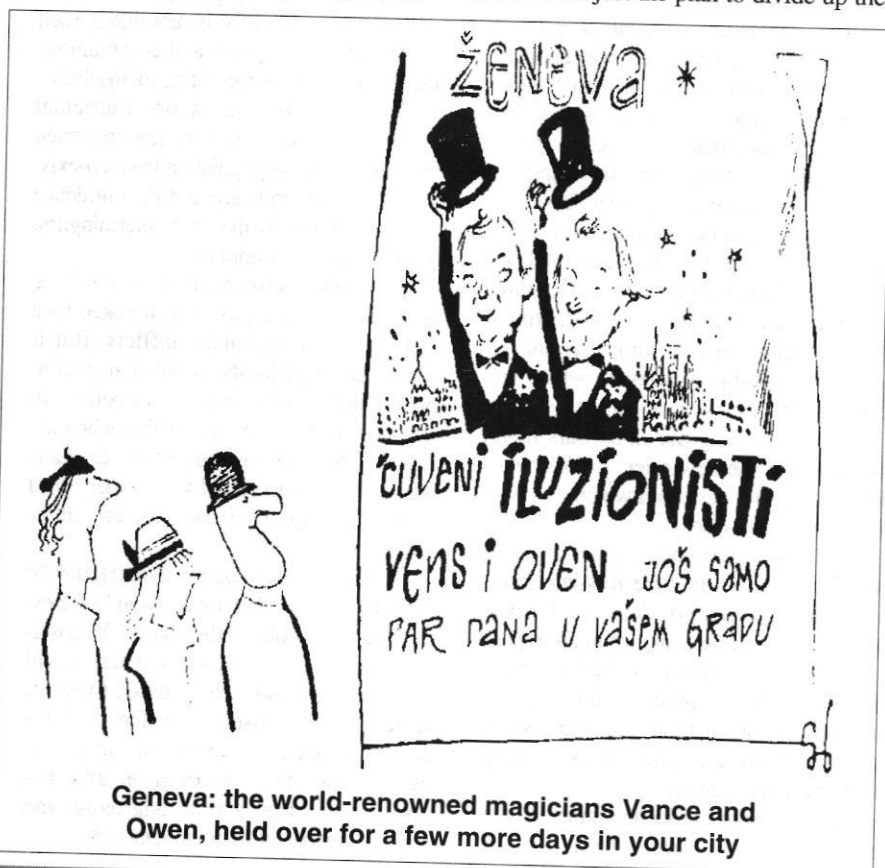
"That is the reality in the Croat held region of Herzeg-Bosna, ratified by the Vance-Owen plan: there are three big towns, one of which — Mostar — has already been established as a Croat capital. But these three towns have a Muslim majority. Croat ethnic cleansing will continue, just as it has already been implemented by the Serb nationalists in Banja Luka and elsewhere," he continues.

Second, there are the Chetnik militias, who have yet to finish their dirty work. While the Croats are concentrated in Herzegovina, adjoining Croatia, the Serb diaspora is dispersed in several zones distant from the Serbian border.

The "cleansing" of "ethnic corridors" through areas with no Serbian majority aims to make the idea of a Serbian republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina a viable one, and to chase out all its opponents.

Pacifist pretensions

Whatever may be the pacifist pretensions of the warlords participating at the negotiations, the situation on the ground is determined by those who want to carve out a Greater Serbia; although weak in numbers compared to the Bosnian forces, they can push forward with their plans thanks to the heavy weapon-



ry left behind by the former Yugoslav army.

Lastly, it is possible that a section of the Muslim population will accept the Owen-Vance-USA plan, since it strengthens those currents favorable to the formation of an Islamic state. They are in a minority in the Muslim community. "Izetbegovic is religious but he is a realist and convinced that Bosnia-Herzegovina can't survive unless it is secular and ethnically mixed."

We can expect to see a growth in intolerance in the Muslim nationalist parties, as we have already seen with their Serbian and Croat equivalents: the "fifth column", the "enemy number

one", will increasingly be the "bad" Muslims (like the campaigns against "bad Serbs" and "bad Croats" in Belgrade and Zagreb). What's more, cornered by his Croat pseudo-allies who are now abandoning him, President Izetbegovic will hereafter be under pressure from the Americans: he will have a difficult time maintaining a firm line face to face with the negotiators at Geneva.

But, "if he signs he will enter into an open conflict with the Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats — particularly in the army — who want to continue the struggle for the right to live together", predicts Dizdarevic. These Bosnians are not represented at Geneva: up against

Mate Boban, leader of the Croatian Herzeg-Bosna region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Radovan Karadzic, leader of the self-proclaimed Serbian republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, President Izetbegovic is forced to speak in the name of the Muslim community.

This stance has been imposed on him by the Serb and Croatian nationalists, by the weakness of the non-nationalist opposition and the ambiguities of his own policy. It has also been imposed by the "international community" who have chosen to accept the prevailing logic of the different nationalisms in power while denouncing their methods; this is the insurmountable contradiction at work at the negotiations.

We can expect the Bosnian armed forces to reject the Vance-Owen plan in its essence. The terrible paradox is that in so doing they will appear to be warmongers and "extremists", while in fact they are, at least in the urbanized centre of the republic, the only defenders of a multicultural and multi-ethnic approach in Bosnia-Herzegovina. "If we had greater means, there would be fewer victims," argues Dizdarevic.

Main weakness not military

But it is important to recognize that the main weakness — the real cause of our powerlessness in this conflict — is not military. The non-nationalist Bosnian left has not yet succeeded in giving the "really existing" multi-ethnic Bosnian resistance a political platform, that is, a clear alternative to the politics of exclusion.

Such an alternative cannot be credible unless it goes beyond the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, unless it firmly entrenches itself in the resistance to the nationalist powers in Serbia and Croatia. But can it be only based, as Dizdarevic proposes, "on human rights, in opposition to the logic of the rights of peoples"?

Recognizing the right to call oneself "Bosnian" or "Eskimo" (when one does not want to be identified as a Serb, Croat or Muslim), rejecting the terrorism of the right of "peoples" imposed by a few through force — does this also mean denying the right of those who want to call themselves Serb, Croat or Muslim? There is no model, but we will have to invent such a democracy — that combines individual and collective rights, within the perspective of the withering away of states and borders. ★

FOR A MULTI-ETHNIC AND SOVEREIGN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

The following resolution was adopted by the February 1993 meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International:

IN RESPONSE to the Geneva negotiations we reaffirm our defence of a sovereign and multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. Any plan that ratifies the tearing apart of the republic into territories carved out on an ethnic basis by Serb and Croat nationalists supported by the Belgrade and Zagreb governments, cannot bring peace.

The demand to lift the embargo on sending arms to the Bosnian forces is an answer to the main Great Serbian aggression; it also makes it possible to resist Great Croatian policies while mobilizing the mixed populations of the besieged towns, like Sarajevo and Tuzla, who feel themselves to be Bosnians and want to continue to live together, whatever their national origins.

A foreign military intervention would have an opposite logic, escaping any control by the Bosnian populations; it would be counterproductive, reinforcing Great Serbian nationalism instead of weakening it; it would expand the war instead of putting an end to it. We are therefore against such an intervention while being in favour of sending arms to the Bosnian forces.

This position goes together with active support to political and civic movements that are working for a dialogue among the communities and a free union of democratic and multi-ethnic states. We denounce all policies of exclusion and revenge, whatever their share of responsibility in unleashing this war: this is the political precondition for weakening Great Serb nationalism, the most violent and threatening force confronting the diverse communities of the Yugoslav region, which is using humiliation and rape to impose its "ethnic cleansing".

We support the feminist campaign to demand that rape be included among War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity. Our active solidarity with the victims of rape must rely on the independent citizens' movements struggling against the nationalisms in power, in particular Serbian women in the anti-war movement that is opposing Milosevic's policies, and the women attacked by the Croat press as "witches" because they have dared to say that Croats have also raped women.

If the map of Great Serbia is drawn up by force in the name of Serb self-determination the war will continue, and will spread to Kosovo and Macedonia. War will break out again in Croatia if the Serb question is settled there by force in the name of Croat self-determination.

If the logic of ethnic nation-states is not defeated by the logic of the systematic and simultaneous recognition of equal rights for all the peoples divided between several Balkan states, whether Albanians, Serbs or Croats, war will engulf the Balkans. ★

Rape and ethnic cleansing

RAPE is being used as a weapon in the war now underway in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This practice is not without its precedents.

While it is impossible to estimate the number of rapes, the fact that they have taken place cannot be denied. Thousands of women have been raped in the course of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

CLAIRE BATAILLE*

Official missions, including from the United Nations (UN) and European Community (EC), inquiries by non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International as well as the shocking accounts given to journalists, leave no doubt as to the systematic use of rape as a part of the policy of ethnic cleansing.

There is an urgent need to organize concrete solidarity initiatives — linking up with those women's organizations who address this dimension of the conflict in their daily activity.

From last September onwards, feminist organizations in the former Yugoslavia alerted public opinion and denounced the crimes, demanding that they be counted as war crimes as judged as such by an international tribunal. By October petitions on the issue were circulating in some Western countries.

More is involved here than "lapses" by soldiers taking advantage of the war situation to attack women without fear of punishment. In this war it seems that rape is being used not only as an instrument of humiliation, terror and control as commonly happens in time of war, but also a way of emptying the villages and sowing irreconcilable hatred between communities, thus furthering ethnic cleansing.

Thus women of all ages held in camps or outside them have been repeatedly raped, and some have died as a result.

*This article originally appeared in the February 18 issue of *Rouge*, publication of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International.

Some very young women have said that classmates were among the rapists, as if to make the inter-communal divisions irreversible.

In this context, an international campaign has been launched to denounce these horrible crimes; to call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice; for women who become pregnant as a result of rape to have abortions free of charge if they wish; that they should get the care they need in women-run centres; and that those that wish it should benefit from the right to asylum and be recognized as refugees. This is the substance of an appeal published by the French Alliance of Women for Democracy in the January 16 edition of the French daily *Le Monde*.

However, in other cases, we find that the issue of the rapes is being used for dubious political ends, in particular to promote imperialist military intervention against Serbia. For example, a petition published in *Elle* magazine and elsewhere denounces rape "made into a weapon of war by the Serbs" and demands "that the French government uses all possible means to bring this barbarism to an end". Similarly the text of an appeal for a demonstration on January 23 put out by some major French trade unions, including the CFDT — close to the ruling Socialist Party — and the teachers' union FEN sets the objective of "putting out of action the regime of president Milosevic, responsible for crimes against humanity and inventor of the planned and systematic use of rape".

Such texts lie by omission. All the international inquiries have found that rape is practised by all the parties when they capture villages, even if Serbs are evidently the main ones responsible. Nor is there any direct evidence of orders from the Serbian capital Belgrade directing the policy of rape.

It takes considerable ignorance, furthermore, to claim that Milosevic has invented the "planned and systematic use of rape". Without going back to the dawn of history, we can cite examples such as Pakistan's war in Bangladesh in 1971 when at least 200,000 Bengali women were systematically raped in the course of the nine

CROATIAN feminists have issued a letter to Western feminists about the danger of abuse of the rape issue by militarist forces. Here are some excerpts:

"It seems to us that aid for raped women is taking a curious turn, insofar as this aid is controlled by governmental organizations, the health ministries of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and in particular by male gynecologists. We fear the use of cases of rape for propaganda purposes, in order to further the spirit of hatred and revenge, to provoke further violence against women and new attacks on the survivors.

Until now, much has been said on this issue, but little done. The atmosphere of journalistic sensationalism has mainly served to upset the victims a little more...a serious solidarity project with women requires understanding, patience and time.

This is why women involved in peace initiatives have decided to start to support self-organization of women in the refugee camps.

Here we simply wish to underline the principles on which our activity should be based:

- Women must support women, for only women can understand the deep crisis suffered by a raped woman.
- The work must be undertaken by non-governmental organizations to avoid manipulation of the issue for narrow political ends.
- Solidarity centres must be set up in all the states of former Yugoslavia for raped women live in all of these states.
- The network of such centres must be decentralized and under the control of women.
- An exchange of experiences by women active in such work in various countries is needed to build a network of institutions and volunteers as quickly as possible. Long-term aid must be organized."

This letter was issued by: the Independent Alliance of Women of Croatia; the Autonomous Women's Centre; The Women's Information and Documentation Centre and the Antiwar Campaign of Croatia.

The Autonomous Women's Centre can be contacted at: Tkalciceva 38, Zagreb, Croatia. Tel: (Yugoslavia) 41 688 278. ★

months war. Most of them were then rejected by their families.

Rape was also used as a weapon in the colonial wars in Algeria and Vietnam. I can still remember the evidence amassed by American feminists which showed that rape was "a part of the daily routine" for American troops in Vietnam and was the standard means of getting information out of female prisoners.

An attempt is being made to use the victims of rape by people who, having abandoned the Bosnian resistance at the outset, are now trying to make up ground in the eyes of public opinion by irresponsible war-mongering — particularly true in France on the eve of elections.

At the beginning of January, France's Minister of European Affairs Elisabeth Guigou and Simone Veil, who has been involved in several commissions of inquiry, launched a national fund raising campaign for victims of rape. Welcome as such an initiative may be, it cannot compensate for the diplomatic treachery of European governments. To organize solidarity with victims of rape is a good thing; it would be even better to support the multi-ethnic resistance and reject the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. ★

Scapegoats

"WHEN a ruling party seeks 'culprits' and 'traitors', particularly 'sacrificial male goats' for slaughter, homosexuals have always been a primary target" comments a Serbian journalist in the December 1992 issue of the bulletin of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. The note continues:

This works all the better in Serbia, one of the last nations in Europe in which homosexuality is criminalized: Article 110 of the penal code calls for up to one year in jail for consenting sexual relations between adult males. Rarely enforced, article 100 hangs like a Damoclean sword in the hands of the authorities over the politically undesirable, yet of greater concern is the drastic rise in the degree and intensity of political and physical violence against homosexuals.

One of the hard-liners of the Socialist Party, Rados Smiljkovic, declared: "Our opposition is under the direct influence of international organizations comprised of masons and homosexuals. Over here we know very little about the exceptionally large power and vigour and influence of these organizations".

Writer Momo Kapor criticized Serbian intellectuals thus: "If the models of today's intellectuals and writers are Céline and Ezra Pound, the poet as traitor as well as those

"Witch" hunt in Croatia

LATE last year the Croatian magazine *Globus* published an unsigned article entitled "Croatia's feminists rape Croatia", which accuses leading Croatian feminists of "contributing a lot to hiding the truth" by not accepting that "it is not women who have been raped [in the ongoing civil war] but Croatian women and Muslim women who have been raped".

In fact, several of the women attacked — Rada Ivekovic, Jelena Lovric, Slavenka Drakulic, Vesna Kasic and Dubravka Ugresic — were the first to identify the encouragement of rape by Serbian forces in Bosnia. Their "anti-Croatian" crime was their argument that it is "a matter of personal and national honour to accept the deplorable fact that 'our boys' are doing it too. 'Our boys' who we should renounce, if we want to be just in this unjust war".

The *Globus* article mixes conventional anti-feminism with all the local character of Croatian reaction. "The five 'witches' [joined] the feminist 'movement' in the early seventies... They have found versatile support in Marxist centres of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The political quadrangle of feminism-Marxism-communism-the Yugoslav ideal functioned very well. The destruction of Yugoslavia and the fall of communism were great shocks to our heroines... The small group of them who, in spite of their theoretical positions and physical appearance did succeed in finding a marriage partner, chose...Serbs. It would be immoral to mention these facts were it not, when one looks at it now, on top of everything, systematic political choice rather than an accidental matter of love."

Feminists, and by inference all critical women journalists, are then "little girls of communism" and "Yugo-nostalgics". There are no worse insults for the Croatian elite, with its falsified "1,000-year" history and its Catholic nationalist hatred for women's liberation.

In a reply published in the oppositional daily *Slobodna Damacija* on December 13, 1992, some of the "witches" condemned "the degree of pervertedness of the mind which abuses even the rape of women to humiliate and proscribe other women. We should ask ourselves; who are the people profiting from rapes of women and why?"

Information and messages of support to Women's Lobby, Zagreb, c/o Vesna Kasic, Odranska 3, 41 000, Zagreb, Croatia. ★

fags from the Western shores Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, then this shows very much their insatiable provincial cravings to have been part of the greater world in which they personally never got to smell."

Kapor has the same disregard for peace demonstrations in Belgrade. "These small, insignificant parties in Belgrade always will find so many lesbians, homosexuals, fatalists whatever you will, an association of possessed Dobermans, writers who will support them on everything."

Anti-homosexual hysteria also motivates the controversial painter and writer Dragos Kalajic, an ideologue of the right-wing Serbian Party of Restoration (SNO). He once called the independent student radio station B-92 which led a campaign "struggle for Peace" to announce: "The international defeatists are propagating homosexuality and American whining." The leader of SNO, Boris Jovic, has publicly opposed "the occupation of Europe by alien Indo-Arab-Black hordes who will only bring us the narcotics trade and homosexuality". ★



The liberal deceit

FOR the past three years the whole of Africa has been the scene of crisis and political change. Of course, each country has its specific features reflecting different colonial and contemporary histories. Some countries remain as yet unaffected and in some, also, previously existing armed conflicts complicate the picture.

But the fact that so many countries have seen similar developments at the same time points to the existence of common causes.

CLAUDE GABRIEL

Paris, February 26, 1993

NOT since the end of the 1950s and the start of the 1960s have events on the continent been so synchronized. At that time the unifying feature was the end of colonialism. What is the new common denominator?

It is a commonplace to say that Africa is today a continent adrift. Whatever the real contrasts between the particular countries this broad-brush diagnosis points up the link between the decline in agricultural productivity, the crisis in the exports of raw materials, the fall in productive investment, the rapid deterioration of the education system and health care, the growth in emigration and so on. An all-pervading malaise afflicts every aspect of socio-economic life in Black Africa.

An entire economic and political model is crumbling. The crisis of the neo-colonial state is combined with other socio-economic earthquakes. The system of post-colonial relations which gave Black Africa its place in the world economy is on the point of breakdown. This is why so many countries are seeing the same political developments.

The 1970s gave an illusion of the possibility of continuous upward growth. Despite the increase in oil bills for non-oil producers, on the whole the African countries benefited from a big increase in export income along with easy access to financial markets.

This was also convenient for the industrial powers who supported industrial investment based on debt which would guarantee them some additional markets for producer goods. The price of a kilo of coffee rose from 115 to 334 cents between

1970 and 1980, of cocoa from 68 to 260, sawn wood from \$95 to \$365 a cubic metre and a ton of phosphate from \$11 to \$47.

This was the epoch of the dream of industrialization, the building of gargantuan factories and much speechifying about the new economic order and technology transfers. However, in fact, nothing changed in terms of the basic structures of dependence and indebtedness grew inexorably.

The same confidence persisted into the following decade, even as the sun was already beginning to set. The world market price of African raw materials slid and demand stagnated. Technological reorganization in the imperialist countries and changes in world trade flows sharply changed the continent's position in the international division of labour. The majority of the continent's countries were affected by this.

The great demolition job

At the same time, the first structural adjustment plans were implemented; the great demolition job was underway. In 1990, external foreign investment made up only 6.8% of trade flows, compared to 24.6% in 1982. The share of direct investment fell from 10.3% to 4.7%.

The decline in attractiveness for foreign investment was accompanied by a declining share of world production; with 500 million inhabitants the continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is today lower than that of Belgium.

A social and political crisis was added to the economic crisis. We will not here deal in detail with the nature of the post-colonial states in Africa. However, it is

important to underline the role that those states played in developing local private accumulation, in legitimizing "national territories" and in the building of an often elusive national consciousness.

It is an odd experience to see international institutions pretending to suddenly discover the corruption which rots these societies. The political systems set up at independence always worked with the blessing of foreign donors.

There were two complementary forms of this system. The first was the general redistribution of foreign aid through the public sector, the army, as well as ethnic and family networks. It made use of resources that the regime controls through its day-to-day management of foreign aid and export income. It also meant the permanent growth of jobs in the administration and privileged aid given to a village from which this or that minister originated. The second form is that of the straightforward looting of public wealth by the ruling cliques.

These two forms must be distinguished because the 1980s saw a certain decline in the former but the continuation of the latter.

The first level was the main means of maintaining social cohesion and giving legitimacy to the regime. Here there was a cascade of redistribution and various social layers got something — even if in an unequal and oppressive form. This level of private management of public property went into crisis in the 1980s as stagnation and structural adjustment plans cut state income.

The social shock was quickly felt and deep. The rural villages were in as much trouble as the towns. Social differences sharpened while all classes and layers were affected: the peasants whose income was falling, the white and blue-collar workers put out the door as a result of privatization, state employees sent into the informal sector as part of "slimming down" of the public sector, students who left university with no hope of finding a job and even a part of the urban petty bourgeoisie who lost contact with the networks of redistribution from above.

To maintain the old model of social and economic regulation a huge increase in foreign aid would have been needed. However, this too was in decline due both to the international crisis and the budget problems of the donor states themselves.

The powers-that-be then faced generalized social discontent whatever the constitutional system or whatever democratic openings they granted. For example Senegal, where a multi-party system has existed for years, has not avoided the waves of protests and repeated strikes and riots.

Visibly alarmed by the rapid deterioration, the international institutions have tried to get a grip on the situation by using aid with strings. At the outset there was no intention to link the structural adjustment plans to democratization — this is a recent and opportunist idea. However, during the 1980s African governments began to be pressured to make fundamental changes in their mode of socio-economic management. We now have a wide experience of the doctrinaire character of such injunctions which confuse the private and predatory management of the state with the size of the public sector. The need for such a sector, above all in a post-colonial context, is ignored.

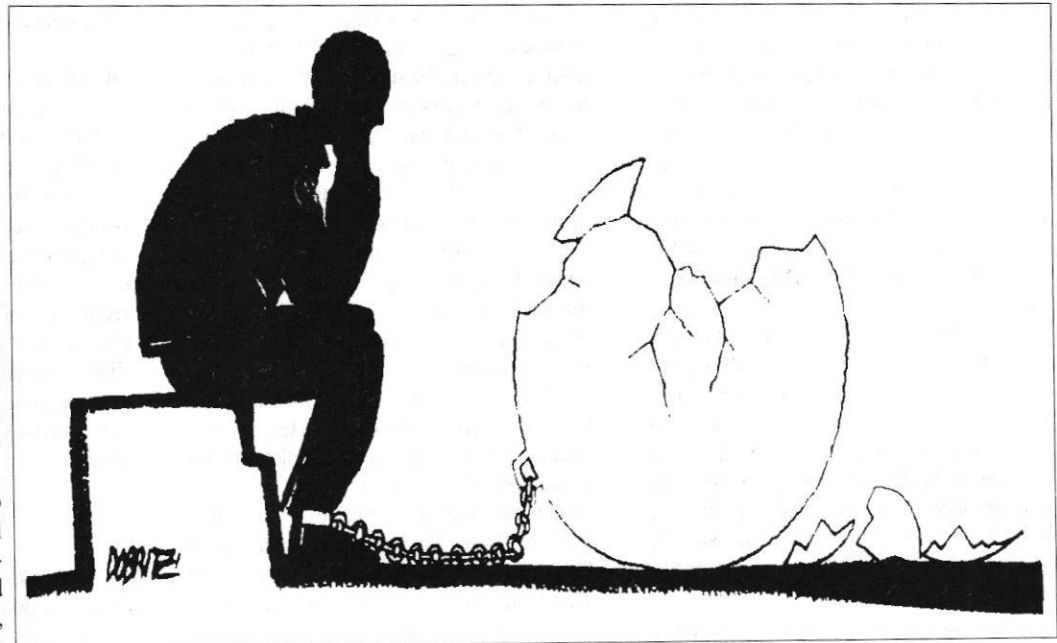
The slogan “the over-bearing state”, suggests that a rapid reduction in its economic scope would bring about a reduction in corruption. Privatization is supposed to impose different management criteria, setting off a virtuous spiral in pursuit of strictly commercial objectives.

However, nothing is less obvious in Black Africa. First of all, the low savings’ level and extreme weakness of local capital makes privatization highly risky. In many cases it is the regime barons who take over, turning a public into a private monopoly.

Meanwhile, nothing fundamental changes. The search for short term profit, speculation and low levels of re-investment are the main characteristics of the African private sector. And the scene is completed by the inadequacy of the banking system and the reticence of foreign investors. In Guinea, for example, enterprises have been shut down altogether since they could not find buyers.

There is, thus, a financial cost (leaving aside the issue of social costs) which the World Bank has not taken into account. The influx of new money connected with privatization and the reduction of public spending has perverse effects that have been overlooked. Once the external adjustment has been obtained the reduced domestic demand discourages activities directed at the local market.

The cleaning out of public finances is



thus often obtained at the expense of the drying up of investments needed for growth. As a result certain costs of production grow, reducing the profitability of investments.

The scope of the catastrophe is so great as to have finally come to the notice of the remote spheres of the various international institutions. In 1988, in the *Courier ACP-CEE*, the European Commission’s Director of Development, Dieter Frisch, agonizes over the worrying turn of events: “Some governments may be tempted to put their names to reform programmes that they cannot fully stick to and whose consequences they have not fully considered... But above all, we fear that such programmes, largely drawn up by foreign experts, are not really adapted to the constraints and specificities of the countries concerned, and this may put their viability in question”. (The author of these thoughts resigned from his post at the start of 1993.)

Gloom in Paris

In France, which is heavily involved in Africa, the same gloom hangs over all the official commentaries on the 1980s. A government report on cooperation and development in Africa openly admits that a series of big mistakes were made relating to the imposition of liberalization and the logic of aid with strings.¹

In the French case there is also the additional element that the franc zone, which was supposed to give some protection from external economic pressures to member African countries is itself running out of steam.

Nothing works any more, not even the Lomé Convention which links most African countries to the European Community.

The Stabbex system of compensation for export losses can longer keep up with the sharp deterioration in the terms of trade. On May 2, 1991, speaking in the Senegalese capital Dakar, European Commission president Jacques Delors recognized that another system was needed to create “an entirely renovated partnership”.

The real problem is not simply the “over-bearing state”. There is also the issue of the social nature of the regimes. The aim of the battle for democracy must be to begin to tackle the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. And it is from this point of view that we should at the reality and limits of the present “democratization process” and opposition forces in these countries.

The first thing to remember is that most of these countries have seen significant popular mobilizations in the course of their political crises. The urban population has mobilized and in its majority given support to opposition parties and trade unions. However, with very few exceptions the political opposition and “democratic” forces have not wanted to base their programmes on the demands of the people supporting them.

There has been much talk about a state of law and civil society but little interest in the social needs of the majority. Some of these forces’ strategists, furthermore, see things far more in terms of “pressure group” politics than the foundation of an ideologically defined party. In many cases, indeed, this is all a dispute among the elites. Many figures from the diverse former regimes cropped up in “oppositional” guise.

1. Ministère de la coopération et du développement, service des Affaires financières et de la coordination géographique. Situation pour 1991. Documentation française, Paris.

The oppositions make a habit of calling for foreign intervention. In Congo, the new leaders have even talked about having South African observers for their forthcoming elections. Virtually all of them seem unaware of the structural constraints of economic dependence. There is a kind of masochistic fascination involved in their efforts to show their competence in fulfilling the axioms of the IMF and World Bank.

They habitually identify the totalitarianism of the outgoing regimes with the size of the state sector and their democratic programmes are thus accompanied by an acceptance of adjustment plans. One example is the economic programme of the Kenyan opposition, drawn up with the help of the German Friedrich Naumann Stiftung which includes privatizations and public sector job cuts.

The example of Zambia is illuminating. A year after coming to power, President Frederick Chiluba and his Movement for Multi-Party Democracy have started to meet problems. Zambia has been presented as an example of peaceful transition and a renewal of the political elite.

Now, however, the ruling party is split, popular discontent has revived and the government is being denounced as the tool of powerful businessmen. The number of figures from the former regime in the new one has been noticed.

The new regime saw its first task as the privatization of 300 enterprises. Despite this, racketeering and corruption are once again being denounced and the population sees no improvement in its lot.² Recent by-elections have seen 70% abstentions.

Other countries have seen similar developments. In the Congo, the election of Pascal Lissouba has done nothing to change old habits of unprincipled sharing out of power. However, in all such cases the Western embassies have been promoting their protégés, influencing debates and providing constitutional expertise.

Even the most radical oppositions seem to lack any overall grasp of the global relations of domination that underpin the present crisis. Notions of managing dependence have replaced any references to an anti-imperialist project. This is an additional contradiction at a time when the working population is engaging in independent actions.

Part of the reason is the international "crisis of socialism" but there is also a lack of strong traditions of an independent workers movement such as exist in Latin America. Thus while the economic crisis is sharpening discontent, it has not as yet led to a better understanding of the incompatibility of different social interests.

The West has started to try and plug the breaches and gain time. In Zaire they have tried bring into being a coalition between the group in power and their main opponents. The same was seen in Senegal with the entry into the government of A. Wade, who then left the government again to stand in the recent presidential elections. France is also promoting cohabitation in Togo where it is continuing to prop up the dictator Eyadema while seeking allies in the "opposition" government produced by the general election.

The Western powers are moving pragmatically, giving whole-hearted support neither to their erstwhile client dictators nor to the oppositions and preferring a compromise between the two. The results are clear: in Zaire, Togo, Madagascar, Kenya and the Cameroons the dictators have manoeuvred, won time and fired on the crowds. In the Ivory Coast, Malawi, and the Central African Republic, the old system staggers on through repression. Indeed, in Kenya and the Cameroons the old regimes have managed to win general "democratic" elections to get international credibility to continue.

National conferences

Most of the "democratic transitions" take place through National Conferences which bring together virtually all political forces and unions — with churches and religious leaders often playing a central role — to negotiate over constitutional reforms and elections. As at the start of the 1960s the constitutions are often written by foreign experts and are modeled on Western constitutions but with added weight for the role of the executive.

In many cases, the oppositions based themselves on mass mobilizations to win these conferences before going on to reduce their strategy to electoral competition thereafter. After being used as a battering ram, the population is excluded from the making of fundamental constitutional choices.

These changes have incited intense debates, among them endless disquisitions on the question of whether democracy is a precondition for development or the opposite. In fact, of course, the battles for democracy and development have to be undertaken together. The real problem is to decide what kind of democracy and development. In other terms, we have to define the social nature of the project.

There are some basic landmarks here. For example, is it conceivable that these countries can escape from underdevelopment without real efforts to change the position of women? Subsistence agriculture, the environment, the informal sec-

tor, population, protection of children, the networks of cooperation — all this is the "women's world". However, they have had little or no role in the National Conferences, and there is little sign of any interest in this essential topic from the oppositions.

There are a whole range of other crucial issues: freedom of the press, union independence and democracy, control of the income of elected representatives, reductions in military spending, access to education for all, barriers against capital flight, cancellation of the foreign debt, the organization of peasants and attention to their needs, secularization of the state and so on.

"Tribalism"

The question of the organization and control of political power is also posed. The proliferation of political parties raises a debate on "tribalism" which divides up the political field into a multitude of lobbies fighting over the assets.

Such phenomena have two very different sources. One is the aspiration of a part of the population to decide the fate of their communities and its land. The other is racketeering based on regional or village networks. Of course, all too often, the second takes advantage of the former.

Ethnic conflict is often presented as an immutable feature of political life in Africa — as the antithesis of modernity. In fact, however, the most disparaged forms of such ethnicity are a product of the capitalist crisis, of competition between racketeers and of the social nature of the neo-colonial state.

Liberia, Somalia and Chad give us some perfect examples of this. Such conflicts are modern products of economic and political dislocation. It is growing poverty that produces such fragmentation. The smaller the surplus product to be divided the more violent the disputes over it. When local production collapses, market exchange can continue on the basis of the siphoning off of food aid and pillage of rural areas, fuelling ethnic and clan conflicts. In Somalia, a demand for services from television teams has created a substitute market with its own supplies, inflationary pressures and competition against the background of the prevailing economic inactivity.

Africa may be marginalized, but it is nonetheless for all that a victim of the dictatorship of the world market. Serious democratic thinking needs to take this truth as its starting point. ★

2. Southern Africa, August 1992. "Has the MMD been hijacked?"

Stand-off at Kinshasa

ON January 28, the capital city of Zaire, Kinshasa, was the scene of a revolt by disgruntled soldiers subsequently put down in a bloody counter-attack by President Mobutu Sese Seko's elite guards. Estimates of the resulting death toll range from 300 to more than 1000, with sections of the city left devastated by the looting and armed conflicts.

The events shed light on the pitched battle that has raged between the forces of military dictator Mobutu, who has ruled the country for 27 years, and those of Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, head of the transitional government formed in late August 1992.

The recent crisis has also revealed the changing relationship between Western capitals and Mobutu, their long-time favourite in the region, who they now see as a liability. In a February 3 statement, the governments of the United States, France and Belgium (the former colonial power) called on Mobutu to step down in favour of Tshisekedi. In the meantime, several hundred French troops were dispatched to Zaire, with similar numbers of Belgian and Portuguese troops sent to neighbouring Congo.

The situation remains tense in Kinshasa; reports indicate that on February 23 Mobutu's forces killed at least a dozen people in their ongoing effort to re-stabilize the situation. The following day, his forces blockaded the legislature, the People's Palace, preventing transitional government members from leaving.

The following article has been adapted from an interview with Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman that originally appeared in the February 10 issue of *La Gauche*, publication of the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste, Belgian section of the Fourth International.

COLETTE BRAECKMAN

THESE events are the result of a plot by Mobutu, who is hoping to solve two problems at once. First of all he has refused to accept the Act of Transition adopted by the National Conference; secondly, he wants his own people in the key posts in the government — in the finance ministry, the national bank and in charge of defence. With the West's support, Tshisekedi resisted Mobutu's demands on this.

Mobutu's counter-attack was made possible by the discontent of the soldiers. The regular army is permanently discontented owing to low wages which are paid irregularly. When you pay soldiers with five million zaire coupons which shopkeepers refuse to accept, an angry reaction is almost inevitable.

The disorders began at the CETA camp near to Kin airport where the soldiers have a reputation for trouble-making.

Normally these soldiers are either unarmed or at most are allowed two bullets per rifle. Munitions are never kept in the camp. Strangely, this time they were there. And, stranger still, at the moment when the uproar began the door of the munitions' depot was open.

Once armed, the soldiers descended on the city and set about sacking it. This provided the opportunity for the Special Presidential Division (SPD) — Mobutu's praetorian guard — to go into action. This force is far better paid than the regular troops and enjoys privileges in such matters as housing. After "restoring order" the SPD then set about pillaging the city themselves, but in a better organized way, using trucks.

The repression of the riots was the pretext for a political purge. The SPD went after Mobutu's opponents and some have been killed. Unfortunately, precise infor-

mation is scarce — people are scared and will not talk on the telephone. The idea was also to terrorize popular neighbourhoods that have supported the opposition National Conference. Finally, the crushing of the regular army also has a precise political aim, since these soldiers are certainly closer to Tshisekedi than to the president.

However, Mobutu is not in the clear yet. The population is against him and he has lost the whole-hearted support of his former Western backers.

Mobutu has tried to fan inter-ethnic hatred to shore up his position. He says "if I go then there will be inter-ethnic chaos". In fact, in order to hang on, he is quite ready to incite such chaos himself. There is a very serious situation in Shaba, where there have been clashes between the Lundas and the Kasayans. The former are the original inhabitants of the region, while the latter work in its mines.

Shaba's governor, Kyungu, is paying people to organize a revolt by the Lundas against the Kasayans, using the local radio, which he controls. People from there say that there have never been problems with the Kasayans, but that it is difficult to resist the hate propaganda coming over the radio, which claims that if the Kasayans are chased out there will be work and housing for the Lundas.

Inter-ethnic troubles may occur in other areas. However, the fire is not catching as quickly as Mobutu hoped. There is tension in Kivu between the local population and refugees from Rwanda, described as "individuals of uncertain nationality". There have also been clashes with Uganda on the border at Kivu. Once again, information from these remote regions is scanty.

Politically mature

I do not think that Zaire will become another Somalia, at least at first. The population of Zaire is politically very mature and will not be easily manipulated. We are unlikely to see the emergence of clan-based warlords such as in Somalia.

In Zaire there is already a gang, Mobutu's. What we may see, on the other hand, as the regime and society disintegrate, are military chiefs acting independently, carving out their own fiefdoms. Sylvie Brunel from the International Association against Hunger recently remarked that the West,

in its efforts to defend the status quo, has ended up producing chaos. It was the West that installed Mobutu and supported him for 25 years against all-comers. French and Belgian troops were involved in military operations on his behalf in Shaba and Kolwezi.

Belgium always spoke in favour of Zaire at the International Monetary Fund when everybody knew about the regime's corruption and the terrible human rights situation. In this Belgium followed the line of the United States, and the latter decided to shut its eyes.

Rampart against communism

Mobutu was a rampart against communism and an ally who protected "our" interests when the Cubans were in Angola. Zaire was used by the CIA as a base for its operations in Angola and throughout southern Africa. Only when the international situation changed did the West start to find Mobutu undesirable.

Now, I think the West finds him an embarrassment and really wants to get rid of him. He is a constant reminder of what the West has been supporting when the talk is all of human rights and humanitarian missions. Furthermore, he may destabilize the whole of central Africa.

Even recently Mobutu was in Paris for the bicentenary celebrations of the French revolution and continues to have access to his luxury properties in Nice and elsewhere.

However, recently a planeload of bank-notes was seized in the airport of the Belgian town of Ostend — which is well

known to regularly receive consignments of arms and money for Mobutu.

For the West, Mobutu no longer means stability, but chaos. A government with some popular legitimacy would be better able to restabilize the country, and the whole region. Even so, it is true that the chaos may get so bad in this region that nobody will be able to think of any other means of stabilization than armed force.

The opposition has some responsibilities in this situation. It has accepted the Western line that "Mobutu must not be humiliated [...] we must leave him a way out". The opposition is politically diverse and has no long term vision. The answers it gives to questions about Zaire's foreign debt, for example, are hardly convincing.

They say "we will pay it with Mobutu's money". But what there is isn't enough and it isn't possible to get it back. The opposition's programme is limited to the democratic issues of a new constitution and a federal state.

There is a problem of generations here. All the opposition politicians are of Mobutu's generation. They have grown up under his system and often held official positions in it. They are imbued with the spirit of corruption. Mobutu has ruined a whole generation. A new generation exists in the opposition but it is not in the leadership.

The opposition's call for a "general strike by stages" failed because it was not realistic. People live from day to day. Eighty percent of the population of Kinshasa do not know in the morning how they are going to find the money to eat that evening. You can't tell people in this situation to lay in stores for a week and stay at

home.

The country's lines of supply have been disrupted. However, this too may be a plot by Mobutu; if supplies rapidly resume, he will claim that Tshisekedi means hunger, while with him in charge, the markets are full. Mobutu may be helped in this by a Belgian, William Damseaux. Damseaux is known as the man who feeds Kinshasa, an "economic operator" in the local phrase. He brings in from the EC or South Africa the leftovers from supermarkets. It is all frozen and brought by boat to Zaire where it is sold by small shopkeepers. The inhabitants of Kinshasa throw it in their soup, and it provides a bit of animal protein. Obviously, Mr. Damseaux's "operation" depends on Mobutu's support.

In desperate cases, outside armies may be needed to bring food. However, soon these sorts of operations make the basic problems worse as the Western forces get drawn into the clan conflicts, take political decisions and make basic solutions more difficult.

All the social and political relations in Somalia have been destroyed and cannot be rebuilt by military force. There was a UN envoy, Sahnun, who had got people talking and progress was being made. However, his methods were time-consuming and the West, wanting quick results, got rid of him.

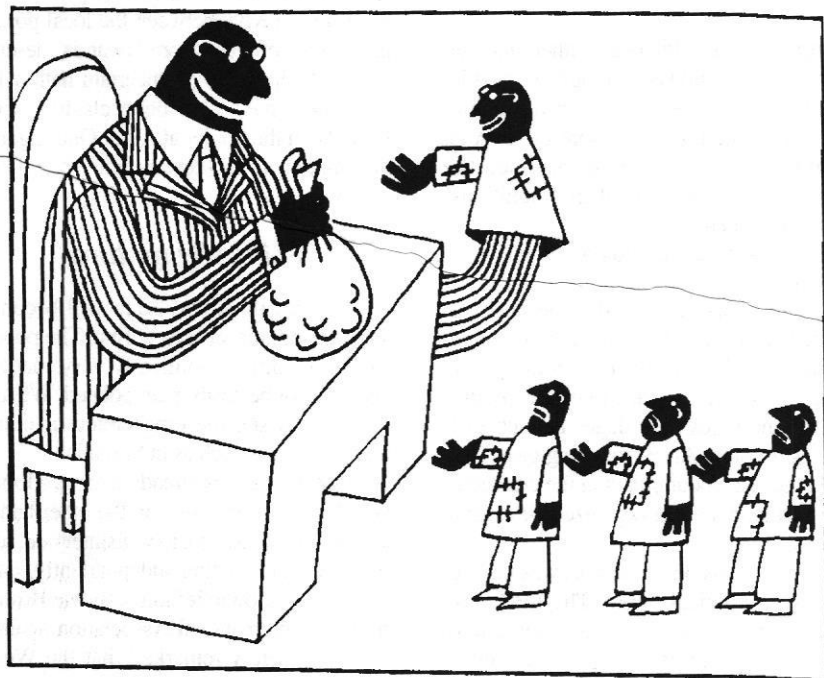
Zaire is far bigger than Somalia. Chaos there would be beyond all control. At the UN they are talking about preventive measures.

Abandoned Africa

People are writing that Africa has been abandoned, even that it should be "re-colonized". But I think there is a positive side to "abandonment". Africans at last have the chance to write their own history for themselves. The West has always been going on about "integrating" Africa into the world market or the East-West structure, but this has completely failed.

But Africa will not go away, even if it only represents 3% of world trade. Look at the United States and Latin America. The people in the latter grow drugs to sell in the former. The Africans may do the same for Europe. The revenge of history! Then there are the epidemics arising from poverty. Fortress Europe cannot stand up against them.

The inventiveness of the people of Zaire is extraordinary. And with the National Conference they have already begun to write their own history. Mobutu has said that his fall means chaos. Zaire's people have shown this is not true. ★



Crisis and realignment

BRITAIN'S Conservative government has made a unique contribution to the struggle to reduce unemployment figures. Since 1979, they have changed the method of calculating the number of unemployed 17 times. Thus, the February 20 announcement that unemployment had reached three million masked the true figure; for some time real unemployment has been more than four million — about one sixth of the workforce.

PHIL HEARSE — London, February 23, 1993

THE CASCADE of redundancies reflected in this figure is just one symptom of the utter collapse of the Thatcherite economic project, which in turn underlies the disarray of John Major's government. Since the collapse of the pound sterling five months ago, and Britain's withdrawal from the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM), the Conservatives have drifted from one political crisis to another. At the same time, there has been an upsurge of workers' mobilization against the government; but such opposition is hamstrung by confusion and outright ideological collapse in the opposition Labour Party, itself reeling from its fourth successive electoral defeat.

While international attention is focused on the crisis of the German economy and Clinton's attempts to relaunch economic growth in the United States, the extent of Britain's economic decline is devastating. The core sectors of the 1980s "yuppie boom", financial services and real estate, have collapsed. Industrial investment is around zero. The state budget deficit is around £50 billion. And the pound has fallen from DM2.95 to DM2.35 in a few months.

Totally exploded is the Thatcherite myth that British capitalism could be regenerated by a combination of smashing the unions, market deregulation, and a smaller but fitter industrial sector topped off by a large service sector. The international financial markets don't believe that an economy without a strong industrial base can go anywhere but down.

If this were not enough, the Tory government is in the middle of a prolonged crisis over the Maastricht Treaty on European union. With a parliamentary majority of just 20, the government is constantly threatened by revolts from its "anti-European" wing, egged on by an embittered Lady Thatcher and her main

lieutenant, arch right-wing ghoul Norman Tebbit.

The current political crisis was sparked off by two bombshells last autumn — withdrawal from the ERM and the public outrage over the decision to close most of Britain's coal mines. The former was pounced on by the rightwing Tory "Euro-sceptics" and the latter led to the biggest workers' demonstration for a decade. Here was the raw material for the Labour Party to deal devastating blows to the government.

But it was not to be. In the wake of the Tory election victory last April, an election many thought Labour would win, the new Labour leadership is in a state of ideological collapse. Under Kinnock, since 1983, the Labour Party moved progressively to the right, adapting to Thatcherite ideology and watering down Keynesian interventionist and social welfare policies. Under new leader John Smith, this process is set to take a qualitative leap forward.

"Clinton economics"

Into Labour's ideological void has stepped the electoral victory of Bill Clinton. "Clinton economics" is the rage in the Labour leadership; and in his February 7 speech John Smith set out a new agenda for the Labour Party committed to "individual enterprise and effort". At the very moment when the market economics of the Reagan-Thatcher years are utterly discredited, the Labour leadership can think of nothing better than to deepen its commitment to this failed enterprise.

Coupled with its ideological follies, the Labour leadership is entering into a far-reaching battle over the party's links with the trade unions and their "block vote" which enables them to dominate party conferences. A faction of the leadership, led by shadow cabinet member Tony Blair and backed by the most rightwing sections

of the trade union bureaucracy, wants to sever Labour's organizational links with the unions completely and talk openly of the creation of a capitalist party on the lines of the US Democrats.

In the current relationship of forces such a project is unrealizable. But John Smith has pinned his colours to the mast of an extensive reform of Labour's links with the unions, seen as a major vote loser. The influence of the left within the party is at its lowest level for 20 years.

However, the Blair project faces major obstacles, behind which stand the overall strength of the organized labour movement. The Labour Party is financed overwhelmingly by the trade unions. Any alternative based on cutting the union link with the aim of creating a "new mass membership" for the party has to confront the reality that the party's membership is in fact declining. In the absence of state funding for political parties, a Labour Party with no union links would face financial collapse.

In any case, John Smith's new political direction and talk of breaking the union link, has provoked Labour's formidable traditionalist sensitivities. A serious attempt to push through the Blair project would mean a new round of internal warfare.

In the 1980s economic problems were disguised by tax revenues from North Sea oil and the sell-off of nationalized industries, as well as the boom in financial services linked to the expansion of the US economy in the years of Reagan's military build-up. These props have gone. Now, massive social security payments to cope with rising unemployment and falling tax income have led to a huge state budget deficit, accompanied by a growing balance of payments deficit.

In the absence of any ideas on how to regenerate the economy, John Major's government has opted for the simple choice: further attacks on the working class and the welfare state, combined with more of the reactionary social engineering pioneered in the Thatcher years.

Last year being an election year, the Tories contented themselves with a new round of anti-trade union legislation and a viciously racist Asylum Bill. Now they are setting off on a new round of privatizations and attacks on the welfare state. All these are linked together into a further attempt to destroy the public sector, which with the

decline of manufacturing industry, is the real stronghold of trade unionism.

British Rail, the Post Office and other services are to be privatized. The marketization of the health service is being deepened, with the closure of several important London teaching hospitals. Harsh new social security measures, including the introduction of a "workfare" scheme to make the unemployed work for their social security benefits, are being discussed.

Devastating cuts

Most devastating, however, is the simple lack of government financial support for all public services, especially those provided by local government. For the first time in living memory local authorities are making teachers compulsorily redundant; and 100,000 local government workers face the sack over the next two or three years.

These cuts are surrounded by a cluster of lesser measures, such as the virtual abolition of a public dental care system and the reorganization of school teaching curricula to remove any progressive content, especially in subjects such as English and History.

Finally, Britain is today at the cutting edge of the imposition of the "new management techniques", popularly known as "Japanization" which imply a reorganization of working practices to the detriment of the labour force, which have now been imposed on millions of workers.

The upsurge of protest in defence of the miners, including demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of workers, has to be seen against this background. Mass unemployment, and the dominance of the "new realist" rightwing leaderships, have combined to thwart a sustained fightback against Tory attacks. Defence of the miners has created a mass movement, but one so far limited to protest actions, without industrial action.

This is the central contradiction in the situation. The disarray of bourgeois political projects is being met by the first stirrings of mass opposition but not as yet by a mass strike movement which could change the balance of class forces.

Even so, the government is retreating on the issue of pit closures. Fierce battles are taking place within the cabinet over what concessions should be made. Unless at least half the pits are kept open the government faces a parliamentary defeat on the issue. The allocation of large subsidies to keep many of the pits open would in itself constitute a victory for the mass movement against closures. Not since the poll tax debacle and the fall of Mrs. That-

cher have the Tories suffered such a reversal.

The Maastricht problem is far from solved. Ingeniously, Tory Euro-sceptics have decided to vote for a Labour amendment on the treaty, pledging Britain to accept the "social chapter" which Britain has been formally exempted from. In theory this would make the Treaty impossible to ratify. The government has responded by saying that it has the right to ratify the treaty and ignore the vote in parliament. However, this would open up a major constitutional crisis.

The overall picture is one of chronic economic decline, working class retreat and political crisis in the government and the major opposition party. How this political gridlock breaks depends in part on developments in the economy.

The one major success for Major so far has been a fall in the rate of inflation to a twenty-year low of 1.75%. But there is no mystery behind this. Chronic deflation and the collapse of consumer spending have sent prices hurtling down. Any pickup in the economy would send inflation up again as would any decrease in unemployment. When unemployment last fell and the economy revived in 1987-89, inflation shot up to 11% and a rash of wage struggles broke out. Major's current 1.5% public sector wage freeze is premised precisely on high unemployment and chronic deflation. Any minimal upturn in economic activity will break the dam of low inflation and low wage increases.

The state of the left

But breaking the gridlock also depends on political developments on the left, building a viable opposition current inside the labour movement which can propel the movement into more sustained action. In the unions there are the first signs of the building of a "public sector alliance" with a number of unions holding a simultaneous ballot on March 5 for a strike against privatization and service cutbacks. Several different rank-and-file formations, the most important led by the far left Militant Tendency, are attempting to build permanent union alliances on this issue.

At a political level the Labour left faces overwhelming odds inside the party. Only Tony Benn remains as the standard bearer of the left on the National Executive and thousands of leftists have left the party. However, the party's leftwing still remains the largest of any mass workers party in Europe, and is taking the first steps towards regrouping around a network linked to the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

The far left is dominated by two large tendencies, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Militant. The SWP continues to be able to recruit large numbers of young people through vigorous propaganda work, but its national political impact is negligible compared to its numbers, owing to its lack of any united front strategy aimed at turning the tables on the new realist right throughout the labour movement.

Prolonged recomposition

The Militant has suffered splits and decline after its recent move out of the Labour Party. It has "modernized" its political profile especially as regards issues such as women's and Black liberation. But it seems clear that the far left has entered a period of prolonged political recomposition.

Even inside the SWP we have had the first inklings of political debate over its triumphalist sectarianism — the organization is currently proclaiming the need for an all-out general strike and engaging in a frenetic recruiting drive on a very low political level.

The fate of the far left organizations, organizationally the most powerful in the advanced capitalist countries, depends on whether a workers' fightback can be sustained. In the 1980s the British labour movement suffered ferocious attacks. Its resilience and the maintenance of a considerable part of its organizational strength is linked to the traditions of mass unionism, as opposed to the semi-political unionism of France and Spain, itself a function of the overwhelmingly proletarian composition of the country.

In the 1970s and 80s the bourgeoisie devised a radical new project, Thatcherism, aimed at breaking with the post-war Keynesian welfare state consensus and regenerating the economy. The consensus was indeed broken, but the economy has not been regenerated. Nothing of any substance has arisen to replace Thatcherism; the Conservatives have run out of ideas and Labour has pushed its radical left to the sidelines.

However, such is the extent of Britain's historical decline and drift towards collapse that British capitalism does not retain the kind of resources for the sort of relaunch that can be envisaged for the US, Germany or even France. The enfeebled British bourgeoisie is compelled to seek new historical routes out of the current impasse. Unless the labour movement is capable of forging its own historical alternative the post-Thatcher bourgeois political vision is likely to be even more barbaric than the Iron Lady ever imagined. ★

The market mirage

THE 1990s opened with the arrival in power in the East European countries of leaderships aiming not to reform the existing "socialist" system but to adapt it to the capitalist world. Whatever the different forms taken by the fall of the single party and the crisis of the old regime, apart from East Germany, the general scenario of restoration is everywhere the same: new governments undertaking a reform of the state with the goal of transforming the economy.

Root-and-branch privatization of heavy industry has been the chosen means for destroying the previous political and economic power of the bureaucratic nomenklatura and subjecting the workers to market discipline. In the aftermath of the failed coup in August 1991, Yeltsin's coming to power in Russia heralded the spread of restorationist "shock therapy" in the former Soviet republics.

But what has been the real effect of these plans?

CATHERINE SAMARY
Paris, March 1, 1993

OVERALL, the neo-liberal recipes for inserting these countries into the developed capitalist world have everywhere caused the same type of damage if not everywhere on the same scale. They have exacerbated the gulf between those regions and countries that were least crisis ridden before the changes — and were thus best fitted to attract foreign investment — and the rest. This has been a key factor in the disintegration of the federal states — Yugoslavia, the USSR and Cze-

choslovakia and a similar process is now at work in the Russian Federation.

The former German Democratic Republic (GDR) is a special case, although even here the difficulties and cost of privatization are significant. Furthermore, Western institutions have singled out Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland from amongst the "transitional societies" as being the most apt for the restoration of capitalism. However, even the members of this sub-group are tending to drift away from each other: in Hungary protectionist and nationalist reflexes may slow down change; the Czech Republic has been drawn far more closely than the others into the German orbit and is tending to go it alone; and in Poland strong traditions of workers resistance remain a disincentive for foreign investors.

Everywhere that the economic crisis is especially severe — in particular in the former USSR and former Yugoslavia — "statist" tendencies have been replacing stumbling privatization projects. While it may be the "Korean model" that is getting

Introduction

THE coming to power of Boris Yeltsin in Russia after the failed coup of August 1991 marked the culmination of the collapse of the old single party political system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in October 1989.

The mainstream media of the day saw in these events the collapse of communism and the final victory of capitalism — the "end of history". In their eyes the future of the former Soviet bloc would be one of a flourishing of democracy on the basis of a return to capitalism.

The reality — both of the past and the future — is not so simple.

Our dossier this month looks at what has happened in these countries in the past few years. Catherine Samary explains the domestic and international limits to capitalist restoration — among them the appalling social implications of the neo-liberal plans. Russian Marxist Alexander Buzgalin outlines the state of the left in Russia confronted with the rise of the conservative "industrial party", and a text written by former Polish dissident Jacek Kuron — now Poland's Minister of Labour — provides telling evidence of the durability of what he calls "the myth of social justice".

But, if capitalism cannot be restored with a wave of a magic wand, the effort to break resistance to it leaves little room for democracy or tolerance. In two shorter articles Czech parliamentary deputy Vratia Votava and IV's Czech correspondent Adam Novak explain the motives for the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation without reference to the popular will and Krystyna Politacha describes the vicious anti-women campaign in Poland, which has just resulted in the passing of an anti-abortion law that has little popular support.

Thus, rather than a smooth change of "systems" following a change of government, developments in these countries are being dictated by the multi-faceted struggle of vast social forces — a struggle connected in a multitude of ways to what happens in the world as a whole. — Colin Meade ★

the upper hand over the "Anglo-Saxon" in the rhetoric of restorationism, in practice the model for pragmatic bureaucrats is more likely to be China.

The past three years have seen a collapse in agricultural and industrial production without any compensating advance in private services. The fall in the former USSR and Bulgaria is about 40%, for Romania 30%, and 20 to 25% in Poland, the former Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The same dynamic is apparent in Slovenia. Growth forecasts for 1993 are negative except for Poland and Hungary, where stagnation or a slight upturn are awaited.

In all cases there has been a rapid growth in unemployment. This has gone from almost nothing in the 1980s to about 20% for 1993 — and this before industrial restructuring has really got underway.

Price reform has been aimed at adaptation to world market prices and the imposition of market constraints on enterprise managements — ending of subsidies, reductions in import duties and so on. But, in practice, the old planning mechanisms

have been scrapped without restructuring having taken place and without market discipline applying. This is expressed in inflation which is in double figures — between 15 and 50% — in the Czech and Slovak Republics, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia; in three figures in Bulgaria and Romania — and 2000% in Russia.

The monetarist nostrums for dealing with inflation have proved counter-productive. Interest rate hikes to impose budget discipline on enterprises have only produced more inflation. Inter-enterprise credits, which are a continuation of barter relations, the addition of interest rate rises to monopoly prices, and the continuation of activity by bankrupt enterprises all show the ineffectiveness of market regulation in such societies.

The pompously unveiled stock markets have little chance of attracting the small quantities of disposable savings in a context of crisis and hyper-inflation, while the new private banks may well simply “accumulate” the prevailing tendencies to bankruptcy. Nor is there much incentive to risk buying the new Russian treasury bonds when the Central Bank of Russia has stopped paying interest on the foreign debt.

The end of Comecon

Inflation, recession and the foreign debt have been everywhere made worse by the scrapping of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). In this barter market, the former USSR was the big provider of raw materials and energy at below world market prices. Manufactured goods from the other countries also had a guaranteed market. The GDR, which had a privileged relation with West Germany, played a pivotal role as an importer of Western technology and producer of the most advanced products exported to the East.

After 1991, the end of Comecon and German unification drastically changed the terms of trade within the Soviet Bloc. Payments were theoretically to be made in hard currency at world market prices. The dislocation and breaking up of currency spheres — with new separate currencies or coupons in each of the former Soviet and Yugoslav republics and now in the Czech and Slovak republics, have worsened the decline in trade between the former Comecon countries and the crisis in supply.

Furthermore, if payment has to be in hard currency, then everyone would prefer to buy Western goods. Finally, the political-economic decision to join the capitalist world has reinforced the tendencies for the

best placed in the chase after hard currency to go it alone. This further aggravates the breakdown of former trade relations and the expropriation of exportable local and regional resources by local authorities.

Even if the regions and countries concerned do not all face the world market from the same starting point, they have all collided with the narrowness of this market in crisis, where doubletalk reigns. For, the same capitalist powers who have been explaining the need for Eastern Europe to remove its trade barriers are themselves protectionist towards those countries.

Western protectionism

The five Eastern and Central European countries who in December 1991 signed association agreements with the EEC are now licking their wounds. Their avowed desire was to become members of the EEC and this choice was translated into a refusal to remain tied to the former brother countries. But crisis-ridden free market Europe has been all the more swift to close doors because the East European countries produce and export goods for which world demand is stagnant or falling — steel, raw materials, agricultural products.

In these domains furthermore, they are in competition with Third World countries and in some others, such as textiles or clothing, they run up against competition from the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs).

The GATT talks are going nowhere and the world trade war has just taken a new turn around steel; exports of steel from East to West Europe rose by 24% between 1991 and 1992, with the price falling between 20 and 30%. The recent effective closure of the American market to imported steel has sharply increased steel over-capacity in the EEC, against a background of recession. Result: “The Council of Ministers of the Twelve has just decided, without any noticeable embarrassment, to limit access to the EEC’s market for the East European countries” (Libération, February 26, 1993).

Overall, the first years of this decade have seen the collapse of trade between the East European countries and a growth in trade with the OECD developed capitalist countries, and especially the EEC. But this is a very uneven process. For one thing, imports have grown faster than exports — calculated in ECUs, in 1991/1992 imports into the five Eastern and Central European countries from the EEC rose by 42% while exports rose by 24%.

For another, the main trade partner is Germany. For these five countries it was

the destination of 41% of their exports to the OECD countries and 40% of the imports — the figures for the former USSR are 27 and 38% respectively. Germany is also Slovenia’s main trade partner.

Faced with the costs of unification and the impact of the crisis in the East in Germany (particularly refugees), a part of the German bourgeoisie may be tempted by a weighting of policy towards the East to the detriment of “Maastricht Europe”. The latter has already suffered from the rises in German interest rates to pay for unification. The practice of moving some aspects of production to Germany’s eastern neighbours in search of lower wages and to stem immigration may develop and, finally, very costly agricultural subsidies may be abandoned in favour of cheaper food imports from the East, thus undermining the EEC’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Globally, there is a widening gap between the “mark zone” in the areas surrounding Germany and the rest. Other ambitious schemes are being hatched. For example, around the Baltic with the North European countries, or with Turkey around the Black Sea, in particular in the direction of the Muslim republics of the former USSR, and finally in north-east Asia on the Chinese and North (and thereby South) Korean borders with Russia drawing in Japan.

However, in all cases economic crisis and conflicts over territory and property, and even local wars, are big obstacles to the realization of such projects. This is especially true in the eyes of potential investors: “The Russians have an obvious interest in this [north-east Asia] project” writes a South Korean expert “in order to make the Trans-Siberian railway profitable and attract investment to Siberia, the North Koreans to open up to the outside world and the Chinese to promote the development of a backward region.

“However the benefits for South Korea and Japan would be far more long term.” And he adds “for political reasons we cannot ignore a project patronized by the United Nations, but we are being very cautious” (*Le Monde*, March 3, 1993).

Indeed, caution is in vogue after the first burst of the “rush to the East”. And for a world capitalism already crippled by its own colossal debt problems this is one of the reasons why privatization is marking time.

The reality of privatization

Privatization has been envisaged in two stages: the “small privatization” and

the big — the latter essential to any deep change in the system.

The former has mainly involved trade, services, and small workshops. Different methods have been used — share issues or auctions. Small privatization has been dynamically entered upon in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, but has been slower elsewhere. In Russia the official aim was to privatize 50% of restaurants and 60% of shops and services by the end of 1992 but in fact in all these spheres the result is lower than 10%. The main reason is the gravity of the crisis and the hyper-inflation which means both a drop in income and a rise in every sort of uncertainty — whether over costs, supplies or political stability.

However, the real key to all the neo-liberal programmes is the big privatization. This is meant to affect thousands of big enterprises in countries where the public sector includes 70 to 90% of industry. But this is not only a question of size.

Behind lies a whole system of historically produced relations of property, production and distribution, values and the specific role played by money when there was no possibility for the buying and selling of means of production, no capital market, and no banking system formed on the basis of capital accumulation.

The aim of the neo-liberal programmes is to subordinate the economy and social relations to the logic of capita-

lism; to break up monopolies while using profitability, competition and financing according to sales as a means of imposing social discipline. This means a real (and not only legal) risk of bankruptcy and redundancies.

This ambitious objective has encountered two big obstacles:

- On the one hand, the economic crises of the two systems themselves. They interact in a vicious spiral; in these circumstances capitalist restoration makes the crisis in the East worse. And the latter in its turn adds to the disorder of the world capitalist system; rather than finding in the East the means to get out of its own crisis, capitalism suffers shock waves from the collapse of the Eastern bloc. The effect of German unification on Maastricht Europe, the flows of immigrants, the war in the former Yugoslavia and the rise of fascism and racism are all examples.

- On the other, there are resistances to restoration within the system: these are related to the absence of a bourgeoisie, of capital and of market regulation of collective property. Worker resistance is a part of this. The latter draw from the past a strength that is not reducible to classical forms of independent, union, self-managing or political movements. Indeed, such movements are very weak or fragmented in these countries.

Still less can we speak of movements equipped with alternative programmes to

that of capitalist restoration. The “crisis of socialism”, felt worldwide, has had a lasting effect. Nonetheless, capitalist restoration is bogged down.

While privatization is not the be-all and end-all of this process, nonetheless, a change in economic logic definitely implies the breaking up of the bureaucratic monopolies which are also sites of working class concentration. But where is the capital to come from?

Why invest?

Domestic saving (assuming that the savers are inclined to invest in shaky undertakings) has been estimated at between 10 and 20% of the value of the privatizable goods. Foreign capital is thus essential to any restorationist project. Now, in mid-1992 the total stock of invested foreign capital in the Eastern European countries and the former USSR was about \$12bn. This figure includes sums involved in many dubious undertakings above all in Romania and the former USSR.

Here are some comparisons: the flow of investments realized in Latin America in 1992 alone was \$36bn; the former USSR's foreign debt is estimated at around \$80bn and its capital flight — hard currency payments to exporting firms in the former USSR kept in Western banks — at between 20 and \$40bn.

Hungary merits a special look since it is the leading recipient of foreign funds. Indeed, it has received as much as the whole of the former USSR, that is \$4bn of the \$12bn mentioned above. This sum is spread among 13,500 mixed enterprises — or in other words, the amount per enterprise is very low. In fact, the aim of the foreign investor is often to position themselves for the future at the least cost and to get the best out of tax breaks without incurring too much risk.

Big privatization has gone further in Hungary than anywhere else in the region, but it has still only affected 10% of the privatizable enterprises. The official goal is for this figure to reach 50% by 1994. However, this is all the more unrealistic because it was the best enterprises that were privatized first and the tendency is for the rhythm to slow. Furthermore, 85% of these privatizations have been carried out to the benefit of a foreign buyer, not at all what the government had in mind. The private sector taken as a whole produces 30% of GDP.

More important than counting up the number of privatizations is evaluating which branches are involved and above all their weight in the economy as a whole. This requires concrete analysis.



One of the aims of the transition is to introduce market disciplines, thus we need to consider whether we are seeing industrial restructuring — both in the private and public sectors — on the basis of these disciplines. And this is not happening — for one major reason: the application of market regulation to the industry of these countries would mean complete disindustrialization and social explosions.

There is a growing awareness that the costs and obstacles to privatization conceived as a change of system are more than merely quantitative. Debates on the “Marshall Plan for the East” are a sign of this. In present day terms, the Marshall Plan at the end of the Second World War cost some \$170bn. Russia has so far received \$1bn of the aid promised. Western experts have estimated that modernizing these countries would cost some \$330bn per year for ten years.

However speculative such figures may be, it is also true that in 1945 the problem was to reconstruct countries that were already capitalist and had all the attributes and forms of behaviour needed for the rule of the market. Furthermore, the state played a major role in reconstruction in Western Europe. The “Korean model” also involved the state. However, the present neo-liberal nostrums are opposed to such interventionism.

In the former GDR privatization has failed as a means of renewal. Now the German state is assuming the burden of salvaging and restructuring industries that were by no means amongst the worst in Eastern Europe. It is doing this because if it does not there could be a social and political explosion.

Different means; same end

There are a number of strategic variants within the overall project of restoring capitalism. The main question is to see who profits and what social costs are attendant on pursuing this project. The main alternatives encountered are the following:

a) At what speed and at what price to privatize?

To provoke an irreversible shock at whatever price (as proposed by American economist Jeffrey Sachs); or to protect and transform the public sector and postpone privatization till later in the expectation of a more “organic” appearance of a national bourgeoisie, such as Hungarian economist János Kornai hopes for? But the latter may in practice mean perpetuating the rule of the old nomenklatura and non-capitalist methods. Then there is the question whether to start off by changing the price sys-

tem — with resulting hyper-inflation in a monopolized system — or privatize first (but at what prices and with what capital?).

b) What social layers to base capitalist restoration on?

The nomenklatura or the new bourgeoisie arising from the middle layers of the intelligentsia and the shadow economy? But with what capital, what management experience and what capacity to impose market discipline on the workers?

The world bourgeoisie resting on a domestic comprador layer? But if foreigners take over the best enterprises there will be a growing popular feeling that the national wealth is being sold off. And what will happen to the non-profitable enterprises, why should private capital bother to refloat them?

c) How can privatization be justified in the eyes of the population and the working class?

Free distribution of share coupons to the whole population seems to be the most common answer. But the results are far from conclusive. The distribution of shares to the workers at preferential rates is not generally supported by the most enthusiastic partisans of capitalism. They see the risk that this practise might perpetuate “self-management misconceptions”.

d) What balance between privatization and the public sector?

Confronted with disastrous schemes proposed by “young Turk” economists of a radical neo-liberal bent we are seeing the rise of the more pragmatic representatives of the “industrial party” — the nomenklatura of the big enterprises which wants to protect itself from the world and domestic market and also from social tensions.

The state makes a comeback

Neo-liberal policies are turning out to be more and more inefficient and counter-productive, if not straightforwardly destructive of the economic, cultural and social potential of the country — the text by Jacek Kuron published on page 26 is eloquent in this respect. Last year the Polish historian Geremek expressed his disillusionment: “We thought we would draw closer to the West, but we are heading South”. The “radical democrats” promised that their proposals would yield improvements in the satisfaction of needs in general.

The hopes placed in the automatic virtues of the market and privatization were based on what people saw in the shop windows of the West and on the predictions of “experts” and did not imply acceptance of market regulation and capitalism. At this second level the ruling liberal groups still

lack a social base.

The vagueness of their formulations reflected the popular mood and illusory promises: “man, liberty and the market” was the title of Shatalin’s radical programme for Russia when he explained his plans to the Moscow media. According to him, the market would be a way of giving individual citizens back control over property despoliated by the bureaucracy and the liberty suppressed by the single party. Furthermore, by a process of reversal, the decades of official anti-capitalist propaganda led people to dismiss criticism of the West.

The advantages of the so-called socialist countries were closely intertwined with their deficiencies. Thus, at least at first, the workers hoped to be able to *keep* social rights while disposing of the bureaucracy through the market and privatization. But the latter in reality bring unemployment *instead* of full employment, products at inaccessible prices *instead* of poor quality but cheap goods, and so on.

Today, we are seeing the appearance of a more favourable view of the past, while attitudes to capitalism depend on what people and groups have got from contact with it. For some, capitalism has brought affordable and better quality goods and higher wages, there being more of such people in the Czech Republic than in Poland, the former USSR and Romania.

In general, we are seeing social resistance sufficient to block liberal advance but without the organization or programme to present a socialist alternative. Nonetheless, the coming to power in Russia of representatives of the bureaucracy who are more in touch with the workers is a sign that liberal policies are in crisis. There is a turn towards more state intervention. But with what social logic and in favour of what system?

In Germany the answer is clear, since here the former GDR is being absorbed by a powerful pre-existing bourgeois state based on a developed system of market regulation. The stagnation of privatization and the social tensions mean even in Germany an increase in the role of the state and the public sector on the basis of world capitalist criteria and prices. Germany has the means to cope with this, even if it may adversely affect the construction of Maastricht Europe.

But elsewhere, where there is a lack of capital, the strengthening of the role of the state means protection from domestic and international market pressure. But it may prove difficult to protect the existing economy without allying with those who reject the market and without protecting the old system as well. This is the dilemma

facing the rulers.

Even in the former GDR capitalism has not yet prevailed. The old structures continue to exist behind new forms with their own relation of social forces and mechanisms. The disintegration of the party/state has enhanced the role of the "men on the ground" at the head of the big industrial combines and local or regional authorities. Lobbies who used to bargain with the central planners to increase their resources and determine the plan's objectives have taken the central regime hostage. The latter can no longer find support in a centralized party/state apparatus that could act as a counterweight to the lobbies. Inter-enterprise credit escaping any control is accompanied by barter relations which maintain the traditional relationships between the big enterprises.

The latter have performed their productive function on the basis of definite social relations with the workers. The main attractions for workers and motives for fulfilling the plan were not monetary but such things as crèches, housing and the direct distribution of scarce goods and services. Sometimes the workers' whole life was structured by a few huge enterprises (or even just one) providing all local employment.

In all such countries — including China — these factors aggravate the social implications of introducing market regulation. In China they have made it impossible to challenge security of employment despite decisions to force up labour productivity. The same will be true of Russia despite the formal adoption of a law on bankruptcy in November 1992.

Managers and workers

At the same time, there was a tense but real convergence of interests between workers and managers in their bargaining with the centre over plan objectives and resource allocation. This relation continues to be expressed in resistance to the abolition of subsidies and price reform. It is one of the chief factors holding back the widespread appearance of workers' strikes and unions that are genuinely independent of the employers.

In such a context, odd politico-social alliances can appear at the centre — as in Russia. For some resistance to liberalism means defence of social protection; for others a means of protecting their industry in the framework of a future national "state capitalism"; and for still others — people utterly hostile to capitalism as such — outright resistance to the very aims of the reforms.

It is not enough for the ruling bureau-

cracies in these countries to want to become capitalists for this to happen. Pragmatism makes them aware of the dangers to their positions involved in capitalist restoration. Unemployment will not be restricted to workers, there is a political witch-hunt already underway against sections of the former rulers, and workers' revolts are another danger.

One emerging variant of "conservatism" — which does not mean a straightforward return to the past — is an alliance between nationalism and an egalitarian anti-liberal, and even workerist viewpoint. This could produce forms of national socialism or populism with clear fascist features, as in Serbia. But, above all, "privatization" in the sense of the scrapping of the old structures of centralized power does not, for all that, mean the adoption of capitalist laws. As they say in Hungary "we thought we were going from the plan to the market, but in fact we have gone from the plan to the clan". For the bureaucrats, direct personal relations with local authorities and with the workers can be more profitable and more reliable than confrontation. And it may well prove easier to feed parasitically off the market than to submit to its dictates.

Large parts of the bureaucracy see capitalism as the only solution. But capitalism does not appear at the wave of a magic wand. Capitalist restoration is credible when international capital is ready to invest and where the economic crisis is not too deep — as is true in the mark zone at present.

Pre- or post-capitalist?

There is no "symmetry" between revolution and counter-revolution. As a popular East European saying has it, going from the fish to the soup poses different problems to going from the soup to the fish.

It has sometimes been said of Soviet-type societies that they are pre- rather than post-capitalist both in terms of overall economic development and social relations. On the latter front analogies have been drawn with feudal societies on the basis of the existence of non-market relations of domination and protection between bureaucrats and workers.

Despite the existence of a wage form of payment, the big enterprises only attract and keep workers by the provision of scarce goods and services. This is the essential reason for the failure to apply instructions about making enterprises profitable. Now, so the argument goes, as in the passage from feudalism to capitalism, so in that

from "socialism" to capitalism the worker must become wholly subjected to the market and the wage should be the only form of payment for his/her work.

However, unlike in pre-capitalist societies, many other "resources" are distributed in a specific money form in Soviet-type societies. An essential part of the "social wage" takes the form of subsidized distribution of transport, healthcare, basic goods and culture. This explains the especially dramatic and retrogressive impact of price changes. We are not dealing here with serfs or small artisans to be turned into a proletariat. The latter already exists massively and in big concentrations alongside an absence of a significant bourgeoisie and a sufficient accumulation of primitive capital. On the other side there is the power of world capitalism.

The workers in whose name the bureaucrats ruled for decades were told they were the only source of value. They were told they were the owners of social wealth. This is why one of the main problems for the new rulers is how to justify privatization. The free distribution of share vouchers is a favoured answer, reflecting the fact that in popular consciousness property belongs to all and to nobody — and in any case not to the bureaucracy.

Nor can the bureaucracy take ownership by decree. The "wild privatizations" grabbed by the bureaucracy in the early days have often been overruled or rendered formal.

And this reflects post-capitalist aspects of these societies which can be summed up as: the acquired strength of the workers, despite the fact that power has been expropriated from them and they are deprived of independent organization. This state of affairs does not give this proletariat a politically coherent vision of a socialist alternative. But it does provide means of resistance to full-scale capitalism.

The proof of capitalist restoration lies in an achieved change in economic logic. This implies changes in the social relation of forces which really make the workers subject to the labour market; make money into capital that can be invested in means of production to reap surplus value; and make profit the criterion for investment and management, even in the public sector.

It is not necessary for all the means of production to be privatized for this to be achieved nor that the only logic at work is capitalist. But capitalist logic must prevail. Such a state of affairs does not exist in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union now and there is no inevitability that it will exist. ★

Winter of uneasy calm

THE gathering socio-economic crisis in Russia has unfolded according to a novel scenario. One might have expected the 30 to 40% fall in living standards of the majority of the population — those who live on wages or pensions — in the past two years to be greeted by mass upheaval, the birth of active social movements and the growth of workers self-organization. Indeed, most socialist organizations based their tactics on this assumption.

ALEXANDER BUZGALIN — Moscow, February 17, 1993

LIFE, however, turned out otherwise. In the first place, the workers' movement has had a hard time making the change from organs of state to independent unions, while the nascent local and regional self-management bodies disintegrated almost as soon as they were born.

Secondly, the democratic political organizations on the left of the spectrum failed to break out from being small groups of activists, usually of a few dozen people in the big cities; even in the best circumstances they draw their grassroots support from the amorphous and passive mass of former Communist Party members. The left remains locked into a permanent division between the former "informals" (Party of Labour, left social democrats, Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, and so forth) and organizations with their origins in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), such as the Socialist Workers Party (SPT) or Russian Party of Communists (RPK).

And thirdly, the dominant force among the more or less active opponents of the regime has turned out to be not the democratic left but the so-called "red-white" movement. This unites the orthodox Communists of the Russian Communist Workers Party and neo-Stalinists with the right bourgeois and even monarchist organizations. They mobilize around national/patriotic slogans and their programme is that of a revival of Russia as a great power.

Unlike the left movement, the powers-that-be have strengthened their

position in terms of laws and internal bureaucratic structures to such an extent that they can permit themselves an open factional struggle between two groups — the Civic Union on the one hand and the Yeltsin-Burbulis-Gaidar team on the other.

This struggle, however, is not one between political parties and organizations in the traditional sense of the word. The main conflicts take place in the bureaucratic structures at its different levels, from the directors of the state enterprises (now pseudo-joint stock companies), the heads of the regional administrations, to the various presidents and premiers (of whom there are several in the Russian Federation). The parties and movements on the right of the political spectrum have gradually turned into crowds of extras in this battle in the bureaucratic circus-ring.

This was the Russian political picture in autumn 1992.

1. General reasons for the decline of the left movement

An essential condition for the gathering crisis is the conformism of the majority of the country's population. This conformism is the product of decades of political stagnation, hardly stirred during the perestroika years and firmed up again in the past year or so in a new form. People accustomed to following government orders and subjection to the system of non-economic constraints of "really existing socialism", possessing very little

in the way of traditions of independent social life and self-organization, have been sucked into the maelstrom of the bureaucratic-mafia market usually without knowing how to swim.

People used to obedience and to working exclusively according to bureaucratic rules but also to certain social guarantees have suddenly been hurled into a new reality.

Here both the old barriers and the guarantees are gone. Life now follows a new universal rule: everybody for themselves; the war of each against all. The bureaucratic guarantees have given way to the struggle of all against all on the market; one form of alienation has been replaced by another. However, unlike in a fully formed market system, this new world lacks any kind of stable new rules for social life. Property and prices, moral values and legal norms, prime ministers and borders all change with unimaginable speed and instability. People find themselves in an institutional and normative vacuum.

Some poorly defined clumps of dry land are to be found in this vacuum (or swamp). These centres of economic, social and political power subject the life of the "ordinary" person to their will. On these misty islands we can dimly make out the forms of the old state-party nomenclatura, newly decked out as directors of enterprises and firms, and the *nouveaux riches* — in their majority more or less directly connected to the former; in short the new political elite.

The economic crisis and the break-up of the country have only added to the chaos. It is not as yet so deep that the majority of the population have seriously suffered. Despite the fall in living standards, the majority of workers, peasants and intellectuals are not facing immediate hunger or poverty. The crisis, furthermore, is extremely uneven; a worker or engineer with one and the same qualifications can have a widely varying level of consumption depending on where they live and the nature of their enterprise. If we add to this the continual but unpredictable and rather arbitrary government handouts, the wide possibilities for speculation, and the general disorganization, we see how the crisis itself tends to

increase division among the workers and their mutual alienation.

It is hard for the "ordinary person" plunged into this new world to come to an understanding of his or her basic interests. This remains the case even if we take into account some counter-factors; we have come out of a totalitarian system which contained, even if in a mutant form, real germs of socialism, for example, the striving for social justice and enthusiasm (the capacity to work collectively for the future), and traditions of collectivism and self-government. All these were and remain one aspect of Russian social psychology.

Furthermore, *perestroika*, whatever the minuses, brought into being, at least on a small scale, a real and durable tradition of anti-totalitarianism — the defence of democracy, *glasnost* and human rights. As a result the country has a layer of people capable of collective social creativity.

The basic problems of the workers and social movement in our country over the past few years arise out of the tension between these two assertions; on the one hand the mass of workers, despite the crisis, remain passive, and are ruled by conformism and the desire to retreat into their own world; on the other there is a weak but persistent left democratic tradition of both a social and political character.

2. The socialist movement's first attempt to overcome its crisis (the left on the eve of the Congress of People's Deputies).

In spite of the clear failure of efforts to make a big breakthrough towards forming a mass democratic left movement, in autumn 1992 Russia's socialists and communists were able to take a practical

first step to make themselves into a real social and political force.

In the course of 1992 the first efforts were made to form left political parties. The post-Communist parties (the Socialist Workers Party — SPT and the Russian Party of Communists — RPK) were registered and the Party of Labour (PT) had its founding conference, while left social democrats formed an organized faction.

All these organizations are rather amorphous, drawing in a very broad spectrum of political views, but first steps were being taken and practical work was underway in the urban centres.

At the same time, the interminable attempts to achieve unity achieved an initial success on November 28-29 with the first Congress of the Democratic Left which brought together 1,200 delegates and 300 guests from all the major regions of Russia, from most countries of the CIS and the Baltic States and Caucasus as well as from Europe, Asia, America and Australia. The main left parties attended as well as groups of left social democrats and the nationalist Free Russia party associated with Russian vice-premier Alexander Rutskoy and a series of other democratic, socialist and communist-oriented organizations.

Furthermore, and especially important, leaders of the Russian trade unions, the Union of Work Collectives, and women's and ecological movements also agreed to take part as did nationally known figures from the worlds of culture, science and the press.

This is more than just a question of reciting an impressive list. The conference signified a real breakthrough in terms of creating unity between the post-CPs, "new left" democratic parties and social organizations. The endless pronouncements on the need to form a new social force in the country, fundamentally different both from the Stalinist "neo-Bol-

shevik" and "backwoods patriotic" type, and from the forms preferred by the liberal camp, had finally produced some practical results.

At the same time, the step forward had its ambiguities and the unity achieved is very fragile. The congress documents are the result of laborious compromises between different groups and are correspondingly flabby; the rare criticisms of the government are balanced by a diffuse positive assessment and an extremely vague dissociation from the great power chauvinist forces.

In both the SPT and the RPK, especially in the regions, the ideas of anti-Yeltsin unity and the recreation of the USSR as a force in which both we and our children could feel pride are quite strong. Such notions can have their positive side, especially for people not accustomed to a dialectical approach to national problems.

The boundaries of the Movement of Left Forces are vague; on one side there is a pull towards the chauvinist "red-whites", on the other, there is the weight of the Civic Union bloc and other similar structures.

Concluding on the eve of the Congress of People's Deputies, the Movement of the Democratic Left vanished for two weeks into the dust of the congress battle between the unstable majority, and the presidential team and its supporters in the congress. The Democratic Left did not, however, come out of those turbulent hours much different from when it went in.

3. Winter 1992-93: new opportunities for the democratic left?

The People's Congress exposed the tragic political situation in Russia. Despite, or because, of its deficiencies, the Congress was a mirror of the swamp in



which Russia now finds itself. The majority of deputies did not and do not have a firm social-political position, reflecting in this the majority of the population, and were mainly concerned with the problem of their own self-preservation.

This majority eschewed the extremes it saw embodied in the adventurist course proposed by Gaidar from its powerful conformist reflexes rather than from any concern for democracy. This was in line with the passive and indecisive feelings of the majority of the population, able to frustrate and even depose leaders but extremely hesitant when it comes to taking any positive practical steps.

Confronted with the president's threat to dissolve the congress, the deputies took some extremely cautious steps towards a different economic course and imposed a change of premier and a number of retreats on President Yeltsin.

The "official opposition" to the Yeltsin-Gaidar line, the Civic Union (GC), wheeled and dealt in the corridors with the aim of getting its own people into key posts, in the sincere conviction that they were thereby fighting for the salvation of the fatherland.

The economic programme worked out by experts close to the GC would indeed be far more helpful in getting the country out of the crisis than Gaidar's monetarist experiments, but there is no guarantee that once in power the GC's leaders would pursue a qualitatively different line to Gaidar's.

The results of the opposition's intrigues turned out to be far more limited than expected: a new premier surrounded by the old ministers and under the control of the same president.

The hardline opposition to the president's line, which was one of the main currents in the majority, is comprised of extremely heterogeneous groups of people hostile to the government — from moderate "statists" to chauvinists, and from orthodox communists to "strong state" liberals. Despite the decisive weight of this force — both when they acted together among themselves and when they supported the majority on a specific issue, it was only a temporary phenomenon produced by a sense of common threat.

The result of the congress was a calm winter, a lull in which new and far more dangerous and important political battles have been brewing. There are a number of reasons for this lull.

Firstly, the coming to power of the new premier has somewhat checked the disintegration of the economy. This is not because there is a new leader. Rather,

there is a new leader because a powerful group of economic chiefs — specifically, the middle-ranking economic bureaucracy, above all directors of the big state enterprises — could no longer put up with the attacks on their positions and had decided to launch a counter-offensive. Unlike the Gaidarites, these leaders understand that the prevention of the collapse of industry is a condition for their survival. They have therefore taken steps in this sense, mainly at the expense of the workers and without getting to the roots of the crisis.

Secondly, an unstable compromise has been struck between two groups of protagonists of nomenklatura capitalism inside the elite — the supporters of an open economy, a monetarist policy and a drastic reform on the one hand and a faction oriented towards the preservation of the power of the government structures and a moderate reform and a slow drift from nomenklatura socialism to nomenklatura capitalism on the other. The political scene is shaped by the fact that neither side can get the upper hand.

Thirdly, "the people are silent". The majority of the population are not concerned with politics but with survival at a time of a worsening crisis of economic, social and even government institutions. The conformists have lost faith in the existing power structures and secretly long for a new strongman — an extremely dangerous mood in our country with its rich totalitarian traditions and weak democratic guarantees. The average worker hopes above all that he or she is not the next to be fired and that their wages will be raised again.

This poses certain tasks for the Democratic Left. In my view the lull offers a rare opportunity for the creation of unity of the different political and social forces grounded in the reality that the creation of a real democracy — one based on the effective rule of the people — is an indispensable condition for the country to find a way out of its crisis.

Will the chance be taken? There is time. We are entering a confusing period of political realignments, in particular through the refounding process of the Russian Communist party on the basis of the two post-CPSU organizations and the preparation of the second Congress of the Democratic Left, which, let us hope, may bring into being collaboration between socialist-oriented political and social organizations.

The most important recent development has been the Second (Special) Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the refounding

congress of the CPSU in Russia. At the moment of its founding the party had half a million members, according to the organizers — which would make it the biggest party in the country. However, from the moment of its birth this organization is torn by powerful internal conflicts.

At one pole are the rank-and-file Communists, who feel the need to unite all forces in the struggle against the growing global crisis resulting from the policies of the Yeltsin team and a wish to "restore socialism".

At the other is the absence of a precise political programme — the programme adopted contains nothing more than a few generalities — an absence of any answers to the question of why "socialism" collapsed in the USSR (references to treachery at the top are only a proof of this), efforts to re-establish iron unity and the suppression of factions and other signs that the CPRF is full of people who have "forgotten nothing and learned nothing".

Furthermore, this party is very close to the National Salvation Front, the organization of the "statists" with a chauvinist, restoration of power, outlook. This was clear from the speeches of many congress delegates and the choice of Zyuganov, co-president of the NSF, as president of the party's central executive committee.

The issue of how to work with members of this organization is one of the main problems facing the Democratic Left. In the midst of the hundreds of thousands of members of the CPRF are many communist-democrats who can see no other viable left political force in the country. Democratic oppositions may well appear inside the CPRF. Time will tell.

In any case the left spectrum can now be seen in terms of three forces. On one pole the RKRP and the neo-Stalinists, on the other the Democratic Left and in between the bigger but amorphous CPRF.

Indeed, the "dead devour the living"; there has been no revolutionary change to the social system in the country. The bloc of conformists and the nomenklatura has merely changed its form, and it is no surprise therefore that the political picture has many similarities with that which existed on the eve of the breakup of the USSR.

Nonetheless, the democratic left has learnt a bit in the past year or two; it is more firmly established and stronger. The scale of these advances will be measured in the coming months. ★

The shotgun divorce

AT the start of this year, federal Czechoslovakia disappeared to be replaced by separate Czech and Slovak states. IV talked to Vratia Votava, a Left Bloc deputy in the Czech parliament and journalist Adam Novak about the split.

**INTERVIEW —
Prague, January 14, 1993**

HOW did the separation come about and who wanted it?

Adam: The division of the Czechoslovak state is the result of the different nature of the paths to capitalist restoration taken in the two parts of the federation after November 1989. In the Czech part, owing to the more developed links with the West and social and economic specificities the reforms have aroused the hope in considerable sections of the population that they can achieve a "Western living standard". This is why Vaclav Klaus' Civic Democratic Union (ODS) which supports economic shock therapy did so well in the June 1992 elections. In Slovakia Klaus' policies had a negative impact from the outset and this expressed itself in opposition to a policy dictated from the federal capital Prague.

Was it the wish of the majority of the Slovak population that the Czechoslovak federation should be divided?

Vratia: In the June elections, the only party that supported separation, the Slovak National Party (SSN), won only 10% of the votes. The most successful party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia of Vladimir Meciar, proposed a transition from a federation to a confederation which he presented as a free association of two republics. At that time he never mentioned independence. In fact, the Slovak leaders were pushed down the path of separation by the refusal of their Czech counterparts to compromise. From the start of the negotiations, the Czech side insisted that there was only one choice — between a highly centralized federal state or complete sepa-

ration. Since the first option was clearly unacceptable for Meciar, the second was obligatory.

Adam: The majority of the population both in the Czech Lands and Slovakia were against the division. The elites on both sides have concentrated all political power in their hands and created a kind of nationalist hysteria with the help of the press. They have claimed that there was no alternative and that they had to be given full confidence to undertake the negotiations.

The population has been completely excluded from the decision making process. In the Czech part opposition to the break-up took the form of the demand for a referendum. At first figures such as federal president Vaclav Havel supported this demand, but he dropped it in the hope of becoming Czech president.

Who supported the referendum idea?

Vratia: According to the constitution such a separation could only come about through a referendum. Havel put this to parliament but there was a majority against — in particular the deputies from Klaus party opposed a referendum. The Slovak government continued to support a referendum until December 1992 while the Czech government rejected it straight after the June 1992 elections. In Slovakia, apart from Meciar's party, a referendum was supported by the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH).

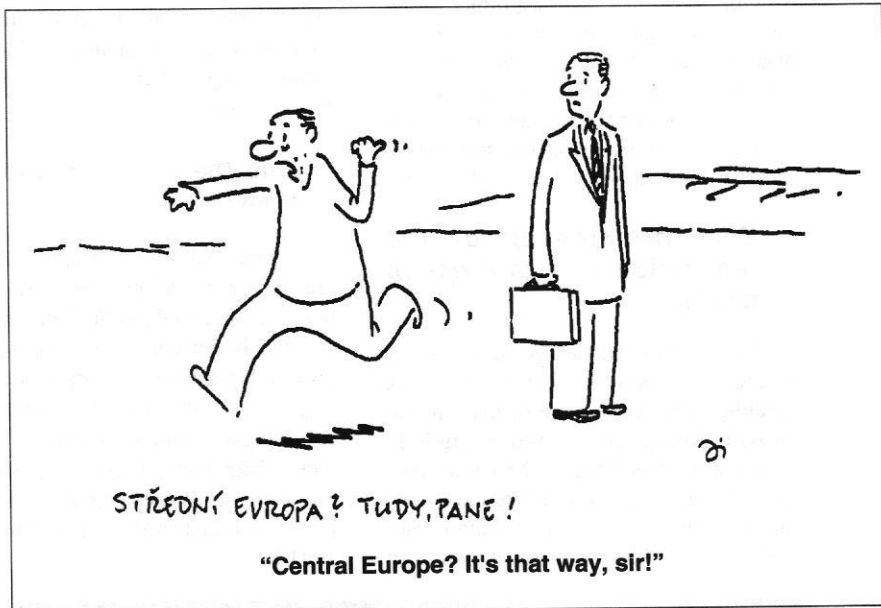
In the Czech Lands backing for a referendum was mainly the property of the left and centre left — the social democrats and the Left Bloc on the one hand and of the far right Republicans on the other.

However, the Czech left was not able to launch a real mass campaign for a referendum. In particular, the Communist Party (KSCM) which dominates the Left Bloc refused to wage this battle. The party leader Jiri Svoboda never spoke at pro-referendum rallies. Basically, the KSCM kept quiet because it did not want direct confrontation with the government. Thus, while such i were called by the Left Bloc they lacked impact owing to the failure of KSCM leaders to take part.

Adam: Apart from the Left Bloc, which organized these demonstrations along with various anarchist groups, all the other parliamentary groups, and in particular the social democrats, refused to take the debate to the streets and refused to act together with the Communists. In parliament, Vratia proposed a campaign of civil disobedience that could have taken the form of a symbolic general strike.

Meanwhile, the social democrat deputy Milos Zeman proposed a demonstration under the Czechoslovak flag rather than under the Czech flag, but these two proposals went unheeded.

The main leftwing demonstration in Prague only brought out about 1,000 people. On the other hand the far right Republicans were able to mobilize 10,000, mainly elderly people.



You were present at the congress of the Communist Party in December 1992. Was there any kind of criticism of the party leadership's passivity over this issue?

Vratia: The congress accepted the division as a *fait accompli*. Only a few delegates expressed their regret that there was no referendum.

Adam: The party did not want to be absent at the moment of the creation of the Czech state. It wanted to look responsible and constructive.

Vratia: This needs to be looked at in a wider context. Currently the KSCM, while reaffirming its socialist outlook does not consider this realizable in the present circumstances. It thus emphasizes the need to counteract the worst effects of the neo-liberal programme — it does not talk of the restoration of capitalism. There are three broad currents in the KSCM: a Stalinist current which was not much in evidence at the congress, a pragmatist majority (including the majority of the party's 33 deputies) who think in terms of a party like the Italian PDS (Democratic Party of the Left — ex-CP) and then there is an "alternative" left current composed of younger elements grouped in the Young Communists Union. The Democratic Forum of Communists and the Self-Management Club of Communists are involved in this.

The main discussion at the congress was over changing its name. The proposal to rename it the Democratic Left Party was rejected with a 75% vote against. The underlying issue here was that of the speed of social democratization of the party.

I intervened to say that it would be better to discuss programme rather than the name and that we should take new inspiration from Marxism and return to the struggle for self-management and self-organization. I denounced the fact that the former ruling bureaucracy has reconverted itself into a dynamic and leading element in the restoration of capitalism. I insisted on the need to support all struggles of resistance to develop self-organization to the maximum and make a special effort to communicate with youth.

Will the breakup of the federation lead to a rise in racism?

Vratia: The economic as well as human relations between the Czech and Slovak republics will be a source of tension, the measures having been adopted in a rush. In particular Slovaks living in the Czech republic will face problems. There have been rumours that they will have to return to Slovakia or pay 2,000 crowns (slightly less than

the average monthly wage) to get Czech citizenship.

Other rumours have been circulating among the Czechs: that there will be a flood of Slovaks into the Czech Lands, and that many Gypsies will move from Slovakia to the Czech Lands. Many people are racist towards the Gypsies who are accused of being the source of criminality. One far right group, the Club of Committed Non-Party Members, has called for the arming of civilians against the alleged criminality of Gypsies. A situation like that in Germany can easily develop here.

Are there any Gypsy deputies?

Adam: Only one — Ladislav Bodi on the Left Bloc slate. The Left Bloc has been alone in including Gypsies on its electoral lists. Bodi, a deputy in the Czech parliament, was elected as a Czechoslovak citizen although he is officially of Slovak nationality (he left Slovakia when he was two years old).

This gives you some idea of the complexities facing Gypsies. Two years ago it became possible to declare Gypsy as a nationality but only 5,000 of the estimated 700-900,000 Gypsies have so declared themselves. According to some sources about a half of Gypsies understand Romany and about one third speak it. The old Stalinist regime pursued a policy of maximizing assimilation of Gypsies into the Czech and Slovak populations. Their oppression was and remains real. For example, nine out of ten Gypsies leave school without any qualifications and less than two out of every 1,000 have a university degree.

Are there other targets of racism?

Adam: Two years ago, Vietnam immigrant workers (some 60,000) and Cubans were the victims of skinhead attacks. The recent upsurge of racism has been marked by anti-semitism.

And the anti-racist mobilizations?

Vratia: We played an active role in the organization of the first anti-racist mobilizations. In April 1990, as the Left Alternative, we organized in collaboration with the anarchists a big anti-racist concert. In 1992, we organized a 2,000 strong demonstration — a real success in current conditions. We also took a delegation to Brussels on October 24. We are currently preparing a big anti-fascist and anti-racist mobilization for March 1993.★

The aspirations of youth

YOUNG people in the Czech Republic want freedom and social and job security.

This is the conclusion drawn by Czech parliamentary deputy and head of the League of Communist Youth, Martin Chudoba — at 24 the youngest member of the Czech parliament — and Adam Nezval from a survey based on official materials on youth attitudes to be published in *IV's* Czech sister publication *Inprekor*.

Some 43% put freedom in general and 28% freedom to travel at the top of their list of what they like most about the new situation. Of features of the old regime, social security gets 43% and job security 37% of their preferences.

While about half of 17 to 18 year olds are content with the current state of affairs, only 29% of 21-22 year olds are — which the authors consider may have to do with the impact of facing the realities of the job market.

At present only 38% feel they suffer from the existence of unemployment, compared to 86% from inflation and 89% from lack of money.

More young people find the present regime extremely corrupt (12%) than they do the previous regime (5%) — a view that in some cases leads to acceptance of the catch-all rightwing explanation that continuing "Communist influence" is to blame for all the country's current ills. However, the authors find little evidence of basic sympathy for fascist or authoritarian ideas.

As they comment, "the results of the survey are further evidence for the faint-hearted that the concerns of the youth can be articulated in a radical left programme".

Indeed, "only 29% of young people think the economic reforms will bring a higher standard of living for everyone; 41% think only a small part of the population will benefit". ★

The poverty of utopia

JACEK KURON, author of the text excerpted in the following pages, has been one of Poland's most prominent political personalities over the past 30 years. Imprisoned in 1964 for his revolutionary communist ideas he was one of the inspirations of the student and intellectual revolt of 1968.

JAN MALEWSKI

IN 1976, he was one of the founders of the Workers Defence Committee (KOR) and his strategic thinking played a role in the emergence of the independent workers' movement which finally blossomed into Solidarnosc in 1980. Again in 1987-88 his writings were a major influence in the working out of the so-called round table compromise which ushered in the end of General Jaruzelski's regime. Today he is the minister in charge of labour and social security, in a coalition government in which his current is a junior partner alongside Catholic fundamentalists.

The striking thing about the thoughts expressed in his text is his lucid appreciation of contemporary Polish realities — growing social discontent, the acceptance that the new order has done away with social gains and the recognition of the absence of a project by which the new regime can mobilize society and win support and not merely tolerance.

Faced with rising social discontent and split by debates, among the most important being the struggle between supporters of parliamentary democracy and Catholic fundamentalists seeking to impose an authoritarian religious-based moral order, the new rulers of Poland are seeking a second wind. The union support it used to be able to count on from Solidarnosc, even if widened by the social pact signed on February 21, 1993, is not a long-term solution. While tripartite commissions, co-management and co-responsibility may appear as solutions to the union leaders, they have no such credibility for the majority of workers.

This is the context for Kuron's remarks on social values. The vast social movement built around Solidarnosc was ripe with a social project, which was sacrificed by the union's leaders on the altar of negotiations with the bureaucracy. The results of three years of forced march towards capitalism are perceived by the majority of those who supported and trusted Solidarnosc as a betrayal of their rights and aspirations. It is such people, today resigned and apathetic, when not openly hostile, who Kuron wants to mobilize around his utopia of a socially just capitalism

In doing this Jacek Kuron summons up his own past writings. In December 1977 he wrote: "No one needs to be told that the unlimited right of self-enrichment may entail obligatory poverty for many. Thus to realize the well-being of each human being in social practice as the supreme value, the principle of social justice is indispensable".¹

While even then he supported, in the name of efficiency, liberal principles for fixing wages, he added that "these propositions are unjust as criteria for the distribution of the social product". In those days he considered "the production of material goods outside of any social control and totalitarianism" as the main problems of the contemporary world and supported "the liberation of labour via self-management in the broad sense".

Plan and self-management

Indeed he proposed the development of self-management movements in all spheres of social, economic and political life, explaining that such movements should "tend to take state planning and social cooperation over from the state and carry out this plan in an independent and self-managing way. Thus there would be a plan, which, while centralizing everything that should be centralized, would at the same time create the conditions for the independence of social groups, regions and the smallest units of production".

However, the choice of an orientation towards capitalism — made with Kuron's conscious participation — silenced the generous intentions of our author. The neo-liberal market option has put an end

The Social Pact

THE pact signed on February 21, 1993 by the government and managers' representatives separately with Solidarnosc and other unions, foresees the speeding up of privatization. The workers have been given the right to choose the form of privatization (in common with the directors), 10% of the shares and representation in co-management organs. the tax on the capital of public enterprises — the "dividend" — is abolished and replaced by a tax on profits. ★

not only to conscious social cooperation and the welfare state but has led to such a deep decline in production that the state no longer has the means for social redistribution.

One of Kuron's subordinates at the labour ministry has explained that they simply do not have the means to feed starving children.² Worse, the decentralization of social welfare, of which Kuron is one of the authors is now suffering because such aid has been cut to balance local budgets.

Thus, in his attempt to pick up the broken thread of the utopia of social justice in a capitalist society, Jacek Kuron is reduced to proposing not the emancipation of labour and still less social control over production as the means for realizing his ends but the mutual management of poverty with possible state aid in the form of tax deductions.

However, in the prevailing political climate in Poland where there is little to be heard but invective, Kuron's statement has the merit of raising essential issues. And even the very term "social justice" (presented by the ultra-liberals as a Stalinist invention) has a subversive sound coming from Kuron. ★

1. Jacek Kuron: *Zasady Ideowé* (Ideological principles), ILP, Paris, 1978.

2. Quoted in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 43, February 20-21, 1993, in a shocking report on malnutrition among school age children in several parts of the country.

Poland and the "myth of social justice"

"REALLY existing socialism was an attempt to realize the ideal of social justice through distribution and thus through the suppression of the market."

This is how Jacek Kuron, long-time Polish dissident and now Minister of Labour introduces his recent article on "the utopia of social justice after the fall of communism", of which major extracts follow.

DOCUMENT*

EVERYONE knows that the effect of the suppression of the market was the absence of any economic efficiency. It is less often pointed out that the suppression of the market led to an explosion of demand. On the market one can only buy the equivalent of the money possessed. When the market is replaced by distribution there are no limits to demand.

This means that various forms of rationing had to be used: public forms, such as vouchers and queues, and hidden forms — "privileged access" and corruption. And when there is distribution, some get more and others less, some are privileged and others discriminated against. In this way the principle of social justice was qualified.

The end of mass terror in 1956 allowed social pressures for justice to appear in the form of strikes, demonstrations and later on broad organized movements. They demanded an end to privileges, and general access to goods needed for a decent life. That is, they said yes to socialism and no to its "deformations".

The establishment of a market economy was in line with the aspirations of society as a whole. People expected a rapid improvement of living conditions and believed in the Solidarnosc movement which had allowed them to become

conscious historical actors while putting forward concrete demands.

The social injustice inherent in a market economy was clear from the start. In January and February 1990 the shops were filled. But very few of the "middle class" — which in People's Poland was taken to include skilled workers, school teachers, white collar workers, doctors and middle peasants — could buy what was in the shops. At the same time, they began to have to pay the market price for goods and services such as housing, energy, nursery schools and holidays that had previously been almost free.

Thus we now have on the one side a pressure on the government to help people live according to the principle of social justice and on the other less and less money for education, health, pensions and social assistance. The budget shrinks as the main source of its revenues, public sector industry, shrinks. The rapidly developing private sector pays in little, as our financial apparatus is not adapted to the monitoring of a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The former social welfare system has collapsed and a new system is only developing slowly and with difficulty. People fear the future. Along with the market economy unemployment has appeared as have social security payments and assistance.

Discontent with the government is growing at the same time as disillusionment with the market. In such conditions all kinds of political demagoguery flourish, parliament is divided and governments change frequently.

Growth of private sector

Despite all these difficulties many people and circles are functioning effectively in the new conditions. At the moment, almost half of non-agricultural production comes from the private sector compared to less than 10% a decade ago. The private non-agricultural sector employs 42% of the labour force, also compared to 10% ten years ago. Services have developed and today employ nearly 40% of the non-agricultural labour force — up from 16% in the same period.

Exports are growing and more of our products are of world quality.

The organs of local democracy elected in 1990 have largely come up to scratch. On the whole their finances are sound, unlike those of central government. A whole range of social and economic initiatives, of foundations and associations, have appeared. The changes at a local level are considered positive by nearly 60% of the population.

The official propaganda of really existing socialism claimed a special role for the working class in society — as the leading force in the nation and as the ruling class. The workers in the big enterprises enjoyed privileges in terms of wages, and perhaps even more important, access to goods distributed by the state such as housing, health services, holiday sites, enterprise shops, canteens, and vouchers for buying consumer goods. A worker in such a factory was protected in almost all aspects of life and enjoyed great social prestige.

Role of the working class

However, in daily life, the real role of the working class had nothing in common with the mythical role proclaimed by the party leaders and ideologues. It approached that role in 1956 and 1970-71 when workers in the big enterprises forced changes in the leadership and policies of the ruling party.

In August 1980, too, workers in the Gdansk dockyard spoke in the name of society and the nation in negotiations with the regime which they treated as a force external to society. Solidarnosc realized the myth of the working class — leading force in the nation! The union was organized around the big enterprises and around the union was organized the overwhelming majority of society. After 1981, under martial law, social resistance took many forms, but it was strikes by young workers raising the slogan "no freedom without Solidarnosc" which frightened the generals and party bosses into retreating.

When Solidarnosc won the elections in June 1989 and a government was named under a prime minister from the movement, the working class had ceased to be

* This article first appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 13-14, 1993.

the leading force in the nation. For a long time, this was not clear to Solidarnosc militants, who continued to cling to general and national slogans, but it became clear to everybody that these were now only decorations attached to enterprise or branch demands.

The movement in support of Lech Walesa's presidential campaign was partly an attempt to preserve the myth of the working class and give Solidarnosc back the role it had had in 1980-81. At the same time it reflected a rejection of the policies of the government that Solidarnosc had itself produced, which were considered anti-worker. However, Walesa's support for Balcerowicz as head of economic policy put an end to such hopes.

It is true that the successive governments have left the public enterprises to their own devices in the hope that the market would force them to change. However, this has proved impossible for the majority of them. Furthermore, the priority given to mining, heavy and military industries under really existing socialism is anachronistic. These branches must be rationalized and our light industry, which is unable to compete on world markets, must also be restructured.

Looked at from the point of view of the government and political elites this task poses immense problems and requires means which it does not have.

Meanwhile, workers in big industry are being told that neither public enterprises nor the branch they work in have a future. Uncertain and fearful of what is to come they show their rejection of the government.

Privatization rejected

Indeed, in the light of the above it is surprising that only a half of workers in the big public enterprises totally reject privatization. Five percent accept it unreservedly while 40% admit that their enterprises need investment and better management. This 45% is probably the result of the privatizations already undertaken which have seen wage improvements for workers. But the majority of workers over-estimate the value and condition of their enterprises and view every privatization offer as a swindle.

The collapse of really existing socialism has not given workers liberty and a sense of being masters of their destiny. On the contrary, they have lost not only privileges and social security but also social standing. Furthermore, they feel like objects, a toy of forces that they do not understand and from which they expect the worst.

The process of economic change

pushes workers in public enterprises into a corner and leads to a radicalization in the unions.

Solidarnosc, willingly or not, has given its name to all the governments since 1990. At least, this is how society sees it. At the same time Solidarnosc' members feel the victims of the policies of these governments and have in fact been marginalized. As a result there is a contradiction between Solidarnosc's words and deeds; between radical phraseology and a search for compromise.

The Solidarnosc '80 union founded by former leaders of the union opposed to the round table negotiations between the union and the former Communist government has taken up the cudgels of a consistent defence of the public enterprises. Despite its intentions it in fact proposes a return to the old order of things.

Within the former pro-Communist OPZZ union and the various groups that have split from it, the main line is one of defence of the workers within the (new) existing order. Rarely do OPZZ leaders take up the struggle against the economic changes. Like the majority of Solidarnosc leaders they are seeking a compromise between the interests of workers in public enterprises and the government.

Compromise and confrontation

Thus the main unions — the OPZZ and Solidarnosc — are bent on compromise. Unfortunately, the radicalization of the workers makes such compromise more and more difficult to achieve. This has led to a situation where an increasing number of unions organize fewer and fewer members. At enterprise level these unions are often truly representative, but around 15 of them have registered as national unions.

Many politicians and economists think that the compromise between the interests of public enterprise workers and the state embodied in the programme of transition to a market economy is useless. In a year or two public enterprises and limited companies controlled by the Treasury will be reduced to the margin of the economy. And if, at the same time, the unions collapse, that is all to the good. Of course, they do not put things in such a brutal fashion. But how else can one interpret the attacks on the negotiations on such a pact between the government and the unions?

The aim of the pact is to make the workers and unions partners in management and government in the transformation of the public enterprises and their privatization.

It is true that the workers are most

interested in their wage packets, but the problem is that until recently they got quite a lot and today they are losing more than other professional groups. They consider this unjust and rebel. Either we have to smash their rebellion or negotiate with their representatives.

The endless changes in government have meant that we have fallen behind in working out an overall compromise. This process has only begun after the workers in the public enterprises, and with them the unions, have lost interest in negotiations, and when the unions have become weaker and their authority less.

The miners and railway workers strike in Silesia in December 1992 was supported by about half of the inhabitants of Poland's capital Warsaw. What is the reason for this surprising and disinterested support?

Fear and myths

In the prevailing atmosphere of social discontent, frustration and fear of the future, myths play a big role. The policies of the government of the Third Republic are coming into conflict with the myth of social justice. The majority of Poles view it as a government that takes from the poor and weak and gives to the rich and powerful.

If the government wants to break the strikes it has to face the myth of the working class perceived as a force fighting in the name of the nation and the myth of the strike as a way to resolve the most difficult problems; it will have against it, on an optimistic view, half of society. Again, remaining optimistic, it can hope for the support of a third of society. I cannot see that either side can win such a struggle.

I do not believe in the magic powers of agreements. The workers and social support have to be won for them. More than once after they have been signed there will be strikes, sometimes wildcat and sometimes organized by unions, including Solidarnosc. And various social groups will support the strikes in the name of social justice. Social justice failed under really existing socialism. But I do not believe that we can build a new social order by rejecting a myth believed in by Poles.

The fall of communism has meant the end of an epoch of rivalry and with it the disappearance of the moving forces of collective action. Perhaps this lack of mobilization is the real source of the recession in the industrialized countries of the West. And maybe the crisis of universal ideals that can motivate hearts and minds, and without which civilization is impossible, is one of the main effects of this process. We

see for example particularism, nationalism and fundamentalism rearing their heads around the globe and getting the upper hand.

While it is difficult to define justice, it is clear that it is a universal idea capable of mobilizing the activities of individuals and societies. The notion of social justice is particularly weighty. In Poland it is understood as a basic right to equality in terms of life, work, housing, medical aid, pensions, education, culture and decent living conditions. The aspiration to realize these ideals of social justice must be a task for social movements and governments in Poland and the modern world as a whole.

We already know that there can be no liberty without the market; but the past few years have dramatically reminded us that the market is not identical with liberty. The majority of Poles are too poor to profit from the liberty provided by the market. We must thus find ways of realizing on the market the aspirations of people who do not have enough money.

The justified criticism of a distributive system is accompanied in liberal thought by the conviction that money is a good regulator of demand. However, individual and social activity can also act as such a regulator. This is the function of the search for a compromise in which the government would participate between the interests of social groups through various pacts and tripartite commissions.

Mutual aid

At the same time, we need the foundation of mutual aid societies, housing associations and other similar institutions which people create for themselves to achieve their ends. The state must aid them by exempting them from tax and sometimes giving them financial aid.

Aid given by the government to individuals leads to the statization of social life and transforms the citizen into a client of the state. On the other hand, a democratic state can create the conditions for the development of various collective initiatives and thus make uniformity impossible and sharply restrict statization.

The task of a centralized state system in such a model would be to guarantee an indispensable minimum in collaboration with structures of local democracy to those who need it. ★

Woman face reactionary onslaught

THE attempt to re-introduce capitalism in Poland has been accompanied by a drive to ensure the subjugation of women to the patriarchal social order.

Krystyna Politacha surveys the anti-women campaign and some encouraging signs of resistance.

KRYSTYNA POLITACHA — Wroclaw, February 3, 1993

THE past three years of neo-liberal economic policies have seen industrial production fall by over 50%. However, inflation continues to forge ahead — around 45% in 1992. In these years, the real average wage has fallen by 40% and the incomes of more than 60% of families are below the social minimum while real incomes of working class families have been cut by over a half since 1989.

There are already more than 2.5 million unemployed. A growing number — now nearly a million — no longer have any rights to unemployment benefits. The budget deficit for 1993 is predicted to rise above 80,000bn zlotys — about \$5bn which implies further cuts in health, education and cultural spending. The wherewithal to finance structural changes in the economy is also missing. Thus the whole social infrastructure is following the declining path of the economy.

More than half of those unemployed are women. The economic crisis has in the first place struck those whose position in the labour force makes them least able to mount collective resistance. This is the case for women. In the Wroclaw region, which has been relatively unaffected by the crisis, 58% of the unemployed are women. In the Lodz region — which is the main female industrial centre 70% of those unemployed are women.

Public sector spending limits have an immediate effect on the material situation of women, who make up nearly 80% of those employed in this sector. Thus, in 1992, public sector salaries declined fas-

ter than the overall drop, and were 4% lower than salaries in industry. Wages for primary school teachers — the most feminized profession in Poland — were 15% below the average. A woman primary school teacher with 30 years service earns 2.4m zlotys a month, while a new police recruit gets 3.8m.

The reduction in spending in the domain of social services means the closure of crèches and nursery schools. In 1991, the number of crèche places was already 35% down on 1989. Since then the closures have accelerated. In December 1992 alone 26 crèches and nursery schools were shut in Wroclaw. These closures were accompanied by a rise in fees for crèches and state-maintained nursery schools, cutting further into the incomes of working women. One has the impression that there is a deliberate policy of driving women out of social life.

Material impoverishment is accompanied by cultural impoverishment. The clubs and houses of culture, traditionally linked to the public enterprises, are closing. The situation is particularly dramatic in the small towns where the closure of an enterprise may not only mean unemployment for half of the inhabitants but also the end of the school, cinema or theatre.

We are thus seeing the progressive liquidation of the workers' social gains in fields such as education, social assistance, health and leisure. This situation is being given legal sanction, as is shown by the rejection in the course of a debate on laws on liberties and civil rights in the Polish parliament, the Diet, of the Socio-Economic Charter which aimed at preserving, at

least in principle, the socio-economic rights of workers won in the past, rights which are accepted in most developed capitalist countries.

At the same time restrictive legislation on abortion has been introduced. Despite significant social mobilization against the Catholic fundamentalist plans for banning abortion in all cases and inflicting legal penalties on women who abort — a mobilization that enjoyed the support of the majority of Poles according to opinion polls — the Diet passed on January 7, 1993, a “law on family planning, defence of the human embryo and the conditions in which abortion is permissible”. Adopted unamended by the Senate on January 30, the law has now been promulgated by the president.

This law, riddled with hypocrisy and lies, is based on religious premises, seeing Polish women as nothing more than breeding stock. It replaces a law allowing abortion in cases of “difficult living conditions for women” adopted in April 1956 in the democratic climate of destalinization.

Henceforth, abortion will only be permitted when there is grave danger to the life or health of the mother, when the embryo is non-viable or where the pregnancy is the result of a crime. The medical diagnosis must be confirmed by at least two other practitioners and where crime is concerned by the public prosecutor. Illegal abortion can be punished by up to two years in jail. The only concession here is that the woman who has aborted will not herself be charged.

As could be expected, the fact that this bill has been passed has helped to create a generally repressive climate. It is no longer possible to buy intra-uterine contraceptive devices. Cases are also reported of women killing new born babies they were forced to have because they dared not ask for contraception or abortion. Undoubtedly the number of back-street abortions will also increase.

The voices and views of women have not been heard in this debate. Parliament refused to hold a referendum on the issue, as requested by a petition of more than a million signatures launched by the Civic Committee in Favour of a Referendum.

This is part and parcel of a wide-ranging political offensive by Catholic fundamentalists

conducted under the auspices of the Catholic church.

This began in 1989 with the introduction of the catechism as an optional subject in education and a mention of the mark achieved in this subject on certificates. The obligatory introduction of the catechism in schools is now being considered.

At the same time, the church is trying to restrict the right of divorce by inserting an obligatory stage of “separation” and, in the framework of the negotiation of a treaty with the Vatican, to obtain for itself some functions now in the hands of the state.

Finally, a new law adopted by the Diet on January 29 on audiovisual communications stipulates that “broadcasts must respect the religious convictions of the audience and in particular the Christian system of values”. This effectively means a right of religious censorship over radio and television. The first effect of the law, furthermore, was a purge of state media officials. It has also meant a restriction of the right of expression of supporters of the right to abortion.

Towards totalitarianism?

The religious offensive involves demands and legal norms in fields as diverse as private life, information, culture and education based on religious principles threatening freedom of expression. On such a basis one could impose a system of religious, moral and political

norms that would lead directly towards a totalitarian state.

A law on rights and civil liberties currently being discussed in parliament which envisages the institutionalization of referenda as a right could, if adopted, serve as a point of support for the social movement which mobilized in defence of a woman’s right to choose and against the Catholic fundamentalist offensive. Opinion polls continue to show 70% against any restriction on women’s rights in Poland and more than a million people — twice the number needed for a referendum under the proposed law — have already come out in favour of a referendum on abortion.

The mobilization around the abortion issue may also provide a possibility for filling the persistent lack of a real women’s organization in Poland. Many women’s groups came back to life last year and have the potential to take initiatives and make their presence felt.

One such group is the Solidarnosc Women’s Commission which began to work in 1989. From that time date its first publications and educational sessions for women union militants; women were able to make their views known in the union and in negotiations with the government.

The provisional presidium of the Solidarnosc National Commission was dissolved in May 1991 by the union’s national leadership following a dispute after the union’s second national congress voted in favour of a legal ban on abortion. Subsequently, the women’s commission in

Wroclaw organized referenda in several big enterprises, in which between 80 and 90% of the workers, both women and men, came out against an abortion ban.

The national leadership then forbade them from speaking out in public, publishing newspapers and expressing positions on abortion, expelled whole branches and shut down the training programme for women militants. After this, the union’s women’s commissions were able to continue activity only in certain regions, including Wroclaw. The mobilization in defence of the right to choose allowed them to break out of their isolation, to organize meetings and debates on how to defend women’s social and democratic rights, to renew links between regions and make contact with other women’s organizations. ★



The people and the president

IN SEPTEMBER 1991 a military coup overthrew Haiti's radical elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide with the connivance of the United States. However, since then, the impoverished Caribbean island has remained in turmoil and the US is now considering reinstating Aristide on its own terms.

Arthur Mahon explains the US' motives and the prospects for a revival of the radical left in Haiti if Aristide returns to office.

ARTHUR MAHON

February 18, 1993



Demonstrators protest against the treatment of Haitian refugees in a detention camp in Florida

WHY, in the beginning of January, did Bush — and then Clinton — suddenly decide to bring tremendous pressure to bear on the men in power in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince? Is this due to the fear of the 200,000 Haitian boat people who, according to the American press, were going to descend upon Florida when Clinton took over if they had no hope that Aristide would return?

In fact, the real explanation lies elsewhere. Now that the ferocious repression has achieved most of its objectives, the American administration is increasingly worried about the political failure of the *coup d'etat*. The government of Marc Bazin, which has served as a cover to the dictatorship since last spring, has few friends.

By the end of 1992 the United States was convinced that there were very few ways out of this crisis: the convocation of general elections (in exchange for which Bush would have insisted Aristide accept his conditions) or else the quick return of the constitutional president (Aristide) to Port-au-Prince, under close scrutiny.

But Aristide has plenty of enemies in Washington, as in the American embassy in Haiti, who have the means to delay his return as long as possible.

Bazin's failure was made plain as day on January 18, when the legislative and senatorial by-elections were massively boycotted by the population. In the department of Artibonite, for example, the Peace and Justice Committee of the Gonaïve diocese observed that only 1% of possible voters cast a ballot. The streets of Port-au-Prince, usually overflowing with activity, were deserted until the evening.

The goal of these elections was to provide new deputies and senators for the alliance which brings together the MIDH (Bazin's party) and the PANPRA, led by the former Maoist Serge Gilles. These parties intended to obtain what they failed to obtain in the elections of December 16, 1990.

Four members of the PANPRA are participating in the government but, more and more, its activists — and even its deputies — are quitting its ranks. PANPRA's job was to obtain the support of the Socialist International (also represented by the KONAKOM, which calls for Aristide's return) for the dictatorship.

However, on February 9 and 10, in Aristide's presence, the council of the Socialist International "denounced the January 18 elections" and declared its support for sanctions "against the *de facto* military government".

Some 45 international observers, sent by the UN and the Organization of Ame-

rican States (OAS) arrived in Haiti on February 13 and 14, and will be followed by a civilian mission. Bazin finally agreed to its deployment after securing a number of important concessions. The UN and OAS text outlining the goals of the mission was changed. Its goal is to "help to guarantee respect for human rights in Haiti"; but, unlike the initial text, "the authorities" no longer have to commit themselves to implement its recommendations as soon as possible.

What comes next? The UN and the OAS are preparing new negotiations with the men in power in Port-au-Prince. Mass mobilization will be a decisive factor. From the very beginning, the policy of the putschists and their entourage has been to prolong negotiations, to go back on signed agreements, and to gain time until the end of Aristide's mandate. Clinton, on whom Aristide seems to have placed great hopes, has already acquired the habit of breaking his promises.

There is already talk of a general strike aimed at bringing down Marc Bazin. In the current situation, the mass movement has a big role to play. But is its capacity to mobilize what it was a few years ago?

A "radical" left, which had the goal of setting up a popular regime, reached its height during the mobilizations that preceded and followed Duvalier's fall. In

1986 and 1987 the Duvalierists were thrown onto the defensive. While the popular movement felt that, as in Central America, it was on the threshold of big changes, these hopes didn't last very long and in the summer of 1987 the military government emerged victorious from a test of strength with those currents favouring a democratic transition. These currents suffered a bloody defeat, leading to an enduring change in the relationship of forces.

From the end of 1987 to Aristide's electoral victory three years later, political life was characterized by *coups d'etats* and the internal struggles of the ruling classes, who were unable to find a way out of the crisis afflicting the country. Thus was revealed the fragility of the implantation the left had managed to achieve through the building of popular organizations. At certain points, a few of these organizations could mobilize large numbers and play a central role in the politicization of the population. But it was rare to find a popular organization that was able to consistently mobilize a section of the population.

In the political landscape, the popular organizations often took up the anti-imperialist and anti-electoralist ideas of the left. The popular organizations could not remain on the sidelines of the anti-imperialist and anti-government struggle. However, most of these organizations concentrated their efforts on politics to the detriment of organizational work with the population around their everyday problems although certain among them organized significant campaigns against the high cost of living and for the re-building of the Creole pig stocks (which were decimated in the early 1980s with the aim of replacing them with pigs imported from the United States).

Among the organizations that most sought to play the role of a political party, the case of the Autonomous Confederation of Haitian Workers (CATH) is particularly noteworthy. The small nucleus of leaders which ran this organization determined its orientation without any rank and file control. The collapse of this nucleus under the weight of intrigues, political differences and corruption led to a disastrous split of the organization.

These popular organizations could not replace a party which could have expressed the interests of the oppressed on the political terrain. Was the building of such a party possible in the years which followed the overthrow of Duvalier? Repression, sectarianism and the lack of activists in the heart of the mass movement would have made such a party-building project

difficult, and the few attempts made came up against additional obstacles: the lack of democratic traditions, police infiltration, and activists using their political activities to make money.

The lack of a party to give political expression to popular and democratic sectors was cruelly felt. During the mobilizations of the summer of 1987, the traditional parties of the reformist left were able to monopolize the political scene to the detriment of popular sectors. In March 1990, General Avril was forced to give up the reins of power; in spite of the mass upsurge, the political terrain was occupied by a coalition of parties which, with the agreement of the American embassy, handed the power over to Ertha Pascal-Trouillot — fully aware of her connections to the Duvalierists. When Jean-Bertrand Aristide declared his candidacy for the presidential election, he could not do so under the banner of a party which spoke to the interests of the masses. Indeed, the left was going through its worst period.

Over the last few years, the Haitian left has encountered a number of difficulties, not unlike those of the Latin American left — faced with a number of failures, a difficult international situation, and a lack of perspectives.

It has also come up against its own specific difficulties. It emerged after a long period of dictatorship lacking an experienced core of activists able to establish links with struggles of previous periods. The education of those activists that did exist was characterized more by its Stalinism than by exchanges with the Latin American left.

Problems of programme

Another of the left's handicaps was the lack of thought given to programmatic questions. In the 1960s and 70s, the Haitian left engaged in a number of abstract debates on the nature of Haitian society and the coming revolution. After the overthrow of Duvalier, it deepened its knowledge of Haitian society and the mechanics of mass mobilization.

But the old debates were not re-examined in the light of the new experiences. What was needed was the formulation of a set of programmatic points based on the immediate and longer term interests of the oppressed — within a perspective of permanent revolution and the beginning of the transition to socialism. The complexity of the social formation did not make this task any easier.

It was also necessary to see the struggles in Haiti as part of a wider pro-

No new deal for boat people

SINCE the military coup that ousted Aristide more than 40,000 Haitians have fled their country by sea in an attempt to reach the United States. Last May American president George Bush ordered the US coastguard to directly repatriate Haitians seized on the high seas.

During the election campaign Bill Clinton promised to end this practice, but in fact has authorized a US military blockade of the island to prevent people leaving — justified as a means of saving lives. As elsewhere a distinction is to be drawn between (acceptable) "political" and (unacceptable) "economic" refugees with the former having to present their case to US officials in Haiti itself, thus exposing themselves to further repression.

Aristide, meanwhile, has urged Haitians to "stay at home and reestablish democracy", reflecting his confidence that Clinton will help him back into the office from which he was so rudely evicted. ★

cess spilling over national borders. However, as much before Duvalier's downfall as after, the importance of the international context was underestimated.

From an international point of view, the circumstances of the birth of the Haitian nation and its century-old isolation from the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America makes the job of conceptualising the building of a new society that much more difficult.

The establishment of a popular regime in Haiti would allow for the implementation of a series of measures which would bring tremendous relief to the oppressed. However, this tiny country on the periphery, scarred and with very low labour productivity, will not be able to solve its central problems by itself. A people's government could not survive without an international extension of the revolution.

Many of the difficulties that the Haitian left has encountered are linked to the specific nature of Haitian society. The numeric weakness of the proletariat (both urban and rural) and its instability — as well as the growing "lumpenization" of the cities — make for formidable obstacles. A large part of society is made up of a number of — partly secret — traditional networks and organizations which

tend to be divided along clan lines and are generally linked to religious practices.

Individuals are inserted into a set of power relations and economic dependencies based on religion and the family. Any long-term strategy would have to take these factors into account, and keep in mind the important place of voodoo in all aspects of Haitian life.

Paradoxically, Aristide's presidential candidacy and subsequent presidency aggravated the crisis of the left, which was not at all prepared for this situation and had to quickly rethink its strategy.

Aristide's candidacy was conceived as the bearer of a democratic transition which had been blocked. For Aristide, such a transition implied an alliance between the popular sector and certain fractions — or, rather, fragments — of the bourgeoisie.

One of the pillars of this alliance was made up of anti-Duvalier personalities calling for a struggle for a "state of law" and the defense of the 1987 constitution.

As such, Aristide's candidacy left itself open to several dangers: one was the chance that these democrats, whose political positions were never particularly firm, would act as a break on the popular movement. On the other hand, the candidacy could have provoked a disastrous confrontation with the Duvalierists and the army.

The Haitian left found itself torn between those who insisted on these dangers and those who preferred to focus on the enthusiasm which greeted Aristide's campaign. The latter saw the need to be a part of the experience or at least to be with the masses. The semi-insurrection that met the attempt in January 1991 to block Aristide's inauguration in January 1991 led many to overestimate the relationship of forces and the level of popular consciousness.

In fact, both those who decided to denounce Aristide from the left and those who favoured a line of critical support were both confronted with a major problem: in the cities, the mass movement remained very weak. Worse, the emergence of a new regime had a perverse effect on a segment of the activists who had played a part in the electoral victory.

The overwhelming majority of "popular" organizations which had emerged in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince were reduced to a few individuals most concerned about finding a way to pressure the state into giving them a job.



The prevailing misery and the lack of a democratic culture have led to a struggle for survival and a job, a race to occupy positions in the state. The mechanisms at work under previous regimes continued to operate, including in the ranks of the president's entourage.

Aristide himself did not give serious attention to the struggle against these tendencies and for the self-organization of the population. These two aspects were linked; the authors of a balance sheet produced for the political organization *Lavalas* ("Avalanche") wrote regarding government efforts to mobilize the population: "Throughout, informality reigned in the designation of responsibilities. This fed the tendency towards the self-promotion of a few personalities and activists. They took over the running of the organizations in all areas, at the expense of cooperation, the sharing of experiences and collective effort. Such practices, viewed with a critical eye by a number of activists, compromised certain creative initiatives which could have been effective had they been planned and coordinated."

The balance sheet goes on to discuss Aristide's call on February 4, 1991, for the construction of a *Lavalas* organization: "However, the need to set up such an organization, understood in varying degrees by different people, was ignored by others — when it was not

opposed outright in the spirit of the prevailing cult of spontaneity [...] From February to September 1991, the Lavalas Organization did not get beyond an embryonic and partial stage."

The lack of honest and competent cadres able to run the state, the difficulties of the left and the popular movement, and the weakness of democratic traditions are factors which weighed heavily from February to September 1991 and will continue to do so for a long time to come.

The dictatorship which followed the September 30, 1991 coup inflicted heavy blows on the left and the popular organizations. Here is the typical testimony of "Yves, a political militant from Limbé", published in the November 1992 issue of *Haiti Information Libre*: "I sleep every night with two shirts, two pants and my socks. I always have to be prepared to escape in case someone comes to arrest me

in the middle of the night. Sometimes I spend two days here and five somewhere else with friends...

"Since December 8, 1991, I have been sleeping in three different places. I have to make journeys of several kilometres by foot, crossing mountains at night... Today, I have serious money problems, and my garden was destroyed when a local official and his gang let loose a herd of cows on it".

A number of peasant groups have been destroyed; this was one of the objectives of the *coup d'état*: to put peasants who have radicalized and politicized in the past period back in their place. The networks of popular organizations have not been dismantled, however, even if it is very difficult to organize meetings, especially in the countryside — the siege of the countryside by the army and the paramilitary forces is much tighter than it was under Duvalier, though the level of repression varies greatly from one village to the next.

Certain local leaders are being rather careful — they know that the political situation could quickly change.

But, even if Aristide returns to the National Palace it is unlikely that the climate of fear will quickly disappear. Over the last year, courageous student mobilizations have not succeeded in bringing other layers of the population into the fray. ★

The temptations of office

THE coming to power of the government of Itamar Franco after the ouster of president Ferdinand Collor on corruption charges has shaken up the Brazilian political scene. It also represents an important new challenge for the leftwing Workers Party (PT).

JOÃO MACHADO

São Paulo, February 21, 1993

TAMAR was Collor's vice-president, but broke with him before his ouster. His political background is different to Collor's. He started out in the Brazilian Democratic Movement, at the time the only legal opposition to the military dictatorship, while Collor came up through the ARENA, the dictatorship's official party and its successor the PDS. Furthermore, Collor, despite vote-catching demagoguery about the "shirtless" poor is fascinated by modernity and the First World and instinctively went for a neo-liberal economic programme.

Itamar, on the other hand, has a taste for nationalist declarations and claims to reject a modernity which would condemn his people to misery — in the tradition of Brazilian populism. The choice by Collor of Itamar as his vice-presidential running mate, at a point when a victory in the elections seemed unlikely, was a sign of the incoherence of Collor's project. Now, owing his office to the popular movement and political parties, Itamar has announced his intention to govern with these parties and the national congress, abandoning Collor's high-handed presidential style (see box).

The first months of his government have been marked by indecision. Itamar has stepped up his populist rhetoric saying that he can no longer accept misery and

Every colour but red

THE new Brazilian government includes figures from a spectrum ranging from the Liberal Front Party (PFL), the party which supported Collor, but whose main principle is to be in any and every government, and the PTB (which also backed Collor), to the left.

First announcements include ministers from the Brazilian Socialist party (PSB), which can be considered social democrat, and Walter Barelli, an economist who has worked with the most militant unions and the PT, although he is not a member of the latter party.

There is also the main leader of the Socialist People's Party (PPS), the new name of the majority of the former Communist Party, which was very pro-Gorbachev in its last days.

The bulk of the ministerial posts however have fallen to the PFL, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), the country's biggest party in terms of representation and a party of the bourgeois centre, and the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB) which stands halfway between contemporary social democracy and traditional liberalism and can reasonably be defined as centre-left.

Barelli is Minister of Labour while the PPS' Roberto Friere is head of the government in the Federal Chamber — an important post. If the PT had wished it could have nominated ministers. The other left parties, such as the (formerly pro-Albanian) Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B) have supported the government, with the exception of the Revolutionary Front led by the Socialist Convergence current, connected with the Argentine Morenoist current, which claims to be Trotskyist. ★

recession and will put an end to privatizations if they are against the national interest.

At the same time, he has renewed the agreements Collor made with foreign creditors in his last days. Privatizations have been halted but Itamar has responded to the inevitable furor from big capital by stating that they will soon restart. He has done nothing about wages, which have been falling sharply.

A ministry has been offered to Luiza Erundina from the Workers Party, but none of the rightwing figures have been dropped. And he seems unable to come up with any counter-inflation policy — prices are currently rising at more than 20% a month.

But despite his lack of initiative the very fact that Itamar is not Collor, that he has moderated some of his predecessor's attacks on the workers and his populist style give him credibility in the eyes of public opinion and this has led to heated debates inside the PT.

Since 1990 the PT has experienced an internal "crisis of hegemony" owing to its own advance into the institutions and the crisis of the international socialist movement.

A part of the most leftwing sectors have broken with their past and moved towards increasingly reformist and even liberal positions. Others have moved left, adopting a more coherent and anti-bureaucratic vision of socialism and moving away from a world view based on the notion of a struggle between geographically defined "socialist" and capitalist camps.

The majority *l'Articulação* current in the party has also been split, although there is still a large body of intermediary opinion. The PT's first congress at the end of 1991 saw a bitter debate between reformist and revolutionary orientations, adopting resolutions which tended to the left.

But this did not bring to an end the "crisis of hegemony" in the PT since many of the party's spokespeople conti-

nued to behave as if the conference resolutions did not exist.

Thus, on all the main political points of political dispute, there were very different positions. This was seen during the debate on election tactics for the 1992 municipal elections and on the nature of the campaign to oust Collor. A big discussion is underway on the tactics for the 1994 presidential elections and the attitude to the Itamar government has also been the occasion for much debate.

Before Collor's departure there were four positions in the PT leadership. On the right, some defended participation in government with the notion of defending their orientation "from inside". At the start the main supporter of this position was the federal deputy Eduardo Jorge. He was later joined by Senator Eduardo Suplicy and the former mayor of Sao Paulo, Luiza Erundina.

In the centre was the "independence" position, urging that the PT not enter the government but that it work with it in various fields, put forward its own proposals and oppose measures it disagreed with. In this scenario there would be a "constructive" relationship between the PT and the government and the PT would aid in preserving "governability". In fact, the only difference with the first position is that no name would be put forward for participation in the government. The main proponent of this position is federal deputy José Genoino.

On the left there is an opposition position that could be described as "constructive" towards the government. The idea here is that the PT should declare its opposition to the government for various reasons — as much for reasons of original sin, Itamar having been Collor's vice-president, as for political reasons.

This tendency argues that the PT cannot take part in a government which contains so many conservatives, whose policy is highly confused and which is not firmly opposed to neo-liberalism; and that the PT should only enter government if it is so elected as part of a coalition with a programme of social change.

However, this current holds that the PT should be concerned about "governability" and even the success of the Itamar government, arguing that a defeat for Itamar would help the most conservative forces. It believes, furthermore, that the public expects the PT to contribute to solving their immediate problems and that even an extremely confused — and bourgeois — government such as Itamar's has something to offer in this sense. This position shades into that of "independence". Its main proponents are the central leaders of

the PT such as its president Lula and the general secretary José Dirceu.

Finally, on the left there are those who are firmly opposed to the government, which they characterize not only as bourgeois but as conservative, and who are not interested in "governability". This latter is an essential difference with the previous position. Furthermore, for this position's supporters, the PT should not only not take part in the government, but should do its utmost to ensure that figures associated with the party, such as Walter Barelli, do not enter the government.



Luiza Erundina

This position has the support of the left of *l'Articulação*, of the Democratic Socialist tendency (to which this writer belongs) and the bloc of tendencies in the *Na Luta, PT* ("Into Struggle") movement as well as some independents, including the deputy Vladimir Palmeira.

Naturally, there are views which all the tendencies in the PT share — such as a concern for the revival of the social movement and that the CUT union confederation should make bolder demands. Even those who defend participation in the government explain it in terms of confrontation and of bringing the weight of the social movement to bear. However, the

divergences are deep, involving the party's strategic vision.

The National Executive Commission started off by opting for "opposition" plus "governability" — with no participation in the government. Subsequently, on October 24, the national leadership on a very close vote (25 votes to 24) rejected "governability" and supported more clear-cut opposition.

The polemics inside the party, a lot of whose leaders have more moderate positions, became heated. Things reached the point where it was announced that the "anti-governability" majority was accidental and that the position would be reversed at the next meeting. The irreconcilables gained a point when Vladimir Palmeira, a supporter of their position, was elected as the leader of the PT's parliamentary fraction — which had been a stronghold of the most conciliatory wing of the party.

This was the state of things when Luiza Erundina, the former mayor of Sao Paulo, accepted an offer of a ministerial post (as the secretary of the Federal Administration), openly flouting her party's decisions.

For some years Luiza Erundina has been aligned with the most reformist wing of the PT. Her closest collaborators were from the "Plan for Brazil" current which argues for the party to lean more towards a movement with unclear limits and few organizational structures which would follow public opinion. They describe such a party as a "party of dialogue" rather than a "party of intervention". Probably no longer happy in the party, she has now explained that "the interests of the nation must be put above partisan interests" and reaffirmed that she will struggle to change the party's position.

The big press has had a field day supporting Erundina against the "sectarian" PT. The meeting of the national leadership which discussed the issue on February 6 and 7 was filmed live for TV. The meeting voted to suspend Erundina from membership for a year (40 votes for suspension against 25 for outright expulsion).

Many of those who voted for suspension favoured expulsion, but they were sensitive to the negative reaction of the press and on public opinion — which, according to polls published in the papers, supports Erundina's entry into government.

In the same meeting and by a big majority the line of opposition to the government and against the "condominium of governability" was reaffirmed. ★

The essence of X

THERE is no more popular political leader among young African Americans today than El Hajj Malik Shabazz — Malcolm X. Everything from tapes of his speeches to the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* is in high demand.

This resurgence of interest in Malcolm is refreshing and encouraging. However, to the extent that it is mere fad and fashion, it also carries with it certain dangers. There is the challenge, particularly to young African American men and women — the new generation of leadership, to understand the essence of Malcolm X and to study the basic tenets of his teachings.

RON DANIELS*

MALCOLM X was born on May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska as Malcolm Little. He died February 21, 1965 as El Hajj Malik Shabazz, felled by assassins' bullets at the Audobon Ballroom in upper Harlem, New York.

Much of his early life was spent in Lansing, Michigan and later in the expanding ghettos of Detroit, Boston and New York. He was a troubled spirit who was forced to cope with the trauma of the murder of his father (Malcolm's father was an organizer for Marcus Garvey's Universal Improvement Association, UNIA). And he witnessed the trials and tribulations of a devoted mother struggling against terrible odds to keep the family together within a racist and oppressive society.

Malcolm Little became a hoodlum, a drug pusher and a pimp. This life of crime eventually landed him in prison. He turned the prison into a classroom, reading every book in the prison library and mastering every word in the Webster's English dictionary. In prison, Malcolm joined the Nation of Islam under the guidance of its leader Elijah Muhammad.

The following are a few basic points which constitute an outline of Malcolm X's philosophy:

- Given the cultural aggression and degradation which African people have suffered within a racist society, Malcolm believed that the liberation of Black people must begin with a healthy appreciation of self. The struggle for liberation must begin with self-respect and self-help. Black people must break the psychological, cultural, economic and political dependency on the oppressor. This requires a knowledge of self

and the maximizing of our own resources for self-help and self-development. Malcolm's goal was to see African American people achieve self-reliance and independence.

- Closely related is Malcolm's emphasis on the study of history. Malcolm was concerned with probing for the true knowledge of the history of African people in the unfolding of human history and civilization. Hence, Black people must move beyond a Euro-centric version of history to discover the real contributions of African people to human development. Of equal importance, Malcolm saw the study of history as a way to learn how other oppressed peoples had gained their freedom.

- As a proponent of Black nationalism, Malcolm advocated that African American people must control the politics and economics within the African American community. Black people should strive to establish control over the territory where we have been forced to subsist by a racist and exploitative society. Control of the African American community was just a starting point for the struggle for complete separation and independence from an oppressive country. Africans in America are not the least duty bound to hold allegiance to a government or nation that has not held allegiance to African American people.

- Malcolm X was a Pan-Africanist and an internationalist. His study of history gave him a deep appreciation for Africa and African people the world over. On the question of identity, Malcolm X was clear that we are an African people whose destiny is inextricably linked to our African homeland. As an internationalist, Malcolm taught that as Africans in America we should not view ourselves as a minority in this country, but

as a part of the majority of people in the world who are Black people and people of colour. Hence, African Americans should build cultural, economic and political bridges to our African homeland and similar ties and alliances with other oppressed people internationally.

- Malcolm also taught that the quest for African-American liberation in the USA was a human rights struggle, not just a matter of civil rights. He argued that human rights, or those rights to which all human beings are entitled, supercede civil rights, or those rights which may be granted by a particular government. Malcolm was determined to take the US government to the United Nations and before the World Court to charge the USA for its past and present violations of the human rights of Africans in America.

- Though Malcolm never advocated initiating acts of violence against other people, he was firmly committed to the principle of self-defense in the face of violent attacks by white racist elements or oppressive authorities. His famous "freedom by any means necessary" position was intended to suggest that Black people should use whatever strategies and tactics that produce a rational and positive result: the ballot or the bullet, non-violent peaceful protest or armed resistance against enemy attack.

- Finally, Malcolm's position evolved from an analysis based exclusively on race and racism to a race-class analysis which saw racism, capitalism and imperialism as systemic manifestations of global white supremacy and domination. Until his death, Malcolm remained a Black nationalist. However, his break with the Nation of Islam and his subsequent international travels broadened his perspectives on a range of issues and questions. He embraced an analysis of racism and economic exploitation as functions of a system of global exploitation and oppression. When he was gunned down, he was still growing and evolving.

Malcolm symbolized uncompromising resistance to racism and oppression. He embodied our hopes for what we can become as a free and self-determining people. ★

*Ron Daniels served as a campaign director for Jesse Jackson in 1988, and was an independent candidate for president in the 1992 elections. This is an abridged version of an article which appeared in the January-February 1993 issue of *The Black Collegian*.

TUNISIA

Drop the charges!

THE fact that Tunisia is a dictatorship is becoming ever more obvious. After imprisoning 8,000 alleged militants of the En-Nahda fundamentalist movement, activists of the Revolutionary Communist Organization (OCR — Tunisian section of the Fourth International), and of the Workers Communist Party of Tunisia (PCOT — pro-Albanian) with sentences of up to four years for their views, and after having dissolved the Tunisian Human Rights League (LDTH), 18 democrats have just been arrested for having formed a "National Committee in Defence of Prisoners of Opinion" (CNDPO).

Its founders, well-known figures from students and teachers unions, human rights activists and long-standing opponents of the regime, proposed the freeing of those imprisoned for their views and an end to the practice of torture.

Accused of spreading false information, disturbing public order and forming an illegal organization, they have all been brought before a court and released with the exception of Salah Hamzawi the committee's coordinator who the judge ordered to be held.

An international protest campaign has forced the regime to retreat. They have reversed their decision to expel one of the committee's founders, Tahar Shagrush who is of Algerian nationality, and have let out Hamzawi on bail.

However, the protests must continue until the trial of the CNDPO's founders to demand the dropping of all the charges and an end to the persecution of the committee and its members.

Letters of protest should be sent to the President of Tunisia, the Presidential Palace, Carthage, Tunisia; and to the Minister of the Interior, Avenue Habib Bourguiba, 2000, Tunis. ★

SOUTH KOREA

Socialist arrested

ON October 27, 1992, after several months of harassment, South Korea's political police arrested Ilbung Choe.

His crime is to be a leftwing publisher in a country which remains stuck not only



in the Cold War, but in the era of McCarthyism.

Ilbung Choe invested a modest inheritance in setting up a Korean-language publishing house, New Review Editions. Without even covering his outlay — the common fate of small leftwing publishing houses not supported by an organization — Choe published works including Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* (with a preface by Ernest Mandel), Moshe Lewin's *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Tony Cliff's *Rosa Luxemburg* and some of the notebooks produced by the IIRE of Amsterdam such as Michael Löwy on *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development and Plan, Market and Democracy* by Catherine Samary.

Accused variously of crimes against the state under the open-ended National Security Law, alleged links with North Korea and crimes of opinion against the South Korean state, Ilbung Choe was sentenced to two years in jail on January 2, 1993.

An international campaign has been launched to demand his immediate release. South Korea's new president, Kim Yung Sam, who took office on February 25, has announced a sweeping amnesty which may affect tens of thousands of people. Himself a former dissident who rallied to the government party, Kim Yung Sam has promised to liberalize the country. However, the scope of the amnesty announced excludes "socialists and rapists". It is nonetheless possible — though not probable — that Ilbung Choe's case will be covered by the amnesty.

For this to happen, as many messages as possible should be sent to the President of the Republic of Korea, Kim Yung Sam, c/o The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Seoul (fax no: 822-720 2686) asking for an amnesty for Ilbung Choe.

Ilbung Choe is 35 years old, and has three children, the last born after his arrest. His wife and mother have also been victims of the police harassment of the household. ★

HONG KONG

Cathay Pacific strike ends

THE strike by over 3500 flight attendants, organized in the Flight Attendants Union (FAU), at the Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways came to an end on January 28 when 90 per cent of workers bowed to the airline's ultimatum to sign on for work for February or face a contract freeze and possible firing.

300 defiant crew members vowed not to return to work without management's guarantee of amnesty for all FAU members.

The strike began on January 13 over increased workloads and the firing of three cabin attendants who followed union instructions not to work out of their positions.

The bulk of Cathay Pacific flights were immediately grounded and remained so for more than two weeks, including in the peak holiday season of the Chinese New Year. The dispute is estimated to have cost the airline some HK\$10-15m (US\$1.3-2m) per day.

Cathay Pacific's heavy-handedness ended up politicizing the strike — turning it into a struggle over the lack of trade union rights in the British colony.

The strike was an inspiring example of local and international solidarity. Locally, a committee of 50 community groups organized mass support rallies, a petition campaign which gathered 10,000 signatures, and found food, clothing and shelter for strikers who camped out at the Government House and for the many cabin crew members hailing from other parts of Asia.

Internationally, the FAU put out a call to assist stranded crew members around the world and track down and stop aircraft chartered by Cathay Pacific to break the strike.

Contacted by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), flight attendants' unions in Holland, Australia, Switzerland, the Philippines, Japan, Germany, the USA and Canada refused to board chartered planes replacing Cathay Pacific designated flights.

Negotiations with the company continue. The support coalition has temporarily shelved plans to call for an international boycott of Cathay Pacific, but stressed it would resume the campaign in the event of company victimization of those active in the strike. ★