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Ridicule and credibility

"THIS war that we do not wish to wage — we are in the process of losing it." In this way, former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius summarised the mood of the "big powers" in the face of the offensive by Serb extremists against Gorazde.

CATHERINE SAMARY

It is ridicule and the loss of credibility by Western institutions and governments that inexorably force them to take a firmer line and carry out more aggressive interventions. This does not change in any way the fact that their initiatives will fatally end in the same impasse. This is because the idea of "clean" air strikes that don't affect the civilian population, and are not accompanied by a troop offensive on the ground, would either be useless or a myth — and therefore murderous. But it is primarily because the political objectives of the Western powers contradict one another.

The threats of air strikes now aim not only at protecting endangered UN forces but also at defending cities declared "security zones", of which Gorazde was theoretically a part.

However, the general command of the White House and NATO have repeated on several occasions that the idea is not to reconquer territories captured by Serb Chetniks. And the Chetniks know this full well, insofar as the Owen-Stoltenberg plan totally legitimates the cutting up of Bosnia into "ethnic" territories.

The plan's only "fault" is that it creates non-viable States, thus leading to permanent war. Those who believe that such a plan could be a formula for peace — a lesser evil — should open their eyes and see the symbol that is Gorazde, a majority Muslim enclave in the heart of "Serb territory". Indeed, all of Bosnia is made up of "enclaves".

The State attributed to the "Muslims" was even less viable than the others, lacking a rear-guard and continuous territory. It needed access to the sea.

As for the "Croatian" Republic of Herceg Bosna (which left out two thirds of Bosnian Croats) it was vital for it to grow and control the electric power plant in Mostar.

The "Serbian Republic" of Bosnia has the largest territory, but since its social base is the peasantry this territory is in the poorest rural zones. To consolidate it means securing control of the more industrialised urban regions and of the main arteries of communication — and above all to ensure links with the "Serbian republics" of Krajina in Croatia and with Serbia itself.

The Bosnian-Croat federation project advanced by the USA posed a threat on a number of levels for the Greater Serbia project. While ambiguous, it hedged against the Owen-Stoltenberg plan — rendering it null and void one could have hoped — for the ethnic division of Bosnia for several weeks. It threw into question the territorial carve-up while remaining open to negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs.

Mixed

On 27 March, 500 Bosnian Serbs representing 200,000 Serbs living in "Muslim" territory — in cities with a mixed population — proclaimed a "civilian council" challenging the legitimacy of Bosnian Serb "leader" Radovan Karadzic and the Greater Serbia project. American and Russian representatives were present.

This initiative had been encouraged after the Croat extremist leader Mate Boban was cast aside¹, at the same time as Croats of central Bosnia created their own "civilian council" and showed their opposition to the "Croat Republic" of Herceg-Bosna.

The split between Serbian President Milosevic and the far-right Serbian Radical Party, the strain in the relationship between Belgrade and the "Serbian Republic" in Croatia², and finally the Russian presence at the meeting of Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo — all these factors made the idea of a Milosevic split with Karadzic more plausible, especially as Milosevic is seeking to have international sanctions lifted.

The Bosnian "Serbian civilian council" asked to participate in all negotia-

tions, called for a rejection of all ideas of "collective responsibility", and instead wants people to be punished for crimes on the basis of concrete facts. The council called for a Bosnian State based on the citizens, in which the interests of each community would be defended in an equal fashion, within the framework of a "reconciliation conference".

The Bosnian-Croat agreement was amended by the Bosnian Serb civilian assembly to recognise the three communities (which the Bosnian parliament accepted on the following day).

While it could be feared that the plan for a Bosnian-Croat federation be turned into a Greater Croatia, such a plan could also favour a dynamic of "civilian resistance" to ethnic cleansing. In any case, it represented a military and political threat to the Greater Serbia plan.

The offensive by Serbian militia on Gorazde can be interpreted as stemming from a decision by the extremist wing of the Bosnian Serbs for whom the question of Greater Serbia is a question of life or death. For them, a NATO ultimatum is a lesser risk so long as it does not challenge the logic of building a Serbian State on Bosnian territory.

Zones

Making non-Serbian populations flee from the desired zones is the goal of their offensives. The method is massacre. A cease-fire can be "conceded" under pressure from ultimatums which at best will help in the evacuation of terrorised and injured populations. The arms freed up as a result can then be redeployed to other strategic points.

To divide up the Greater Serbia (and Greater Croatia) forces, to tell the truth about the (minority) force of partisans of a Muslim State, to seek support in cities with the most mixed populations and to held defend them by relying on their traditions of harmonious co-existence —

1. Mate Boban is the leader of the "Croatian Republic" in central Bosnia, and a member of Croatian President Tudjman's party, the HDV.

2. The candidate supported by Belgrade was almost not elected in elections organised in this self-proclaimed "Serbian Republic", never recognised by Belgrade. Recent negotiations suggest that there might be a compromise leaving Croatian territory held by Serb secessionist forces in their hands, giving them autonomy rather than complete independence.

International Workers' Aid Solidarity with Tuzla

IT was a harsh winter in the city of Tuzla. It endured a twin embargo, imposed by both Serbian and Croatian troops. The airport remains closed.

Tuzla is an exceptional city from a number of points of view. Since the 1990 elections, it has been led by a coalition of non-nationalist parties. It is also one of the only cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina where multi-ethnic coexistence has been maintained since the beginning of the war. However, Muslim nationalist forces have not stopped exercising tremendous pressure inside the city, and moroso in the surrounding villages.

Part of the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina is being played out in this city and its industrial region. The international network of solidarity, International Workers Aid, wanted to help break the isolation of Tuzla and establish a presence of the European workers movement. The first convoy reached Tuzla in November, after overcoming a number of difficulties. This provided an opportunity for making contacts with the Tuzla municipal government, the miners union and the women's association.

It was then decided to organise a bigger convoy for the spring. Its goal was to provide miners and their families with flour, sugar and oil, so that they could make bread, a rare commodity in the region for some time. For months, money was collected across Europe in order to purchase these ingredients, pay for transport and set up an office in Split, a city on the Dalmatian coast from where most humanitarian convoys leave. Four-wheel drive trucks were purchased for the difficult journey from Split to Tuzla.

On 16 April, these trucks began to deliver to Tuzla the nearly 150 tonnes of goods that trucks from across Europe had delivered to Split. The first trucks arrived in Tuzla on 18 April. Twelve tonnes of food items and messages of solidarity were handed over to the miners union. The drivers immediately returned, leaving one comrade in Tuzla. They will have to make a number of trips between the Dalmatian coast and Tuzla to deliver all the goods held in a warehouse near Split. It was necessary to buy another four-wheel drive truck. For each trip, a different person accompanies the drivers in order to establish solidarity links with the Tuzla associations.

During the first round, contacts were renewed with the women's and independent media associations. There is currently a representative of a Dutch student organisation in Tuzla, who is there to meet university associations and deliver books.

Before the departure of the first set of trucks, about 50 Swedes, Danes, Dutch, Germans, Belgians, British, Italians and Spaniards gathered near Split to meet the Croatian representatives and discuss the organisation of the convoy. A decision was taken to send a delegation to Sarajevo for May Day.

The next International Workers Aid meeting will be held in Italy at the end of June. Donations to International Workers Aid should be sent to: **Den Danske Bank, 2-12 Holmens Kanal, DK-1092 Copenhagen K, Telex 27 000-SSZIFT DABADKKK, account number 4180862161.** ☺

this is the only political line that offers hope for peace.

This is not the approach of the "contact group" representing the European Community, the United Nations, Russia and the United States, set up in London. The "great powers" will bang their desks and try to speak "with one voice" — but to what end?

They first seek to restore their credibility. But the ultimatum concerning Sarajevo only "worked" thanks to a fragile convergence of the interests of the forces present on the ground: respite for the Bosnians; a UN presence with a

large Russian representation, which codified the division of Sarajevo for Karadzic's troops who themselves were in a rush to move on to more strategic areas (Bihac, Maglaj, Gorazde); a Serbian withdrawal whose forms calmed the anxiety of a UNPROFOR worried about its ground troops; and a NATO overjoyed to see its role as the UN's strong-arm strengthened, without for all that having to intervene.

Troops

This configuration of forces is unlikely to appear elsewhere and implies an increased presence of troops on the ground — which in turns means diffe-

rent reactions from the different governments according to the degree of their involvement on the ground. Noisy squabbles are likely — above all between a UN worried about reprisals against its troops and NATO (thanks to a United States worried about polls questioning its leadership at the head of the "new world order").

But there are also clashes between the official bodies of the UN and governments worried about "sending their troops into the lion's den", as French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé explained when French UN troops did not enter Gorazde as planned.

Speeches can be high and mighty, but any real loss of troops — which would have a dramatic effect on volatile public opinion — will only further expose their hollowness.

And this does not address the real source of disagreement. What are the political objectives in Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavia? How can the American and European plans be reconciled with another. Nothing is stable in this area, given that positions are determined by a "realpolitik" that changes in relation to the relationship of forces on the ground, the various sets of public opinion, and the international stakes for a series of forces.

The Russian question — with all its uncertainties — is not the least of the West's worries. For Moscow's representatives (who do not always say the same thing) the primary objective is that of getting Russia accepted as a great power. That is, Russia is ready to collaborate, but demands the right to have its say — and even exercise a veto — over NATO interventions.

Russia's privileged relations with Serbia are meant to serve this end. But this doesn't mean unconditional support for the policy of the Bosnian Serbs, who are not well-known for their spirit of diplomacy and compromise. ★

Cárdenas

We apologise to those readers who were expecting the interview with the Mexican Presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, to appear in this issue. The original interview was given before the assassination of the PRI's candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio. In view of this we are expecting to publish a new interview later in the year, but before the elections. ☺

No "great leap forward"

THE mid-1992 awakening of public opinion on the question of the European Union (EU) was a political development of major importance. The Maastricht Treaty, signed in February 1992 and tailor-made for big capital, was to signal a "great leap forward" in the process of European unification — from the Common Market to political and monetary union. But the ink was barely dry when the Treaty went into crisis.

FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN
Brussels, 22 April 1994

THE Danish referendum of June 1992 and the French referendum of September 1992 demonstrated the limited legitimacy of the European Community (EC) among the people. Social explosions in Greece in the summer of 1992 and in Italy in October 1992 were the first to come up against the "criteria of convergence" — the "norms" contained in the Treaty for inflation, the budgetary deficit, the public debt and long and short-term interest rates — in whose name governments justified their policies of brutal austerity.

In September 1992 the first major crisis of the European Monetary System (EMS) showed how little the European bourgeoisies adhered to the accord that had just been signed. This division within big European capital only confirmed the rivalry which had already led Germany, France and Great Britain to intervene — each in their own way — in crisis-ridden Yugoslavia to increase their sphere of influence. The combination of these three crises created a radical political turning point for the EC (which has since become, and will hereafter be referred to as the European Union, EU).

Since that time, the EU periodically lurches towards catastrophe. Instead of approaching the famous "norms", we are moving away from them. Instead of

convergence, there is a divergence of policies. There is a problem of credibility. Behind all these crises are the fundamental contradictions of the EU, which are aggravated by the long economic depression. But it is above all the voluntarist attempt to go from a free trade zone to political-State union that is the driving force behind the current crisis.

The Single European Act (which was adopted in 1985 and took effect in 1993) put the finishing touches to a large market in which capital, goods and workers would circulate freely. As for the Maastricht Treaty (which was adopted in December 1991, signed in February 1992 and officially applied from November 1993), its goal is the establishment of a political and monetary union.

There seems to be a logical link between the two, with the second flowing from the first. A single currency would be favourable for trade and capital circulation; European citizenship would be favourable for the circulation of the work force; and the centralisation of the police apparatus (through the Schengen component of Maastricht) and the military (with the Western European Union and the Euro-brigade) would provide for the harmonious functioning of European territory.

Embryo

But this is not what is happening. The Maastricht Treaty puts European unification on another level altogether, that of the creation of the embryo of a "supranational State apparatus". As a result it creates two sources of high tension from on high.

In the first place, it removes a number of prerogatives from the orbit of the national States. National States, although they have lost a lot of their legitimacy, continue to play a decisive role in maintaining social cohesion and reproducing conditions for the proper functioning of capitalism. As such, the European State apparatus seems at the same time to be both indispensable and irresponsible.

In the second place, this contradiction is heightened by the fact that the European proto-State apparatus intervenes with constraints to "harmonise" a

number of financial and political conditions in all the member countries of the EU. But these member States are products of a very uneven development, with histories going back two or more centuries, and with very immediate "political" histories. Enormous economic and geopolitical interests are at play.

The explosive character of these inter-imperialist contradictions was demonstrated through the two murderous wars that took place over the period of thirty years earlier this century. These contradictions have not disappeared even if their form may have evolved through the massive interpenetration of the different economies and the Europeanisation of certain sectors of big capital.

As such, the big bourgeoisie's determination to support European unification — including on the supra-national level — runs directly up against the differences in the various countries.

Most British manufacturing exports are now directed to the European continent, even if the majority of profits of British financial and industrial firms still originate outside of the EU. This allows for a fine "free trade" agreement with Germany, which remains a leading exporter of manufactured goods.

Weakness

France is a second-rate economic power. It compensates the weakness of "its merchandise" with diplomatic initiatives and a handful of post-colonial wars. Its ability to win a share of the market in the world arena depends — more than for other major EU members — on its specifically political weight (which de Gaulle understood). This is why France insists on a political Europe.

For its part, the German bourgeoisie is not opposed to a political Europe by any stretch of the imagination. It knows that for reasons related to recent history it must imperatively cloak its economic power in the garments of European institutions — including handing over some power to the European parliament.

As such, Germany was forced, by Maastricht and following French pressure, to prove its loyalty to a political Europe. The German mark will anchor the future single currency which will be

under EU control. But this is only a promise. Germany will not accept the idea of an "automatic" passage to a single currency and bank — even though this is in the Treaty, on condition that "the criteria for convergence are met".

Germany will make a political judgement, because it has its eyes on the East. This is not to torpedo the EU — essential for its foreign trade — but to win the EU to its own perspectives of outflanking the Americans and the Japanese in the scramble for potential new markets, from Prague to Vladivostok. And until further notice, this means fully harnessing of all State and economic mechanisms on the national level.

Many more examples could be cited.

For example, German capitalism had the economic and political strength to integrate its working class movement — which must be the world's largest and best organised — into the State apparatus and even into the enterprises (the *mittbestimmung*). For its part, the French employers never thought of this idea. And the British ruling class is ready to do anything to protect the "comparative advantage" which it secured following Thatcher's brutal defeat of the trade union movement.

Youth in France showed that victories are possible



But it is definitely around the question of the single currency — both a powerful symbol and a real issue — that the contradictions of European unification are centred at the present time. A single currency would definitely be beneficial for trade and commerce. But it first requires budgetary, tax and financial harmony. And this means that the social and economic policies of EU governments are all up for grabs.

As a result, there is an increasing disparity in the division of money (for example, with regard to pay and welfare benefits) between the social classes and

even between different sections of these classes. The living conditions of millions of people are being altered.

One proof that money is not just a "general equivalent" for measuring the "value" of merchandise is to compare prices from one country to the next. It becomes clear that it is a social relationship — that is, a question of the relationship of forces between classes in each country and also between ruling classes within the EU. "Currency building" is a central concern for a State, particularly for a (big) imperialist State. The Brussels summit of December 1993 casually decided to postpone the common currency to the next century.

Needs

Behind all this there is a major problem — that of political power within the EU. Already, national States no longer fully respond to the needs of multinational European capital. It is urgent for them to create new political-State mechanisms with an international scope. But we are far from the formation of a real European State.

In reality, there is no European nation. The internationalisation of the

insurmountable in the short-term.

Maastricht's failings will not automatically lead to a simple return to the Single European Act (1985), the Treaty of Rome (1958) or, worse, to a dislocation of the EU and national protectionism. There is a double brake that goes hand in hand with an overall economic logic of the current period that goes in the direction of regional groupings on a world level.

First, since the end of the Second World War, European unification has from the beginning combined economic and political measures, beginning with the Marshall Plan. There is a tradition of inter-governmental co-ordination with constraining economic implications — but without any transfer of national sovereignty. This tradition is represented by a never-ending series of "European spaces" — which go from large to insignificant depending on the case — which symbolise this idea, groom the political personnel (an "elite") and further this perspective.

The risk of a dislocation of the EU cannot be excluded. An abrupt change in the balance of forces is possible — primarily as a result of uncontrolled social and political forces unleashed by the

long depressive wave. But this risk is above all linked to the possibility of an economic or military catastrophe on the international level — or of a social shake-up in one or more EU countries.

The interaction of the economies of the countries of the EU has reached a stage where any dislocation in the EU would create dislocation in each

component economy of the member countries. For nearly all the countries of the EU — the large (including Britain) as well as the small — the big market is a clear objective necessity. This is why the European Commission and the Council of Ministers have been able to manage a precarious situation with intermediate institutional formulae.

The EU is a complex structure. It is a "free trade zone (highly open to the outside) led by inter-governmental institutions (which constitute its centre of gravity) and the beginnings of a supranational State apparatus."

EU bourgeoisies is a process that goes beyond Europe's borders, and we are not heading towards a unified European bourgeoisie. Moreover, there is not a real European-national sentiment among the people of Europe, even though there may exist a certain embryonic consciousness evolving in this direction. Even this consciousness is primarily through contrast — that is, through furtive comparisons to the Third World, Japan and the "American way of life".

The crisis of political unification, symbolised by the Maastricht Treaty, will last because its contradictions are

Within this framework, there are never-ending political debates and struggles.

There are bourgeois political forces that propose a re-organisation of the EU on the basis of a weak confederation between national States and the cancellation of the Maastricht Treaty. But these currents are clearly within a minority in the big bourgeoisie. Even the British ruling class is no longer opposed in principle to the single currency.

The real debate in European most important capitalist circles centres on pragmatic considerations about synchronisation of the establishment of politico-economic State institutions and the harmonisation of the real economies of the main countries.

Precarious

For the time being, this has led to a new consensus — reached in Brussels in December 1993 — which is as precarious as the previous one. The deadlines for the single currency are being put off, with market mechanisms expected to work for a certain period towards the indispensable readjustment of the economic, social and political structures of the main member countries.

This tactical adaptation has implied some distancing between France and Germany (which had already begun with the monetary crisis of the summer of 1993), and a clear rapprochement between Germany and Britain.

Formally, the accords on monetary union have been neither revised nor abrogated. The European bourgeoisies were not prepared to publicly admit their failure. In any event, they wanted to implement the anti-social measures that flow from the Maastricht Treaty.

This new approach will not be without risk for the cohesion of the EU. It enlarges the political gap. It will also create — albeit in a more diluted fashion — political tensions between member States, as is already shown by the impasse on the question of the broadening of the EU to include the Scandinavian countries and Austria.

The strangling of the idea of a social Europe will have a major impact on the the relationship between capital and labour in all the countries of the EU.

The different bourgeoisies — supported by their respective governments — can only plan for the short-term. They will not be able to get away from a number of central problems directly linked to the life of the EU — such as the enlargement of the EU and its conse-

quences, links with the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, the constitutional re-organisation of the EU (1996), and the exact deadlines for the Maastricht Treaty and the various parallel treaties (such as Schengen, the reform of the WEU, and so on).

Forced by the topsy-turvy and difficult political period in the world and in each country of the EU, they may decide to dive in head first, even if this involves creating a crisis with the other countries and/or frontally attacking the working class. Outside events may well provide an alibi — the Gulf War (cut short) gave a small taste of this.

THE struggle for an alternative involves an ideological, political and organisational struggle against social democracy. It has embraced the policies of severe capitalist austerity, and has not hesitated to inflict defeats on the working class. On the question of Europe, its role has been less brutal but just as pernicious. It has propagated a “Europeanist” ideology in the working class and trade union movement that equates support for the EU with an end to the economic crisis.

These pro-European sentiments emerged following the Second World War. But until the 1970s, they were subordinated to Americanism and “trans-Atlantic solidarity”. The weakening of American imperialism on the economic and moral level — since the Vietnam War — and the deepening of the crisis (the 1980-82 recession) led social democracy into a kind of “militant Europeanism”.

Social democracy is definitely integrated into the national bourgeois State and linked to “its” bourgeoisie — but at a time of world capitalism it has to rely on the strongest bourgeoisie, the one which is best placed to guarantee peace, democracy and prosperity.

The party of the “American way of life” from the 1920s to the 1970s has become the “all Europe” party. It was at the end of the 1980s that social democracy closely linked its liberal-monetarist policies to the idea of the “external constraint”, that of the EEC and now the EU. As a result, it has championed the formidable ideological campaign carried out by the State, political, academic and media elites of the bourgeoisie.

Social democratic ideology stands on two pillars. On the one hand, it sees peace, democracy and humanism as the almost natural offshoots of Europe. This

is blatantly contradicted by the stubborn facts of recent history: colonial expeditions and slavery; the two “world” wars; the constant temptation to swing towards authoritarian regimes (such as fascism); the invention of concentration camps (since the end of the 19th century in South Africa); a number of genocides (against Blacks, Native Indians and Jews); anti-semitic and anti-Arab racism; the “modern” suffocation of the Third World; poverty, including under parliamentary democracy; and daily violence inflicted on women and children.

Insofar as Europe has experienced an incontestable advance in the democratic and social spheres, this is related to a centuries-old fight against exploitation and oppression, from peasant uprisings to urban revolts, dissident intellectuals, female “witches” and, for the last 150 years, the conscious struggles for emancipation led by the working class movement, the feminist movement and for peoples fighting for their national and social liberation.

Social democracy also sees European unification as State construction imposed “from above”, instead of through co-operation between peoples and solidarity between workers, women and citizens “from below” and across borders.

Social roots

The more social democracy loses its original social roots, the more it seeks refuge in bourgeois State institutions — in this case, the EU. But the longer the crisis lasts, the more this European State takes on a despotic and technocratic character. An infernal logic!

“Obliged” to choose between its own social and democratic requirements and the preservation and development of the European proto-State, social democracy has cast aside these requirements on several occasions: on the democratic-parliamentary character of the EU; on equal rights for citizens (including non-EU immigrants); on the unifying constraints of a Social Charter; the “temporary” renunciation of a social Europe at Maastricht; the renunciation of a “plan for employment” in the interests of flexibility and social deregulation (the Brussels summit), and so on.

Social democracy has also contributed in a decisive way, in 1989-90, to making sure that a social Europe does not see the light of day. This was a defeat for the European trade union movement, which had gathered for the occasion and went down without a

fight.¹ The pretext for these retreats is always the same — to avoid a crisis in the EU.

At the same time, solidarity between the social and working class movements in the EU (and beyond) is not at the heart of social democracy's European policy. Rather, it is solidarity between EU governments. Its slogan, "not less, but more Europe!" is actually a war cry addressed to the social movements, meaning "in the name of the [survival of the] EU, align yourselves!"

In spite of the need, and the many opportunities, social democracy made no attempt to advance struggles, demands, solidarity and perspectives on a pan-European level.

But how can social democracy organise solidarity between workers on a pan-European level when it sets about breaking it in each country of the EU?

Paradoxically, the Europeanist ideology — egocentric and competitive by nature — is in no way incompatible to economic and political nationalism. As such, in the name of Europe, we can hear reformist trade union leaders demanding sacrifices, in each country and in each enterprise, to strengthen "our" firm in relation to "the partners" of the EU.

In France, in September 1992, social democracy did not hesitate to make use

of the truncheon-argument for "blocking German expansionism". In Germany, Kohl successfully got the Social Democratic Party (SPD) involved in his war against "the laziness of the most privileged" — comparing the lot of German workers to those in Spain. In Spain itself, social democratic leader Felipe Gonzalez has been crushing labour for ten years in the name of guaranteeing Spain's place in the front ranks of the EU.

In the pan-European game, the working class movement — kept within the national borders of each country of the EU by the social democratic apparatuses — is very much a late-comer in relation to the bourgeoisie.

Problems

The race ahead by social democracy towards the strengthening of the EU's State institutions in no way resolves the urgent problems of the organised workers movement, even from the reformist point of view of the trade union apparatuses.

The EU is not ready to become a real government. Its institutional structures are only in embryonic form, even though they already have a decisive influence over certain key decisions of the national States. These structures have a despotic character, in that they are outside of all institutional pressure and control.

The absence, on a pan-European level, of the "modern" institutions of bourgeois parliamentarianism and social consensus-making has cut short the idea of a European "civil society" — of a dense and diversified fabric of organisations, movements, associations, and so forth.

On the other hand, American-style lobbying in the corridors of Brussels is all the rage. The end result is that the traditional working class movement is disarmed. The way the

EU is being built today — with the blessing of social democracy — prevents a transfer to the Europe-wide level of the wide array of tactical devices which it has developed on a national level over more than a century.

These devices include: collective agreements in all sectors and on all levels of economic life; broad social legislation and protection, the basis of solidarity in the working class; democratic rights guaranteeing trade union activity in society and in the workplace; indirect participation in the running of the country through a system (different from country to country) of para-State organs of social consultation between trade unions, employers and the government; access to legislative work through the big working class parties, in parliament and in government

Credible

Over time, the combination of the mass roots of the trade union movement and its proximity to State and para-State institutions gave rise to a credible and operational trade union tactic of "negotiation-action-renegotiation-results" (with a more combative version for the trade union left).

This tactic is already worn out on the national level, and due to the crisis of the left Keynesian programme, it is pointless on the level of the EU.

A reformist pro-European left is trying to provide a response, but its oppositional line is not an alternative, since it accepts the over-riding principle of social democracy: its attachment to EU institutions.²

No doubt, it calls for a break with liberal-monetarist policies and for an economic kick-start on a pan-European level. But from there, they "logically" take on a position of defending Maastricht (with its single bank and currency) and calling for increased budgetary, tax, legislative and financial powers for the Commission.

A catastrophist analysis of the working class movement leads it a classically social democratic conclusion: the strengthening of (bourgeois) State institutions is indispensable for the functioning — or even the survival — of the working class movement.



1. Stephen J. Silvia, 'The social Charter of the European Community: A Defeat for European Labour', *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 44, no. 4, July 1991.

2. The British left-wing socialist Ken Coates (A Labour Party deputy in the European Parliament) developed this type of political approach into a coherent project. See 'A European Recovery Programme', *European Labour Forum*, no. 9, Winter 1992-93.

Another sector of the European left (of social democratic or Stalinist origin) is opposed to the EU and Maastricht in the name of "left-wing nationalism". One of this current's main representatives is Jean-Pierre Chevènement in France. He pleads the case of national sovereignty. His approach is based on two suppositions: the democratic failure of the EU is total, since it is subject to no control; and the national framework is the best for reviving the economy, even if this means taking measures that are protectionist and for "national preference".

This is a very contradictory current. On the one hand, it is clearly a break with the dominant Europeanist ideology and political line of the bourgeoisie and of social democracy. Its alternative approach relies on a crisis in the EU, for a break with the monetary union.

But behind this is hidden the illusion of a Keynesian revival on the national level. And linked to this illusion there is a nationalist drift which is barely hidden. As such, from his idealisation of the "republican" and democratic French State, Chevènement has gone on to oppose key social demands of the workers movement, including the reduction of the working week.

Behind this trend — behind which already lurks another — there is yet another being born: the idea of a concerted effort by workers and employers for national revival (in the case of France).

While a left nationalist response leads into a pernicious impasse, the "Europeanist" surge forward is no better. Each in their own way, they call for confidence in State institutions (one on the national and the other on the European level). This ends up by limiting both independent action and the demands of the working class and social movements.

There can be no doubt that any attempt to break with the reigning liberal-monetarist policy would quickly run up against the EU, which is the central organiser of this policy on a European level.

Taking its position to its logical conclusions, social democracy sealed any possible way out for the working class by imposing the following dilemma: a break with neo-liberalism means a departure from the EU (with all the presumed negative effects). The only choice was that of accepting the EU, in the hope of improving its institutions and policies.

The development of a strategic response that can meet this challenge is

vital for getting out of the situation of political impotence that currently paralyses the working class and social movements, particularly their left wing.

No doubt, the absence of such an alternative will not prevent struggles from breaking out, but they will be left without a global political perspective — lacking dynamism, unity and the will to win. This has become a practical question insofar as the EU is going through a very difficult period from which it will not emerge very soon.

Moreover, there is an incontestable social remobilisation that addresses the problem from a left-wing perspective.

This is very important; without a major revival of the activity of the working class and its allies — and without the beginnings of favourable changes in the relationship of forces on the ground, any alternative plan will be a purely abstract construct.

Response

These last few months have provided precious notions of what the beginnings of a political response should look like.

For the moment, given the absence of a wide-ranging social struggle organised on the pan-European level — by a non-existent pan-European labour movement — and the absence of any perspective of revolutionary confrontations that would quickly flow over the borders of one country, the most realistic hypothesis is the following: that a government of the EU is caught in the grips of a wide-ranging social struggle (comparable to those that have broken out these last few years in Greece, Italy, Spain, Belgium and France) and must retreat on an important point of its austerity agenda.

Such a retreat would inevitably come into conflict with the institutional regulations and the main policies of the EU. Past crises (on the question of Fren-



ch fishermen and farmers, for example) have demonstrated as much.

The matter would then fall into the tangled web of the EU's institutional framework. Since inter-governmental relations dictate the law within the EU, it would be up to the Council of Ministers to deal with it. Each EU government would then be consulted on the question, and would then have to present it before the public opinion of each of their countries, in particular that of the working class.

From this point onwards, the outline of a left-wing alternative appears, inasmuch as there is a need for a strong European public power — that breaks with the institutions of the EU and its member governments — that takes up social demands that workers struggling in one country bring to the attention of the entire work force of the EU.

Where would the opening of such a political breach lead? That would depend on a number of factors that can't be predicted today.

On the tactical level, three conclusions can already be drawn. First, to rely on the change in the relationship of forces through the activity of "those from below" means taking the social dynamic on a national level as the starting point. Then, we must understand how the political dialectic goes from the

national to the European level. Finally, we must consider the opening of a crisis in the EU as being an obligatory part of the journey towards a "social Europe" — on condition that this involves a shake-up of the EU institutions and not their continuity.

This raises a series of tactical problems, both political and programmatic. The real key is that of finding how this political dynamic — unleashed in one country — can be brought into the heart of the EU to shake its political-State structure.

Without getting steeped in political fiction, two variations can be predicted. The government in place (pro-capitalist, whichever party is in power) that is forced to retreat is therefore obliged to negotiate in the upper echelons of the EU. Even in this case, the possibility of exercising tremendous political pressure is very real, as past crises have shown.

The other variant is that a left-wing government (a "workers" or "social" government) comes to power following a particular struggle, and is more or less representative of the social movements.

Each of these cases stems from a different relationship of political and social

forces in the country. They also point to different potential dynamics.

What is important today is not political fiction, but a response to the politicised section of the trade union and social vanguard that is already calling for some kind of a response to the social democratic trap which says, "if we win a social struggle, this could lead to the isolation of the country, the break-up of the EU and the rise of nationalism, or even of fascism." This kind of worried reasoning is a function of the relationship of forces between the left and the right in the working class and social movements, and between capital and labour.

Measures

It should be said that nothing obliges a left-wing government to leave the EU and close its borders. It would need to — in order to consolidate itself — take a number of measures favourable to workers, women, youth, immigrants, especially for the most disadvantaged of these sectors. On this basis, proposals can be made to the other peoples of Europe to "short-circuit" the EU, taking these measures as an alternative for the whole EU and for each member country.

It is clear that the economic and social policy of such a government would be closely linked to the broadening and strengthening of social mobilisations throughout Europe. Instead of getting out of the EU and denouncing the "reactionary treaties" (and satisfying oneself with general propaganda for a socialist Europe), it is necessary to use to the fullest the time and space allowed for by EU institutional mechanisms — to win over the working classes of the EU.

It is not scandalous — if these conditions are met and this strategy is followed — to demand an immediate renegotiation of the treaties. The political axis of the propaganda, the concrete social and economic policies, the manoeuvres and negotiations is for proposing "the re-organisation of the EU on other bases," understood as "a European space unified on the basis of a model of growth based on social needs, full employment, respect for the environment and international cooperation."³

We would not propose a complete schema (an exercise very popular in the Europeanist left) as an alternative to the EU. However, we could put forward measures which address existing institutions. Instead of "quitting" the single bank (if it exists), we could refuse to

submit to its diktat, sticking instead to the local policies applied by a left-wing government. Instead of rejecting the EMS, we could propose a zone of monetary stability based on economic criteria that break from the neo-liberal logic.

The crisis of the EU, the general toughening of bourgeois policies, the topsyturvy nature of the international situation, growing social tension, and the inevitable periodic adaptations of EU institutions — all these factors can only heighten the autocratic nature of the EU, and expose it in the eyes of public opinion. This is a State that lacks both a Constitution and elected, accountable bodies!

This raises a burning question of democracy, which the anti-capitalist left must squarely address. And this can only be done with a radical democratic demand: for a Constituent Assembly based on universal suffrage in all the countries of the EU according to the same system of proportional representation. This call is part of the fight to deepen the crisis of the EU and pave the way towards another kind of Europe. It expresses in organisational terms what should be the central theme of a campaign for political democracy: the peoples of Europe should themselves decide in which society they wish to live together!

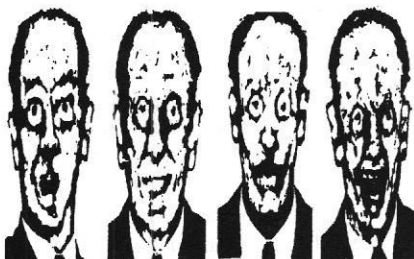
Derailed

As with all partial demands (for the reduction of the working week, for example), this demand can be co-opted and derailed. The key consists of filling the demand with anti-autocratic content and highlighting its social implications. The real potential of this demand lies in the possibility of fusing it with social mobilisations which, if they manage to create a crisis in the EU, will inevitably give rise to the question of how an alternative Europe should be organised.

The call can be used for every future "failing" of the EU: to intervene on the question of the limited legitimacy of the EU, on the scheduled renegotiations with certain member countries, on the anti-social measures decided by the Council of Ministers at every European "summit", on the State-government monopoly over treaty renegotiations and in the implementation of the single currency, and so forth.

The call denounces the pseudo-democracy of referenda ("yes" or "no" on vital questions) and of the European

3. Quotations taken from Henri Wilno's article, 'Échanges internationaux, que ferait un gouvernement de gauche?', *Critique Communiste*, winter 1993-1994.



pseudo-parliament. And it lets us move away from the false choice put forward by the left nationalists between the democratic national State and anti-democratic Europe.

Agitation around such a call ("the people should decide!") lets us advance the idea of the "Europe that we want". It also lets us put forward the idea of a new citizenship: the right to vote and to stand in elections for all EU residents; male-female parity among deputies; and a large Assembly that regularly briefs the population on its work.

Of course, such a proposal raises a number of other problems. The geographic basis would be that of the current EU, but the Assembly could invite other States and peoples to join.

Democratic

The Assembly would not be entirely sovereign to impose by majority vote a Constitution on all today's member States. A democratic mechanism would have to be put in place in each country to see if each population accepts the proposed Constitution, and thus wishes to join the new EU.

The election of deputies in the Constituent Assembly would have to be based on the current States. But this does not automatically define the organised State framework of the future Europe, since this question too would be part of the deliberation of the Constituent Assembly.

This matter is of special importance to oppressed nationalities within EU member-States. The Assembly can be a tribune for them to defend their right to self-determination and put forward concrete proposals so they can take their place in the future Europe. ★

The real key is that of finding how this political dynamic — unleashed in one country — can be brought into the heart of the European Union to shake its political-State structure.

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This edition of *International Marxist Review* will be the last in its current format. A discussion has begun, the aim of which will be to decide on a better format for the presentation of the Fourth International's theoretical views. Details will be published here in *International Viewpoint*. ☪

For a Europe of solidarity

THE Appeal which we publish below was drafted specifically for the European elections. The organisations and currents which have signed the Appeal appear at the end.

A GAINST THE EUROPEAN UNION. FOR A SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL, DEMOCRATIC AND EGALITARIAN EUROPE BASED ON PEACE AND SOLIDARITY

The last European elections took place in 1989. It was a time of euphoria for the various European bourgeoisies. It was said that the creation of the Single Market — at the time set for 1 January 1993 — would lead to the creation of millions of jobs and a way out of the economic crisis. In this way, Europe was to be able to face up to its American and Japanese rivals within the international capitalist order.

Five years later, the verdict is unanimous: the project is in crisis, and it has failed to meet its stated objectives. 1993 was a black year.

Two recent figures on their own sum up the human and economic disaster: 20 million unemployed (an official figure which should really be doubled to make up for legislative and statistical subterfuges) and 50 million poor.

As for European unification, it is at a virtual standstill. Through its institutional games, the true nature of the European Union has been revealed for all to see. Far from responding to the social and international aspirations of workers, women and youth, the EU is above all a supermarket, a super-bank and a super-power! The EU means both the dismantling of the Welfare State and the building of an imperialist fortress. It is waging a war on its own workers and youth, an economic war against its Japanese and Ame-

rican competitors, and an all-out war against the Third World.

This Europe is not our Europe. We fight it not in the name of nationalist navel-gazing, but in the name of a Europe which is ecological, democratic, egalitarian and based on peace and solidarity. Our struggle against the EU is part of the anti-capitalist struggle for another society — a socialist society. This will be a Europe of the work place and the free association of peoples, open to the East and in solidarity with the South.

The deep-going crisis of the EU and the social remobilisation underway in a number of countries places this alternative on the agenda. It will not come about through existing State institutions — either national or European — but through the mass activity of workers, women and youth. It requires the building and strengthening of working class and social movements on a pan-European level. It calls for a radical break with the paralysing orientation that social democracy and the Communist Parties have imparted to the working class movement.

The Fourth International and its organisations want to contribute to this process, in a way best suited to each country, by putting forward a political platform that favours the emergence of demands on a continental-wide scale.

For a social Europe. One priority: abolish unemployment!

The millions of unemployed and excluded constitute a major human drama, a point of shame for our governments, and a waste of energy and creativity for society. Moreover, mass unemployment has persisted for many years and this is an obstacle to the necessary fight-back. It also constitutes a danger for the whole labour movement.

The bourgeoisie claims that we will never again reach near full-employment for economic and technological reasons. Within social democracy and in sections of the environmental movement, the same

song is being sung.

But this is false!

It is possible to create millions of jobs that are socially useful and ecologically justified, by putting an end to the competition between 400 multinationals fighting over a market of 800 million "Westerners", and by re-organising the economy along different lines than that of the profit logic — to meet social needs in our countries and of nearly 2 billion human beings in distress elsewhere in the world: food, access to water and land, basic infrastructure, health care, education, housing; followed by urban reform, public transport, renewable sources of energy, communication, and so forth. This will require the rehabilitation of the public sector and the intervention of the public sector on a pan-European level to replace a totally dysfunctional private sector.

To stop Europe's decline means co-operating with the East and the South. This means a generous project based on solidarity, a revival of civilisation on a global level.

Confronted with the problem of mass unemployment, we call for an immediate reduction of the length of the working week to 35 hours without a reduction in salary. On the pan-European level, we need financial aid for countries and enterprises to compensate for the glaring imbalances, through a "structural fund" built up through a tax on large fortunes and on the revenues of finance capital. This would clearly also require control by workers and the public authorities. This measure would advance the struggle to move quickly towards the 32 and 30-hour working week in countries with high labour productivity; this would be accompanied by a thoroughgoing re-organisation of work and life in society;

In addition, we struggle for an equal wage for equal work for women; against a reactionary family policy and for the establishment of individual and equal rights in the area of social security; for the wide-scale development of quality child care and other such facilities;

— for upward harmonisation of the systems of social security, of norms of security and hygiene, and of working conditions generally;

— for youth: the right to free studies and guaranteed employment without discrimination or supervision;

— a guaranteed minimum wage and a minimum unemployment insurance payment in all the countries of the Union;

— trade union rights legally recognised in all the countries of the Union: the right to strike, right to workplace representation, right to conclude collective work agreements, the setting up of European workplace committees in the multinationals.

An ecological Europe.

One priority:
break with policies that place the future of the planet in danger. End the race for profit, which does not take into consideration environmental costs, natural cycles and social needs.

— for an upward harmonisation of environmental norms and a high level of consumer protection;

— for a policy based on the development of renewable energies;

— for a policy of public transport, telecommunications and energy. They should be affordable, outside the logic of the market, deliberately oriented towards user needs, and respectful of the environment;

— an agricultural policy that discourages the massive use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers.

A Europe of citizens.

One priority:
in all fields, assert the demand for equal rights.

— against ethnic purification, racism and xenophobia in all forms;

— equal rights for immigrants from outside the EU, including the right to vote and to stand in all elections;

— right to asylum through a generous interpretation inspired by the Geneva convention;

— freedom of movement within the EU;

— equality of social and civil rights for women; parity for women; equal representation of men and women in all elected official (State)

institutions;

— democratic right to cultural, religious, national, political and ideological expression;

— for the recognition of the right to self-determination of peoples and the democratic rights of national and ethnic minorities;

— for a European confederation of peoples.

A Europe based on solidarity.

One priority:
immediately stop the human disaster which affects the South and threatens the East.

— against the ethnic division in Bosnia, which is favoured by the EU. Humanitarian aid, not bombs;

— cancellation without condition of the debt of the countries of the South and the East, to stop the mad race towards "structural adjustment";

— a break from the market logic imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. Radical reform of UN. All vital questions for humanity (war and peace, the survival of the planet, economic and ecologically-sound development, transport and communication and culture) must be publicly debated and decided by the General Assembly;

— bilateral trade and development contracts to respond on a priority basis to the social needs of populations, in co-operation with NGOs, and in favour of development based on the best local conditions, and by working against the law of profit by opposing the unfettered competition between countries of the South for access to the world market.

A Europe of peace.

One priority:
struggle for Europe to become a demilitarised zone.

— elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear military units, as well as of all military units at the forefront of repression, hostage-taking, terror and torture (eg. rapid deployment forces, paracommandos, etc.);

— a radical reduction in the military budget;

— against a European army, for the dissolution of the "Franco-German brigade", of the UEO, and for a withdrawal from NATO.

— withdrawal of American troops and the dismantling of American

bases; withdrawal of the fleet of American warships from the Mediterranean, from the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

Europe will not be built behind people's backs and in a social graveyard. This democratic and social struggle will be waged against the EU and its current institutions, and against Big Capital, of which the EU is the cutting edge. The Europe we want will be built "from below". This means strengthening networks between social movements — trade union, anti-racist and anti-fascist, feminist, Third World solidarity, and so on — on a pan-European level.

In this area, the trade union movement has a specific responsibility, for the development of co-ordination between workers on the level of their branch of the economy and of the multinationals, and for the organisation of common campaigns against unemployment, for the radical reduction of the working week, against the Maastricht criteria, and so forth.

We need a strong left-wing political alternative before it is too late, and on a pan-European level, through a convergence between the radical left and the radical wing of the ecology current. Without this alternative, there will be no future for the struggles of workers, women, youth who — whatever their nationality — are mobilising against injustice, and rebelling against unemployment and misery, racism and war.

We plan to contribute to the building of this alternative with all our might. ☼

The following European sections of the Fourth International have signed the Appeal:

Socialist Workers' Party (SAP/POS, Belgium);

Socialist Workers' Party (SAP, Denmark);

Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, France);

Socialist Workers' Party (SAP, Netherlands);

Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR, Portugal);

Socialist Party (SP, Sweden).

Other signatories include:

The editorial board of the Fourth Internationalist journal *Bandiera Rossa* (Italy);

Re-inventing socialism



ALAIN Tondeur is a leader of the Socialist Workers' Party (Belgian section of the Fourth International) and editor of its French language publication, *La Gauche*. *International Viewpoint* spoke to him about the establishment of the United Left in the French speaking Walloon region of the country, and the campaign which has been launched for the European elections in June.

INTERVIEW — 18 April 1994

W *HAT is the United Left?*

The United Left (GU) is a political movement of left-wing trade-unionists, third-world solidarity activists and feminists. It is not a new party nor coalition of parties or of organised currents. Nor is it a "club" which merely reflects upon the future of the left. It is a movement of individual men and women who are active in the social movements, not necessarily members of political parties, who want to combine their efforts so as to put forward real choices and open up real debates.

● *What is the programme of the movement?*

GU does not have a comprehensive answer to the huge problems which today face both the working class and humanity in general. Firstly, it rejects

capitalist society based on a race for profit, and proposes in its place a "united, democratic, pluralist and accountable society", based upon the liberation of individuals as well as the satisfaction of social, ecological and cultural needs; secondly, its political project is based on the re-appropriation of action and debate by citizens, in as much as it is only through democratic intervention by the social majority, through its becoming conscious and through its mobilisations, that a real project of deep social transformation can take place. The Appeal of the new movement concluded with these lines: "The socialist project has embodied this hope for one-hundred and fifty years. It has been brought into disrepute. It must be re-invented."

"The socialist project has ... been brought into disrepute. It must be re-invented."

Besides these two fundamental principles, GU has adopted as its own a whole series of concrete demands which have been developed by the social movements. In this way GU has taken on the claims of the feminist movement (for gender equality in all places of power), the movement "Avec vous" ("With You") for equality of rights (the right to vote for immigrants who have lived more than five years in any country within the European Union), the third-world solidarity movement (can-

cellation of the debt and rejection of outside interference), organisations which aid refugees (respect for the General Convention), the environmentalist movement (eco-development more related to consumer need, an end to plundering of resources and development of renewable energy), union confederations (the same rate of taxation for capital as wages, abolition of financial advantages for multi-national headquarters, a wealth tax and an end to secret bank accounts, and also taxation on speculation) and workers' mobilisations against the Global Plan (rejection of "flexibility" and privatisations, preservation of social security, and a radical reduction in working hours without loss of pay). In addition to these claims, GU will set out concrete alternatives, following collective discussion, on all the problems which different movements would like taken up.

● *What brought about the appearance of GU?*

GU is the fall-out of the struggle against the Global Plan, which took place last October to December.¹ The idea that the left should unite politically had existed for some time: It has now become concrete, mainly because a significant number of left-wing trade

unionists concluded from the social mobilisation last autumn that they should engage actively on the political plain. The Global Plan is a social-democratic plan within the frame-

work of Delor's "White Book". The regressive social measures which it contains mark a real change in social relations: a freeze on salaries, destabilisation of social security, "flexibility" and "the making precarious" of work to excess, notably for young people and women, compulsory employment (at 150 FB per hour²) for certain categories

1. See Alain Tondeur, 'New Belgium solves nothing', *International Viewpoint*, no. 247, July 1993.
2. 150 FB is worth approximately £2.80/US\$4.20.

of unemployed. There was a huge riposte from workers, notably on 26 November, when an unprecedented twenty-four hour strike completely paralysed economic activity. But the struggle came to an abrupt end: social-democracy stood firm and the union leaderships bowed before the imperative of governmental stability. The result was a deep crisis in the Belgian system of social dialogue, as well as a very serious crisis in relations between the Socialist Party (PS) and the Socialist-led union, the FGTB. Some symptoms of this crisis: the Brussels FGTB will this year organise its own 1st May celebrations, without the PS, while the Walloon FGTB will not speak at meetings in the south of the country on that date. But this is not enough for the militants in the sectors which were foremost in the struggle (FGTB metalworkers and employees in the Confederation of Christian unions (CSC): they want to set out a left-wing political alternative, both to combat the right-wing drift of the PS and as a counter-balance to the likely break-through of the extreme right. Some responsible unions from a number of large companies — Caterpillar, Volkswagen, Sidérurgie, FNNH and SNECMA have from the beginning participated actively in meetings of the GU.

The political engagement of left-wing unionists has been accentuated by the scandals which have sullied the PS and by the crisis which these scandals have opened up in the heart of social democracy. Immediately after the vote on the Global Plan, justice demanded and obtained the lifting of parliamentary immunity on three socialist ministers, including the Vice-President Guy Coème, and the Minister-President of the Walloon region, and ex-President of the Socialist group in the European Parliament, Guy Spitaels. The three are suspected of having received bribes from the Italian company Agusta, at the time when it was pumping cash to the Italian Socialist Party of Bettino Craxi and when the Belgian Guy Coème was the Minister of Defence. The affair is without doubt linked to the killing of the former President of the PS, André Cools, in August 1992. The PS leadership reacted to the "affairs" by increasing its right-wing administrative course — under the banner of ethics — as not

to run the risk of electoral punishment. In 1991 their social-democracy resulted in a loss in support of nearly ten percent, according to opinion polls. Suddenly the clan warfare rebounded in the heart of the PS: the Walloon regionalists, attracted by populism, took those in Brussels and were contested by "orthodox" administrators, ardent supporters of André Cools. This phenomenon of unionist engagement in the political struggle, for a left-wing alternative to social democracy has not been since 1963-4, after the "strike of the century" of winter 1960-1. It is a significant event in the Belgian workers' movement, which has traditionally been dominated by "pure syndicalism". This has made all the left-wing political organisations face up to their responsibilities, and has encouraged them to unite around a political plan.

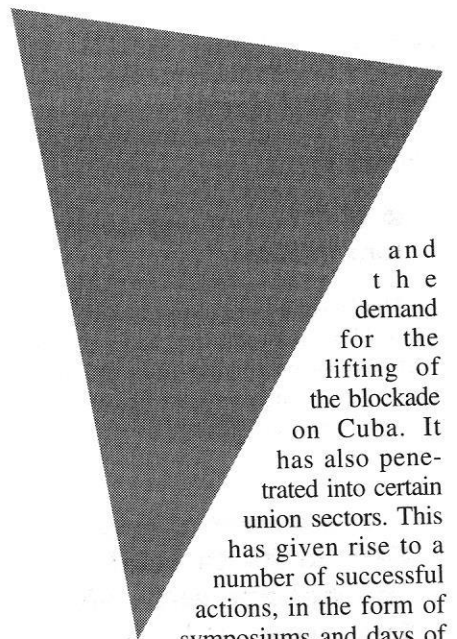
● **Have other factors favoured the setting-up of GU?**

Certainly. Three are particularly important.

Firstly, the new social movements, like the union movement,

have all been confronted by the absence of political support for their demands. The plainest example is that of the huge movement "Avec vous", which is for democracy, and against exclusion and racism. On 27 March "Avec vous" brought out around 200 thousand people onto the streets of Brussels. "Avec Vous" demands equality of political and social rights for all, including the right to vote for immigrants resident for more than five years in the European Union. It is an understatement that this claim is ignored; whilst scarcely twelve years ago all the traditional parties declared that they supported the right to vote in local elections, they now make concessions to racist prejudice. While the Maastricht Treaty gives immigrants the right to vote in local elections, this will not occur in Belgium before the year 2000. From that, the overall problem of political representation is raised...

Secondly, in recent years there has been a whole series of joint practical experiences around specific themes. The most important example is that of the third world movement; it has radicalised itself very clearly around such claims as for the cancellation of the debt, rejection of "humanitarian" outside interference



and the demand for the lifting of the blockade on Cuba. It has also penetrated into certain union sectors. This has given rise to a number of successful actions, in the form of symposiums and days of action, in particular on the initiative of the Committee

for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (CADTM). These initiatives were successful due to there being action and pluralist debate around a minimal platform. Thanks to these encounters, some sections of the left have got to know one another, to work together and to respect each other. It is not therefore by chance that some important figures in the third world movement, such as Pierre Galand (Secretary-general of Oxfam, Belgium),³ Gérard Karlhausen (responsible for projects at the National Centre for Co-operative Development) and François Houtard (director of the Tricontinental Centre) have given their support to GU.

The third factor is political. The (Stalinist) Belgian Workers' Party (PTB) has indisputable organisational force, but it has been greatly isolated and marginalised by the social movements, due to its developing an ultra-sectarian and self-justificatory politics, such as in its defence of the Peruvian "Shining Path" movement. On the other hand, the Communist Party (PC) has developed strongly in recent years. Its congress in November 1990 declared itself for political recomposition on the left. But it has gone through a deep crisis, which has led it to not putting forward a party list at the time of its last electoral consultations. It still has an influence, but lacks inter-regional cohesion and so was not therefore able to take a central initiative so as to put its theories into practice. But

3. See 'World Bank: Criminal', *International Viewpoint*, no. 255, April 1994 for Pierre Galand's resignation letter from the NGO-World Bank working group and its co-ordinating committee.

the majority of its cadres and of its leadership have rallied with certain enthusiasm to the proposal for recomposition advanced by the Socialist Workers' Party (POS).

● **So GU is not only an electoral initiative?**

That's right. The unionist left has pleaded for a joint slate for the European elections, but on condition that the new political movement is seen not only in terms of electoral slates but also in terms

GU wants to lead the debate with all the forces which call into question the race for competitiveness, unemployment, racism, sexism and the pillage of the third world...

of the development of alternatives within social mobilisations. This has equally been the view of the POS. There have been a number of hesitations: certain personalities judged it premature to put forward a slate at the European elections, and the PC was more reserved when faced with the setting-up of a movement. But the united dynamic, through its breadth, has put everyone in agreement. GU has therefore put forward a slate with three objectives; to enable those on the left to vote for who they want, to open up the debate on an alternative society to that envisaged by Maastricht and to build itself as a thoroughgoing political movement.

It should be said that the echo of the initiative has been quite stunning. Not only in the union movement, but also in the view of numerous personalities. The public appeal of GU was supported by nearly 300 people, among whom were a number who have undisputed legitimacy in left-wing opinion: the playwright Jean Louvet, the sociologist Elaine Vogel-Polsky (specialist on "social" Europe and an activist for democracy with equal representation of men and women), the philosopher Isabelle Stengers (who in 1993 won the French Academy prize for philosophy), the republican José

Fontaine, the journalist Colette Braeckman (specialist in Black Africa and contributor to Diplomatic World), the third-world solidarity activists already mentioned, a group of left-wing Christians and the virologist Lise Thiry (Belgian Aids specialist, and ex-PS Senator, who worked with PS Health Minister Santkin).

The GU slate, led by Lise Thiry, is the expression of this large echo. In view of its composition, opinion-makers have changed their tone. At first they spoke in terms of an initiative by "the marginal left" or the "far left"; they speak now of the "alternative left list". The biggest national newspapers give a large amount of space to GU. Xavier Mabilie, an astute observer of Belgian political life for many years and director of the centre for socio-political research and information (CRIPS), was interviewed recently concerning "the little lists". His view was that GU is capable of harming the PS.

● **What is the state of relations between the Greens and GU?**

The Ecolo party has passed fifteen percent in the opinion polls. Clearly it cannot be placed in the same bracket as the establishment parties. It voted against the Global Plan, and the Maastricht treaty, and defends equality of rights for immigrants. But at the same time, it is aiming for power and has adapted its practices to this perspective. The clearest example is its support for non-democratic reform of the State, in return for eco-fiscality. GU fits in with the perspective of a strategic debate with the Green party.

More widely, the movement does not view itself as having achieved everything but as a first step in coming together. In the heart of social-democracy a certain differentiation has also arisen with the setting-up of a left tendency, Socialism and Liberties, which is opposed to the Maastricht vision of Europe. GU wants to lead the debate with all the forces which call into question the logic of the race for competitiveness, unemployment, racism, sexism and the

pillage of the third world, within the perspective of other future recompositions.

● **What is the position of the political parties in GU?**

Canon François Houtart, in his synthesis of the debates at the time of the assembly which set up the movement on 5 March 1994 clearly summed up the situation: "The presence of the political parties in such a movement, alongside independent but organised persons, from other sectors, demands that their rate be clearly defined. None of them can exercise a hegemony over the movement." So far as the POS is concerned it has no intention of dissolving itself into a political current. At the same time, the parties which support GU could be brought into alignment, according to the success of the movement. If this success is to strengthen and become firmly established in the long-term a proper organisation will have to be developed, with a common press. The POS will be holding a congress in November 1994, after the local elections, to discuss its own project based on practical experience. ★



THE United Left (GU) campaign for the upcoming European elections aims at providing an alternative to a "new world order" which, far from solving the pressing social problems faced by the working class, has exacerbated them. Against a future of increasing inequality, growing unemployment and under-employment, and mounting xenophobia and racism, the United Left insists that other choices are possible. As its election broadsheet explains: "The struggle against unemployment and exploitation is at the centre of an alternative that can be built. This is possible through an alternative division of the gains of productivity involving a radical reduction of labour time without loss of pay. Let the financiers, landlords and bosses pay — those who currently benefit from the gains in productivity." Below, we publish extracts from the GU platform.

DOCUMENT

WE need to build another Europe. None of the current institutions of the European Union satisfy even the most elementary requirements of democracy. Even the European parliament — the sole elected body — is virtually powerless.

Although the Europe of Maastricht claims to promote closer relations between the peoples of the continent, the European Union pits all against all in sharp competition. It attacks wages, dismantles public services and social protection. Instead of providing new jobs, it has sharply increased unemployment. This Europe is non-democratic and void of progressive social content. It constitutes a fortress, exports its waste to the Third World and turns back refugees.

In spite of claims to the contrary, inequality between the sexes — the oldest of inequalities — has only grown. For the large majority of women the double working day remains a reality. Forced into dead-end and underpaid jobs, they have been the first to suffer from cuts in welfare benefits.

Another Europe is possible:

- European-wide citizenship — whereby all inhabitants, including immigrants born outside the European Union, would have the same political and social rights.
- A Europe that respects the right of asylum.
- A Europe of improved working conditions, wages and overall social legislation.
- A Europe that responds to the interests of all, with stable employment that is socially and environmentally useful
- A Europe founded on peace with established relations of co-development with the Third World and the East while respecting self-determination.

For International Solidarity!

In spite of much talk about "development", the gap between the industrialised countries and the Third World has only grown..

International financial organisations like the World Bank, the IMF and the GATT have made life miserable for not only the people of the South, and the East, but right here at home.

The scandalous Third World debt involves a net transfer of US\$40 billion a year from the poor countries to the rich ones. This is only the most

visible aspect of the insertion of these countries into the world market. This kind of development also involves the destruction of Third World social structures, of traditional economies, and leads to growing poverty and food dependence.

It is possible to create new relations with the South which are not founded on free market liberalism.

The market is not a natural law!

Social needs related to transportation, telecommunications, research, the production and distribution of energy, environmental protection, urban renewal and so forth, need to be divorced from the laws of the market.

In the absence of a real alternative from the traditional parties, racist and fascist forces have benefitted from the current crisis.

Like the 1930s, the far right has once again found an audience.

But a simple moral condemnation of racist and fascist ideology is not sufficient. The current crisis is also a crisis of the traditional parties. We can rebuild politics and make it a vehicle for social change.

Gender equality.

A half-century after women won the right to vote, and in the context of a growing role played by women in all sectors of social life, they continue to be marginalised from real power.

Democracy.

There is no democracy without real alternatives but the traditional parties have excluded these.

The traditional left parties in Belgium have been integrated into the system with all its destructive features.

These parties do not, therefore, constitute a real alternative. There is no democracy without an anti-capitalist left!

An alternative is possible!

A new form of citizenship includes the right to a job, housing, a living wage, culture, and education.

We can change society!

Let's take charge of our own destiny. Let's break out of the limited, undemocratic structures into which we have been forced. Let's organise ourselves in a concrete way for future struggles.

Let's create a new political movement to bring alternatives into social movements and electoral struggles. ✪

Missed opportunity

THE United Left has missed an opportunity to widen its appeal and support. Our correspondent explains why.

MIGUEL ROMERO
Madrid, 27 April 1994

THE European elections on 12 June will take place during the most serious economic, political and social crisis in the Spanish State since the Socialists (PSOE) came to power at the end of 1982. Some statistics: unemployment at 24%, or around 3.8 million people; casual employment at 34%; industrial jobs down by 10% last year; and, thanks to corruption, the emergence of a "Kleptocracy" with amongst its members the ex-Governor of the Bank of Spain, the ex-Director General of the Civil Guard (the political force specialised in the struggle against "terrorism" and drug trafficking, which also possesses an extremely powerful information network),¹ the ex-Director General of the State Official Gazette, the ex-chief of the Stock Exchange and many less senior officials. Nobody doubts that there will be new scandals in the next few months nor that a large number of those involved in the corruption will never be discovered.

The crisis has overwhelmed the capacity for reaction and resistance of the social movements, which in general have been weak and disorientated for a long time. If the general strike on 27 January showed the possibility for struggle, it demonstrated even more clearly the lack of alternatives to the Workers' Commissions (CC.OO) and the General Workers' Union (UGT), which did not know what to do when the government completely refused to change to its harsh economic and social policy.

In these conditions, the political importance of the European elections is growing: a strong vote by the left against the PSOE is one of the few means available in the short-term to stimulate social mobilisation. For the United Left (IU) — which in recent years has made radical opposition to the González government its central feature — it should have been an exceptional opportunity to form the axis of a united, "red-green" list of candidates ("red-green" being not wholly appropriate, given the involvement of, for example, feminist groups), with which a large majority of the left could identify, fed-up as they are with the PSOE. Regrettably, this opportunity has been lost. The IU European list has been decided by internal manoeuvring (possibly for medium-term political objectives) which do not correspond with its proclaimed willingness to develop "a live process of political, programmatic

The crisis has overwhelmed the capacity for reaction and resistance of the social movements, which in general have been weak and disorientated for a long time.

and, in time, institutional convergence of a broad spectrum of left-wing forces." Only fifty-eight percent of the Federal Council voted in favour of the list. This is a statistic which indicates that there will be important political battles within IU in the run-up to its Fourth Federal Assembly, which will take place in December. It is worth examining the IU European electoral policy for 12 June in the context of the most important debates going on in the organisation.

Two currents

At the Third Federal Assembly which took place in May 1992 two main currents emerged, which since then have played a major rôle: the majority current is informal and centred around Julio

Anguita, IU's general co-ordinator, and obtained sixty percent of the vote. The minority current, New Left (NI), is organised formally and obtained forty percent. The Communist Party (PCE) of which Julio Anguita continues to be the Secretary-General, is the backbone of the majority, while in NI there are a number of important former leaders of the PCE — the best-known of those being Nicolás Sartorius, who for many years was seen as the natural successor to Santiago Carrillo² — and of the Socialist Action Party (PASOC),³ an organisation with very few activists, but which is influential due to its appearance as the "socialists" of the IU. We can characterise the majority as the "left" and the NI the "right" of the IU, although this needs to be amplified.

The conflict between the majority and NI became worse in subsequent months. This was especially true of the debate around Maastricht which pushed the IU to breaking point. On 27 September 1992 the Federal Council adopted a resolution which altered substantially the position taken by the majority: "The Federal Council agrees that the Parliamentary group should abstain from the final on the principle of the Maastricht Treaty.

Abstention will serve to denounce the González government's exclusion of the Spanish people from the building of Europe and at the same time declare that the Maastricht Treaty in its final form should not be ratified, on the contrary pleading for renegotiation..." In spite of the intention of consensus, only eight deputies abstained; another eight voted in favour (adhering to the "critical support" formula) and one, although also in favour, was absent from the vote so as to avoid the official position being in a minority,

1. The Interior Minister, Antonio Ascuni, who had governmental responsibility for the Civil Guard, has also subsequently resigned.

2. Santiago Carrillo (1915-) was for many years the central leader of the Spanish Communist Party.

3. PASOC was formed from a split in the PSOE in 1983. Its leaders are, in the main, "establishment" figures.

with the consequent risk of provoking a serious internal crisis. In any event, those still divided between the majority and NI positions were themselves going to set off a new conflict some months later.

Electoral lists

From the beginning of 1993 there was a pre-campaign atmosphere in respect of the general elections. Anguita notably radicalised his position: "The PSOE must lose the elections through left-wing activity." The NI current harshly criticised this position and proposed that agreement be sought with the PSOE so as to avoid the possibility of a conservative Popular Party (PP) government. To give some idea of why it was proposed, on 23 April 1993 an opinion poll in the Spanish daily *El País* showed that 43% supported a PSOE-IU government, as against 34% in support of a PSOE-PP government. (Only 11% were in favour of the coalition which in fact has finally occurred between PSOE and the Catalán nationalist organisation, United Convergence (CiU).

However conflict was provoked not by programmatic questions, but something much more prosaic: the electoral lists. The Madrid organisation, which traditionally has the main leaders, called preliminary elections to fix the order of candidates proposed by the leadership. There was a high degree of participation — ninety-seven percent, or 2,832 members. In principle it was a positive idea and one which the left should use in future. In this instance there was a huge vote against the main leaders of NI. They obtained fifth, eighth and ninth positions, but these were not certain of election. As a result they withdrew their candidacies, and would not accept a compromise offered by Anguita, and NI resigned from the coalition leadership.

The IU vote in the general election was worse than expected: eighteen deputies were elected, only one more than previously, although its vote increased by more than 400 thousand to almost 2.25 million or 9.7% of the vote. González could obtain an absolute majority either through coalition with IU or CiU. For some days there were meetings and negotiations and it was at this period that internal movements began which resulted months later in the position decided upon in respect of the European elections.

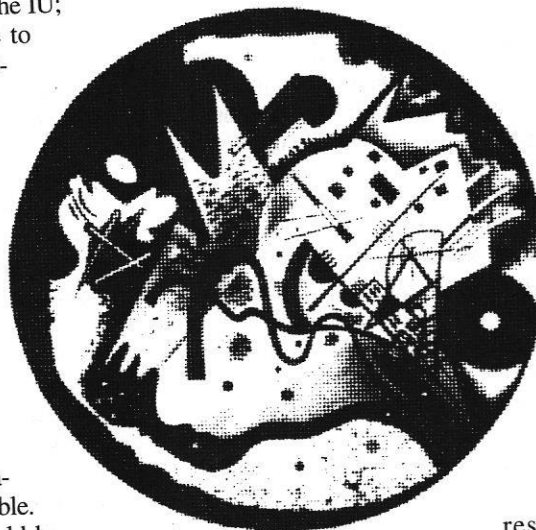
The NI position was extremely clear and coherent from the first. Sartorius stated that agreement with the PSOE

was a question of survival for the IU; given that the major obstacle to agreement was economic policy, this shrewd politician proposed that IU should accept whatever was agreed between the PSOE and the unions. For their part, the majority proposed a programmatic agreement, which if it occurred should be ratified by the rank and file. As IU was responsible for responding to the possibility of a PSOE-IU parliamentary majority, this approach appeared in principle fairly reasonable. But in reality the position held by the majority's spokespeople in meetings with the PSOE was extremely confused.

Anguita treats programmatic questions seriously (his favourite phrase is: "Programme, programme, programme") and IU itself frequently produces enormous manifestos (for example, that for the 1993 elections took up 150 close-typed pages). Without questioning the usefulness of these, it is doubtful whether they can serve as guides for complex policies of alliance, especially if the objective is to form a government. No one seemed to understand, even after the talks with González, what the IU considered the overriding conditions for supporting or forming part of the government. Even worse, it remained unclear what Anguita meant to say when he declared the readiness of IU to "burn itself up" if there was agreement with a PSOE which had turned to the left. In the end González refused to contemplate an agreement with IU. But it is reasonable to suppose that when these problems are considered specifically, which is likely to happen soon, there will be important debates which will not necessarily take place in the framework of the currents. There will be occasion to return later to this theme.

Towards "normalisation"

González' contempt for any IU proposal ended the post-electoral debate. But only a few weeks later there was another internal crisis. Sartorius proposed that the organisation should become a party, so as to challenge the hegemony of the PCE within the IU. The proposal was rejected firmly; it was clear that a majority wanted to maintain the present organisational structure and not engage further in internal conflict, which might



result in a split; as a result of this, Sartorius withdrew from political activity, at least temporarily.

Rumours

A prominent opponent of the Sartorius proposal was Alonso Puerta, a European deputy and Secretary-General of PASOC. Rumours began to circulate that Puerta had arranged with Anguita that he should head the IU list for the European elections; it seemed incredible, but it was true.

During the summer, González attempted to sign a social pact with the CC.OO and the UGT. The CC.OO delegation in particular proved very receptive to his overtures. Anguita was firmly opposed to the social pact, demonstrating once more that on social questions he remains implacably opposed to the rampant neo-liberalism of the government. NI supported the pact, as had been expected. However, González' repeated inflexibility did bring about agreement within the IU: agreement that no pact was possible.

After the summer there were clear signs of change in the leadership of IU, referred to as "normalisation". The statement which Anguita made in the Federal Council at the beginning of October was agreed by a joint majority-NI commission, and NI announced its re-joining of the federal organisations of the IU, on the grounds that the majority had made an about turn on issues such as the building of Europe, the policy of alliances and economic proposals. Although clearly the main reason why the NI returned to the leadership is that they had little to do otherwise, there did appear to be change in position on the part of the majority, although this had not

shown itself in any practical way and at times appeared rather contradictory.

There were three different elements to the Anguita position following the general elections: firstly, he sought a programmatic consensus with NI which would heal the breach opened up by the Maastricht debate, but maintain the basic political profile of the organisation; secondly, in the face of the crisis in the PSOE, he wanted IU to win influence amongst disenchanted PSOE voters, and goodwill to be shown in pursuing agreements, (with a corresponding "rectification" on the part of the PSOE) so that programmatic agreement could be reached; and thirdly, he still maintained a harsh critical line on González' politics, and supported the calls for social mobilisation, which occurred in the General Strike on 27 January. The three elements did not fit well together. Further, a line would develop which had disturbing aspects but which would determine the future of the organisation.

Eco-socialist factor

In early autumn there was a new development which had a small but significant influence on events. In Barcelona and Madrid meetings began between "red" and "green" currents. These included members of both IU's majority and "eco-socialist" current, Alternative Left (IA), the Greens, pacifists, and, in Barcelona, many of the collective which publishes the magazine *Mientras Tanto* (Meanwhile), a pioneer of eco-socialism since its inception in 1979. They communicated with each other and shared a common approach to central issues. To quote from one of their documents: "We cannot resign ourselves to short-sighted or criminal policies which harms the interests of the majority and mortgages the future. Today more than ever there needs to be an alternative broad front of those of us who support equality, liberty and solidarity whether or not we are in political organisations: left-wing parties and groups, unions, the ecologist and anti-nuclear movement, feminist and pacifist groups, Christian movements, civic and cultural associations..."

Although these initiatives were not strictly electoral, the proximity of the European elections and the possibility of intervening in these clearly played an important role.

At the end of December Joaquim Sempere in Barcelona, and a little later Carlos Taibo in Madrid, put themselves forward as independent nominees for a list which would defend an eco-socialist

programme. Both are intellectuals who although no longer politically active had played a large part in left-wing struggles, and who could count upon the support of many taking part in the meetings.

Their main supporters were IU and the aligned organisation, Initiative for Catalunya.

The Sempere and Taibo candidacies did not contradict the IU's political position. Its objective for the European elections is to form "a strong red-green centre in the Strasbourg Parliament" and it has often said that it wishes to establish a special relationship with the social movements. However they would also be useful politically — their radical and alternative image could be transformed into votes for the IU. But the above counted for nothing. In Barcelona the leadership of Initiative for Catalunya endorsed the candidacy of Antoni Gutiérrez, outgoing European deputy and ex-Secretary General of the Catalanian Unified Socialist Party (PSUC),⁴ who obtained seventy percent of the vote, as against thirty percent for Sempere.

In Madrid, the IU leadership made only an informal offer of seventh position on the list to Taibo. He would not have been certain of election and most of those who nominated him considered it unacceptable.

Crosshead

The situation was especially regrettable because if Sempere and Taibo had been endorsed useful lessons might have been learnt for the future. However the Barcelona and Madrid initiatives are not only continuing but finding an echo elsewhere, both within and outside the IU. It will not be easy to find the space nor a suitable rôle for such groups so different not only in their practices, but also in their projects. But it is important to build bridges between the "reds" and "greens". It is clear from many European countries that where such bridges do not exist, this has negative consequences for both camps.

On 5 March a Convention took place in Madrid of more than five-hundred IU cadres, to debate and approve the European election programme. The next day the Federal Council decided the first fifteen positions on its list of candidates.

The debate upon the programme was generally limited to leading cadre. There has been numerous and justified criticisms of this from the rank and file.

The Convention put forward very few amendments and although many opinions were expressed there was an atmosphere of controlled consensus. The final version was decided by the relevant commission.

The document setting out the programme is long — over eighty pages, one third of which is on the economy. There are many positive ideas concerning solidarity with immigrants, co-operation with the south, reduction of the working week to thirty hours (although with wage reductions), defence of conscientious objection, participation by citizens, social organisations and movements, a consistent approach to environmental issues, and so on.

The aspects which are most open to criticism are (1) those which are either abstract Europeanism, pure rhetoric, or confusing ideas and tasks (for example "The European Union is a strategic objective of the left" or "Europe is objectively interested in democratising international relations..."), (2) above all, the ambiguous proposal to "build a majority for progress on the European level." Its proponents insist that it should not be understood as a proposal for alliance with the European Socialist Party (ESP),⁵ but do not explain how the "majority for progress" can exist in Strasbourg on the margin of the ESP. This is an especially serious matter because IU is aware of the unavoidable relationship between policies of alliances on the European plain and in the Spanish State.

The programme was approved almost unanimously. But the following day there was a fierce battle over the electoral list and more particularly over who should head the list. In the Federal Presidency (the Executive Committee) there was a close vote between two candidates: Alonso Puerta, supported by Anguita, the main leaders of the very powerful Andalucian organisation and also NI, and Laura González (European deputy, ex-President of the Asturian parliament and leader of the Asturian Communist party, supported by most of the "majority" (although, at least for the present, it would be better to say "ex-majority"). Alonso Puerta won by seventeen votes to fourteen.

Anguita put forward on Puerta's behalf generic arguments (such as "shared loyalty to the programme") and

4. The PSUC is an autonomous regional organisation affiliated to the PCE.

5. The "European Socialist Party" brings together all the major social-democratic parties from the countries of the European Union.

others which were not particularly convincing (for example emphasising "that which unites us more than that which separates us"). A number of times he made a somewhat puzzling reference to Puerta being the most intelligent choice. He did not explain why and we cannot speculate on his reasons. But the main arguments in favour of Puerta's candidacy are: (1) To head the list with a supporter of the majority position in the debate on Maastricht gives the IU a democratic and pluralistic image; (2) Puerta appeals to PSOE voters; (3) Puerta is a symbol of the IU's openness to future agreements with the PSOE.

Only the third argument has any kind of consistency. Whether this weighed upon the decision will be seen after the Andalucian elections which will also take place on 12 June; in which the PSOE will lose its absolute majority, the PP will increase while probably remaining in second place, and the IU will be faced with difficult questions around the making of alliances.

In any event, the official list was approved in the face of considerable opposition. While eighty-nine voted in favour, only thirty-five of these came from the ex-majority. Twenty-eight voted against and thirty-three abstained. Angry words were spoken. While it is true that pluralism is one thing and democracy another the Andalucian who spoke against Puerta has been dismissed. This is exceptional, but far from unimportant.

In short, IU is putting forward a list for the European parliament in which its machine counts for more than whether it is "red" or "green". Internally, a good election result — and IU should improve, if in 1989 it only obtained under one million votes and four deputies — is likely to favour the supporters of the list and can strengthen those "recentred" who perhaps are incubating within the IU leadership. However it is unclear whether a bad result would produce the opposite.

Nevertheless, the internal problems seem in this case to be minor. As things are, on 12 June most of the people will vote for symbols, not candidates nor programmes. The most important result will be the relationship between what the PSOE loses and IU wins. In other words, whether with or without Puerta, on a national level IU will be the most visible alternative to the left of the PSOE.

Its vote should be the largest possible. Whatever happens, after 12 June we will enter a stormy period. ★

Danish resistance to continue?

THE "no" vote in Denmark's first Maastricht referendum on 2 June 1992, sent tremendous shock waves through the country's establishment and that of Europe's as a whole too. After the vote however, the left-reformist Socialist People's Party (SF), which had been initially opposed to Maastricht, emerged as one of the architects of the so-called "National Compromise" which led to a "yes" vote in the second referendum on 18 May 1993. The National Compromise reflected a change in the SF's politics — a change which had been underway for some time — and this was highlighted in particular by the party leaderships hope that they would become part of a new Social Democratic led government. When the bourgeois government fell in January 1993 their hopes were dashed. The Social Democrat's leader, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, instead chose three minor bourgeois parties as his coalition partners. The SF was, once again, left in opposition.

● For the Red-Green Alliance however, the situation after the 18 May had actually improved. As a reaction to the SF's manoeuvres, opinion polls indicated that the Alliance had now passed the magic two percent limit required to win representation in the Danish parliament. Despite this, the Alliance is not running an independent list for the European elections. Instead it will run both its own campaign and propose support for two other anti-Maastricht "resistance" lists.

● The People's Movement Against the EEC, which currently has four European deputies, split following the 2 June 1992 referendum. Those that left formed the June Movement. From day-to-day, the difference between the two

organisations is difficult to see, but while the People's Movement demands that Denmark should leave the EEC (and not just reject Maastricht), the June Movement is only opposed to Maastricht and not the EEC as a whole.

Members of the Red-Green Alliance will head the lists for the European elections of both organisations. Since both movements consist of bourgeois and left-wing forces there have been some strange positions taken. For example, the People's Movement will talk in one sentence about employers and employees negotiating with common interests, and in the next sentence declare how strong trade unions are required as the only protection against attacks on social rights.

● The Social Democrats are trying to put the welfare state at the forefront of their campaign, while at the same time attempting to ignore the content of the National Compromise — a "compromise" which the SF is still trying to maintain. Amongst the bourgeois parties the Liberal Party and the Centre Party will promote further Danish integration with the European Union and also membership of the West European Union — a question which will probably be at the top of the agenda of the governmental conference in 1996.

There is little doubt that the coming election will be seen in the light of June 1992 and May 1993. The Danish people will interpret the election as a "yes" or "no" to the European Union. In May 1993, forty-four percent still voted "no" to Maastricht. The results of these elections will indicate the extent to which Danish resistance to the European Union continues.

Jan Jensen ☆

Europe yes, Maastricht no!

THE Party of Democratic Socialism has, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, emerged as the principal left opposition party in Germany. It looks set to send representatives to the European Parliament. Our correspondent reports from its recent electoral congress.

MANUEL KELLNER*
Köln, 25 April 1994

THE conference held in March in Berlin by the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) which arose from the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the ruling party in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR) debated and voted upon their manifesto for the elections to the Bundestag (parliament) in October, and for the European elections on 12 June.

"Resistance"

The large banner on the platform read "Electoral Congress '94 — change begins with opposition." "Opposition" was amended by an unknown hand to "Resistance". This reflected the feelings of the majority of the "AG Junge GenossInnen", a youth group linked to the PDS, who are afraid that the PDS is becoming an establishment party. The PDS vice-president, Wolfgang Gehrcke asked them: "But how have we changed our positions under the pressure of parliamentary work?" In many areas, the PDS has persevered in the face of rigid opposition: against foreign activity by the army (Bundeswehr),¹ the abolition of the right to asylum, criminalisation of abortion, and so forth. The feeling of the youth is not necessarily correct. However, although in general the PDS has a left-wing programme, the position of its best-known member, Gregor Gysi (President of the PDS Parliamentary group) as set out in his "Ingoldstadt Manifesto" (in which he tries to show solutions "to the inside of the system" and although he is the sole author is identified with the PDS by the media) is certainly more right-wing.

The other opposition, the "Communist Platform", was extremely defensive and

not particularly appealing: taking a "revolutionary" stance yet putting forward virtually no concrete positions, while showing nostalgia for the good old Communist parties of yesteryear...

In the past, there have been impassioned debates on the subject of Europe, with a minority opposed to any positive reference to the European Union and even to Europe. This was on the basis that the new Europe was merely an imperialist project by big business and the banks, and that its political structures did not allow for any real influence either from below or by parliamentary deputies. This time there was no such argument.

The PDS European programme can be summarised as follows: Europe yes, but Maastricht Europe no. It is for: struggle against the blatant lack of democracy in the European Union institutions; struggle against "Fortress Europe"; solidarity with immigrants and refugees from the South and East; resistance to austerity measures, destruction of social gains and reactionary attacks against women's rights; struggle for full employment through reduction in working hours without loss of salary (this last was agreed after a stormy debate, before "without loss of salary" was demanded only for those on low and average wages) and through public programmes based in the work place. The PDS European election programme contains many progressive demands which every revolutionary can and must support.

Vision

However there was still a very interesting debate around what the general political vision of Europe should be. The version submitted to congress, once more demanded a Europe in which its citizens participate, a Europe which is multi-cultural, "green", pacifist and non-racist, which is concerned with social justice and which guarantees the right to sustenance, work and housing. This was a great deal, but did not satisfy the majority of delegates. It was also agreed that Europe is to be a Europe of democratic socialism.

The list of candidates for the elections is very diverse but it is worth noting that by a decision of its leadership in March 1994 the candidates who are eventually elected to the European Parliament (just as

those who are elected to the Bundestag), must behave in a parliamentary manner. They must give a large part of what they earn to the Party or for projects linked to political work. Equally they must promise to resign, if they leave the PDS Parliamentary group.

Order

In the new German order, the PDS parliamentary work in Bonn has been and remains vital in the struggle of the oppressed and therefore also for the radical left. It is not by chance that revolutionaries in Germany like those of the United Socialist Party (VSP)² have developed a line of (albeit critical) electoral support for the PDS and are even close to placing candidates on its "open list" for the national elections.

It would clearly be positive if the PDS achieves the necessary five percent of the vote to enter the Strasbourg parliament.³

The election programme contains progressive demands which every revolutionary can and must support.

They would certainly be by far the most left-wing of the ninety-nine Germans who will sit there. The other radical and revolutionary left European parliamentarians will certainly be able to work constructively with those of the PDS on a number of issues and therefore links should be established. But there must also be vigorous debate, for the PDS, while a left-wing reformist party, is nevertheless a reformist party, which does not envisage a radical break with the bourgeois state. And this will translate into concrete political consequences as soon as crisis occurs. ★

* The author is editor of Sozialistische Zeitung (SoZ), paper of the United Socialist Party (VSP).

1. German law still states that its army cannot serve outside of NATO countries, but, as readers may be aware, they have recently been stationed in Somalia and ex-Yugoslavia, to name but two countries.

2. Some of the VSP's members are supporters of the Fourth International.

3. The European Parliament meets in Strasbourg, France.

Radicalisation in the air

STUDENT/YOUTH ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

Paul is a member of the Dutch youth organisation, Rebel, and is active with School students against racism. He is 17 years old.

Andrea is a leader of the Portuguese Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International) and the president of the student union at the University of Porto. She is 20 years old.

Cyril is a leader of the French youth organisation, Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR-ES), and is 26 years old.

Pulika is a political science student and a member of the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC). He is responsible for the Party's work in universities and high schools. He is 21 years old.

Thomas is a member of the Belgian youth organisation, Young Socialist Guard (JSW) in the city of Ghent. He is involved in anti-racist and student activism. He is 23 years old.

Carole is a leader of the French youth organisation, Revolution-Equality-Democracy (RED), and a member of the organisation of young feminists Marie Pas Claire. She is active in the "Act Against Unemployment" (AC) campaign in Paris. She is 23 years old.

Raghu Krishnan spoke with them for *International Viewpoint* in Amsterdam, 5 April 1994. ☪

C *an you describe the struggles you've been involved in recently?*

Paul: The last student struggles in Holland took place in the spring of 1993. They were against cuts in State welfare benefits and in funding for the education system. This took the form of demonstrations and a big nation-wide student strike.

Andrea: At the beginning of this year, a student movement began in the high

schools in response to the legislation of testing that would prevent many youth who wanted to attend university from doing so. The movement shifted into the universities when the government implemented a massive hike in tuition fees. This struggle radicalised, leading to a number of large demonstrations, followed by strikes with the occupation of the offices where tuition fees are collected. During the demonstrations, the police attacked the youth with batons; this led people to organise not only against problems relating to education but also against police violence.

Cyril: In March 1994 there was a major youth struggle in France, linked to the creation of a contract which would allow employers to pay between 30% to 80% of the minimum wage for a year with no guarantee of a permanent job afterwards. There were more than 30 demonstrations of largely high school students, mobilising hundreds of thousands of youth, with strikes in high schools and certain universities. At one point, there were links made with workers, through joint demonstrations of trade unions and youth, or through trade union support for the youth mobilisations. The government refused to withdraw its legislation for a month, in the belief that a few changes would put a stop to the demonstrations. This went hand-in-hand with an increase in the repression of the movement — with, for example, the expulsion of two demonstrators not born in France. In the end, the mobilisations grew to a point where the government had to withdraw totally and abandon its legislation at the end of March.

Pulika: The last struggle in which I participated was that of university and high school students, which was rather small in terms of actual participation. It began in September 1993 in response to a decree increasing the number of students that could be in each class. This legislation also sought to cut the number of teaching and administrative personnel, beginning with certain precarious categories of teachers and student instructors. The movement literally exploded when the government brought forward a plan for reform — supported by the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS, ex-CP) — which established financial and pedagogical autonomy for

schools, in other words privatisation and a highly uneven school system.

Thomas: In Belgium there were two university and high school student struggles recently. The first began at the end of October 1993 and continued throughout November. It was a struggle of non-university post-secondary school students against the reforms of the Flemish Minister of Education aimed at fusing post-secondary institutions into groupings of 3,000 to 4,000 students. The movement demanded social assistance in the post-secondary system, called for the opening of cafeterias, and denounced the management of their colleges by people named by politicians. They called for greater student participation in the running of the colleges.

There were several big demonstrations, with the last one mobilising some 15,000 students. There were also some occupations.

For the second consecutive year there was a high school and student strike against racism and fascism and for equal rights, on 24 November, the anniversary of the electoral breakthrough of the Vlaams Blok in the 1992 municipal elections. Some 25,000 to 30,000 participated throughout both the French and Flemish speaking regions of the country.

● **Some commentators have said that while these struggles are very radical the actual political level is very low. Is this a fair assessment in your view?**

Carole: I think there is greater radicalisation in the struggles and in the forms of confrontation — including physical confrontation — with the government. I'm not convinced that there is a de-politicisation. For at the heart of these struggles is the question of employment, which allows for the building of strong links between the working class and youth, and for addressing broader social questions, and not just the specific problems of students. I think that even if there is a lower political level to begin with, the forms and motivations of these movements lead to easier and broader politicisation afterwards.

Andrea: I agree with Carole. There is both radicalisation and a growth in political consciousness. When the government

tries to privatise the education system, youth ask themselves a whole series of questions linked to education, and further questions regarding society as a whole. The privatisation of education presents the same problems as the privatisation of the health system. People will be expected to pay more for nothing in return, while at the same time the police force and the army's budget grow.

Thomas: I think that youth are once again beginning to ask themselves questions concerning society as a whole, even though this radicalisation and these early signs of politicisation are fragile. The traditional parties, including social democracy, are totally discredited among youth, who also are very distrustful of trade unions, which are seen as relays for social democracy and the Christian Democrats. The absence of a credible left-wing political alternative is a tremendous obstacle for raising the political consciousness of youth.

Pulika: I more or less agree that this radicalism can lead to a broader, more social consciousness as in France where there is a community of interests between students and young workers on the question of work and unemployment. But in Italy, there is a lot of confusion and a number of contradictions as far as political awareness is concerned. The essential thing is that the student movement came out clearly against privatisation — a sign of a greater political consciousness than in past years — since youth have understood that privatisation means an attack on the right to study.

I only wanted to add that while radicalism may be important, in Italy, for example, radicalism alone can very well lead to rightist political conclusions. This is what will happen if the left is unable to provide political answers.

In Italy, the "moral" crisis has produced a certain level of disgust among youth for everything related to politics and parties. This may explain why 55% of youth vote for right-wing parties. Radicalism, yes, but also a rejection of politics and parties, and this is a problem for us when we try to intervene in a movement which describes itself as "apolitical" and "non-partisan".

Cyril: I think that youth, in France in any case, were determined to go all the way against the government. They were persuaded that the government was carrying out a global policy against the gains of workers and youth. This is politicisation, but there are a number of weak-

nesses. We saw that there was tremendous difficulty setting up structures of self-organisation, a result of the fact that these youth have very little in the way of political traditions — and this is a danger. The last major student movement took place some six or seven years ago, and this is not the same generation. The student unions have been greatly weakened and there is no significant organisation for high school students. Youth rise up spontaneously, without for all that joining "traditional" organisations such as our own.

Paul: When we had our student strike, 187,000 youth participated. Most of them didn't have any political consciousness, and when youth are interviewed you see that they are very apolitical. They have a general awareness about questions like ecology and racism. But 20% of youth in Holland are actually racist. There's not a real politicisation and I don't even think there's much social consciousness either. The government plans cuts, and youth are against this, but they don't draw any further conclusions. They think that what we have to say about capitalism and so on is too radical, "communist" and so forth.

● *What links have been established with other social movements and what are the implications?*

Thomas: In Belgium, we saw some rather impressive developments. The 24 November anti-racist and anti-fascist student strike coincided with working class strikes in a number of cities. In some demonstrations, youth and trade union contingents marched together against the government austerity plan. This makes it possible for us to talk with high school students about working class struggles and demands, and the anti-government fight. During the high school strike against racism, once again we saw a massive participation — especially in Antwerp and Liege — of young Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, even though they are not very involved in the organising committees.

Andrea: Students and trade unions came together at the last demonstration in Lisbon. We also had an experience of common struggle with teachers — beyond the question of tuition fees, there is also that of job loss for instructors, especially in the social sciences.

Paul: The movement against the cuts died out, and we are far too small an organisation to keep the momentum going. We have always had a very strong peace

movement in Holland, but it too has died out, and there's no longer an example for new people entering into struggle.

Carole: It is important that the recent demonstrations in France led — largely as a result of the government's error, legislating against both youth and workers at the same time — to trade union unity, for the first time in at least 30 years. This can provide perspectives for a social movement. It is important that it was youth that precipitated this unity, and this may well lead to generally overcoming trade union and political divisions.

Cyril: We can see how the contradictions are becoming explosive. The employers want the government to pursue the austerity agenda but the social and political situation prevents it from doing so. The big victory in March is an example for other social sectors, who have been waiting for signs that it is possible to defeat the government in spite of its comfortable majority in the National Assembly. Youth have also demonstrated that the question of unemployment will play a decisive role in the coming years. ★

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"Socialist" victory in sight

HUNGARY goes to the polls on 8 and 29 May in a two round general election. Our correspondent explains the background to the elections and examines the possibility of a Socialist Party landslide.

LASZLO ANDOR
Budapest, 14 April 1994

THE current government, which was formed in May 1990, has collapsed. Formed, in the main, by three parties — the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), and the Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party (KNDP) — it was supported by sixty percent of the parliamentary deputies.¹ The government was first led by József Antall, an expert on medical history, who died last December, and was succeeded by Péter Boross, who was invited into the cabinet in 1990 from retirement after a successful career in the catering industry. Double l and double s at the end of these surnames signifies nobility, which became a central factor in the politics of the government. From a populist movement of writers and other intellectuals, Antall turned the MDF into a party of the historic

Christian-Nationalist middle class, with roots in the 19th century liberal nobility.

They slowly and quietly rehabilitated inter-war Hungarian politics, and promoted inter-war authoritarian leaders as outstanding heroes of democracy. This process reached its peak last September when Admiral Miklós Horthy, the oppressor of the 1919 Soviet Republic of Hungary, and Regent between 1920 and 1944, was re-buried in his homeland. The next televised funeral, this time a real one, was Antall's, who had fought cancer publically since October 1990. His funeral was modelled on the fascist Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös (1932-36), who established Hungary's alliance with Mussolini and Hitler, and of Count Pál Teleki, who was Prime Minister when various anti-Jewish laws were enacted.

This historic continuity has played an important role not just in style but in terms of policies as well, particularly economics. The government was attempting to find a middle way between total restoration — which would have restored the rights of pre-Stalinist owners of firms, land, and property — and the sell-off of state assets, which appeared to be the method which was least likely to threaten the running of the economy, and even promised to produce some revenue for the budget. This compromise resulted in four consecutive Compensation Acts, which gave so-called compensation vouchers to expropriated owners in proportion to their long gone assets. These vouchers can be used to buy assets as well as certain consumer goods, and are traded in the stock exchange as well. Close to a million people have already benefitted from compensation in some form. (The total number of eligible voters is 8 million and the government clearly hopes to establish a million strong loyal base.)

However, while Antall's government wanted to pursue a nationalist economic strategy, in order to help domestic business and the process of

capital accumulation, they could not escape the deepest economic depression since the 1930s. They had inherited a USD20 billion foreign debt from the Stalinist period and had no choice but to obey IMF-conditionality and World Bank structural adjustment; policies which were incorporated into four-year transformation programme. Another factor which pushed the economy further into depression was the collapse of the East-European trading system, and in the meantime a recession had hit Western Europe as well, which made recovery practically impossible.

Despite severe economic storms in the neighbourhood, industrial policy has remained a totally unimportant issue behind transforming ownership and replacing personnel in well-paid jobs in ministries and companies. Thus, in the light of external shocks and internal mismanagement and ignorance, it is not a surprise that figures show a dramatic decline for the past four-year period. If we were to designate 1989 as equal to 100, in 1993 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had fallen to 70-75; industrial production fell to about 65; agriculture, 60-65; while inflation rose to 300 (that is, between 23-35% annually). Within the same period the rate of unemployment rose from 1% to close on 15%.

Internal fighting

A government with a record like this will not be popular and time after time the coalition was torn by internal fighting. Support eroded quite quickly, although Antall initially managed to retain the support of more than fifty percent of the deputies. It was the democratic — or left — nationalists who split from the MDF first, and, in collaboration with the ex-Communist minister Imre Pozsgay, who had left the Socialist Party (MSZP) in November 1990, they formed the National Democratic Alliance. Then the FKGP split over the issue of compensation or restoration. Later, several individual parliamentary deputies left the MDF, including the leader of

¹ Hungary's parliamentary deputies are elected partly by geographical constituency and partly by party list.

Leading parties

- MDF — Hungarian Democratic Forum
- FKGP — Independent Smallholders' Party
- KNDP — Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party
- MSZP — Socialist Party
- FIDESZ — Alliance of Young Democrats
- SZDSZ — Alliance of Free Democrats

the Entrepreneurs' League, who later formed the small but rich Republican Party. Two MDF deputies joined the small opposition faction of the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ). Finally, in 1993, after a heavy attack from the right of MDF against the sick Prime Minister, a dozen deputies left or were expelled from the MDF and formed small far-right parties, like the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIEP), led by István Csurka, Party of Hungarian Interest, Party of Hungarian Justice, and the Hungarian Market Party. The KDNP has been the most loyal to the coalition, but they too have become critical.

Fragmentation

Following this spectacular fragmentation, in December 1993 the government moved to modify the Election Law. The amendment increased the threshold for representation in parliament from four to five percent. This change was also a message to the Kádárist Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (from January 1993 it has been called the Workers' Party), which came close to four percent in 1990. The increase in the threshold was supported by all the parties currently in parliament, since all of them expect to get more than five percent.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most shameful manoeuvre of the government was against the electronic media. With the agreement of all the parties in parliament, two famous social scientists were appointed to govern the national radio and television stations. The government had found that it had very little intellectual influence on the population and the circulation of the daily and weekly papers they had founded or taken control of remained very low. Hence their desire to seize control of radio and television. But after a year infighting, they forced the two scientists to resign as presidents, and the two vice-presidents, right-wing MDF-loyalists bureaucrats, started to close down programmes which had provided air-time for a variety of alternative viewpoints. In March of this year, just as the election campaign was beginning, the government sacked 129 journalists and other employees, allegedly for financial reasons.

According to opinion polls, all this nervous activity is in vain. A liberal alliance has been preparing for more than a year to replace the Christian-Nationalist government. This unofficial shadow-coalition was formed by the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ),

second in 1990 with 23% of the vote, FIDESZ, with 5.5%, and two parties not represented in parliament, the Agrarian Union, which turned itself from defenders of collective farms into a modern bourgeois agrarian party, and the Entrepreneurs' Party, led by the liquor producer industrialist Péter Zwack, who had given up US citizenship to become Antall's first ambassador in Washington (he was sacked after six months).

Although this liberal shadow-coalition has been highly publicised, events between its creation and the election campaign make it nearly impossible for them to make a government in June. First of all, the two small parties will not manage to jump over the 5% threshold, and will not be able to win more than one or two seats in the constituencies, which make up nearly half of the parliament. Although Zwack is popular (due to his famous Unicom liquor), and the Agrarian Union won a by-election in coalition with the Republican Party, they are destined to be left behind by the two major liberal parties in the second round of the constituency elections.

Secondly the Free Democrats have not had a good time in opposition, despite winning the municipal elections in Autumn 1990, and one by-election in 1992. They have consumed three presidents and four faction leaders in four years. They had to find a new economic identity when shock therapy became unpopular. However progressive they can be on cultural policies, they have nevertheless been criticising the government's economic policy, calling for faster privatisation and liberalisation. They also came under attack from the far right when the parentage of some of the party's central leaders — the ex-Marxist philosopher János Kis, party president Iván Peto, and economist Tamás Bauer — was called into question by the now infamous use of the slogan "Hungarians must have Hungarian opposition". Eventually they managed to find a perfect candidate for the premiership: Gábor Kuneze, a former company manager with an old-fashioned moustache and impressive rhetorical skills, who even happened to have attended the same Catholic high school as the last Prime Minister.

While SZDSZ was struggling with all the problems, and the government was becoming increasingly unpopular, the Young Democrats had an extremely good year in 1992, polling over 30%. They started as a liberal youth movement in 1988, with strong links in environmentalist and other post-modernist

circles. However, they slowly abandoned these grass-roots connections, particularly since they may have become an obstacle in the pursuit of power. This was especially the case with their president Viktor Orbán, who has been called "the Tiger" by the leading political analyst László Lengyel. FIDESZ' image places a strong emphasis on expertise and they advocate supply side economics in combination with some monetarist voodoo, and, as one economist has noted, they often look more like a leasing company than a political party. In the Hungarian context, this akin to an accusation of fraud. Indeed, one of the major issues which has subsequently reduced their popularity was a secret deal whereby they acquired a large sum on money by selling property given to them by the government for use as a party headquarters.

Gestures

With this case, as well as other FIDESZ' gestures towards the right, it slowly became apparent that they were playing a double game — ready to join either a liberal or a nationalist coalition. This made their most popular politician, Gábor Fodor, leave FIDESZ in November 1993, and run as the number-two on the SZDSZ list. After all, the FIDESZ-dream is over, and the party's support has dropped to around 15%, equal to both the SZDSZ and MDF. This outcome justifies previous analyses that doubted the realism of a liberal alternative, based on the fact that nowhere in European history have liberal parties formed governments on their own, let alone in Central-Eastern Europe amidst economic depression and nationalist cleavages. The liberals either have to join forces with conservatives against the left, or undertake, to some extent, social reform. In Hungary, the developments of 1993 have clarified these choices; FIDESZ chose the first option, and SZDSZ the second.

The readiness of SZDSZ to ally with the Socialists became more and more apparent when they joined forces against authoritarian tendencies in government circles under the auspices of the Democratic Charter. This loose formation was established in September 1991 by leading liberal and socialist intellectuals, with a demonstrative absence of FIDESZ, who called the Charter the Trojan Horse of a social-liberal coalition. However, the openness of SZDSZ toward the left is not unconditional: they demand the neo-liberal economic pro-

gramme of László Békesi, an ex-finance minister from the last communist government, to be unchallenged by MSZP. Békesi rejects any suggestion that unemployment could be below 10%, and, further, promises an acceleration of privatisation, while initiating the rebuilding of Eastern markets as well as collective bargaining on the national level.

The bogey-man of the MSZP, and the strongest rival to Békesi is Sándor Nagy, leader of the largest trade union federation, MSZOSZ. He is also an economist and a bureaucrat from the previous regime, who was neglected as an unimportant figure until his federation won the elections for the control of the social security boards in May 1993. Now he is head of the National Pension Fund as well, while his deputy is the head of the National Health Fund. Their alliance with the MSZP dates back to the summer of 1991, when two anti-union laws were passed by parliament, with the only protest coming from the Socialists. Within the MSZP, it is trade union related politicians who are the most likely to listen to the left-wing of the party, although they refuse to take on Békesi over economic policy. Nevertheless, Nagy runs as number-two on the joint election list, after MSZP president Gyula Horn, while Békesi comes third.

Quietly

MSZP has managed to settle internal disputes quietly, won two by-elections, and climbed to around 25% in the polls. This is partly due to the fact that the extra-parliamentary Social-Democratic Party (MSZDP) has continued to be unpopular in the eyes of the voters. So while both liberal and conservative voters will be split, on the left, Kádárist and Social-Democratic competition to the MSZP remains weak, and both are likely to support Socialist candidates in the second round unconditionally. Even so, broad anti-left alliances as well as anti-socialist propaganda are likely to emerge in the run-up to the elections, which could leave the MSZP with a dozen constituencies only.

They could still be declared the overall winner if they win the party list, but whether they can secure a majority government with the SZDSZ depends on the latter performing well too. Thus, the question is open: will there be a landslide towards the left and an MSZP-SZDSZ coalition as a result, or medieval images take control over the electorate, and an MDF-KDNP-FIDESZ govern-

ment will come into office in June. In the opinion of many, for example left-wing socialists, the MSZP in office with liberal policies would be a kind of disaster. But even if there is no party on the scene to offer a forceful alternative to the current capitalist restoration, does that invalidate the rule about choosing the lesser evil?

Mismanaged

Thus, the most important would be now to unseat a government which has abused public assets, mismanaged the economy, runs the country as a feudalistic dominion, and wants to remain in charge by any means necessary. This abuse has appeared especially extensive in the pre-election months. While public finances and foreign accounts are deeply in the red, the coalition timed quite a few pay increases and other achievements into the campaign period. They raised the annual hard currency package which individuals can buy from USD300 to USD800 from 1 April. They launched the issue of the fourth round of compensation vouchers in March, and public sector employers are receiving pay increases too. Pensioners have received "good news" as well, which was delivered by the post together with MDF adverts in some districts. Of course, it is a pleasure for Hungarians, as for anyone else, to get more money than less, especially if that money is convertible. However, these improvements should be based not on foreign borrowing but on the development of productive capacity. The government led by the MDF has proven incapable of delivering this. Even if one has no illusions about the social-liberal alternative, they must be given a chance, for the sake of a more secular environment and a healthy reshuffle in the bureaucracy. ★



The alternative dialogue

Introduction

THE agreement which will inaugurate the first stage of the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords will be signed in Cairo on 4 May. The US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will be present, and will bring along trucks generously offered by the American army to transport the new "Palestinian police" who have been trained in Egypt and Jordan. A few days before, an economic protocol was signed in Paris, under the auspices of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Alain Juppé, which called for "free trade" for products between Israel and the territories under "Palestinian authority".

International Viewpoint brought together two left-wing activists — **Adel Samara** and **Michel Warshawsky** — for another kind of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Adel Samara is the editor of *Canaan*, the main publication of the Palestinian left opposition in the Occupied Territories. He was imprisoned for eight years as a result of his political activities.

Michel Warshawsky is a founder member of the Revolutionary Communist League-*Matzpen* and the director of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem. He was detained for several months as a result of his support for the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Salah Jaber ✪

SALAH: There were different reactions to the Washington Accord on the Palestinian and Israeli left. Were they due mostly to the difference of the political environment between the two sides or are there more substantial disagreements which have appeared in the wake of the Accord?

ADEL: I think that the differences are not due to the environment. There are some Israeli leftists who agree with the Accord and some who don't. It is the same for the Palestinians. I think that there is a theoretical reason behind this position. There are many people in the Middle East, and all over the world, who feel that this is the era of defeat and, accordingly, that there is no chance to fight or oppose an agreement which is imposed by imperialism and capital in general. Their readiness to continue to struggle against the agreement was reduced.

The other point is that the left-wing organisations who have a mass base in the Occupied Territories are against the Accord, while the small organisations who have no grass-roots relationship with the community were very quick to support it. For example, the Popular Front is against the Accord. While on the other hand you have small organisations like the traditional Communist Party, or a current within the Democratic Front, called Fida, who are supporting the Accord. So for me there are two main points: the theoretical basis of the organisations, and their social relationship with the masses.

MICHEL: I don't think that the debates which we have had inside our own organisation and between ourselves is about the nature of the Accord — whether it is a good or a bad agreement. The discussion was more about how should we formulate our position in our mass work. Both in Palestinian society, and in the progressive part of Israeli society, there were tremendous illusions concerning this agreement whether, as

Adel says, out of despair and the feeling that nothing else can be done, or in the belief that this was an agreement which could be a very positive step towards a progressive outcome to the negotiations. This is why we have chosen — and we believe the Palestinian left should have done the same, obviously in their own ways and with their own demands — not to focus on whether we do or do not support the agreement but to make clear what the conditions are which could make this agreement work, and to mobilise around these issues. And then what are the possibilities? Either these mobilisations will be able to change the nature of the agreement and transform it into a positive step or — which was the more probable and is, in fact, what happened — they will be confronted by these obstacles and prove that this agreement could not be a step further.

In a statement produced in the first week of September we formulated everything in a conditional way: *If* there is no change concerning the settlements then there is no chance of the Oslo Accords being the first step towards peace, and so forth. There will not be a radical change in the Occupied Territories nor the mass release of the deportees and so forth. Now it is really clear, with the Hebron massacre even more, that because these issues are not dealt with properly, because they are not part of the deal, because they are not dealt with by the Israelis, we are in a dead end. Or we have an agreement which has nothing to do with the expectations of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and tens and hundreds of thousands of Israelis — an expectation that we are turning over a new page. Rather, it is an old page with an attempt to reform it in order to gain PLO participation in running the occupation in a new way.

SALAH: I think that makes the framework of the debate which followed the signing of the Accord clear. As a first reaction the question of "If?", as Michel described it, might be considered a good way to deal with the situation from the stand-point of the Israeli left. But the question is whether on the Palestinian side you could say "If?" because the answer seems obvious, taking into account

the character of the Arafat leadership and the way in which they struck this deal, even behind the backs of its own representatives in the Occupied Territories.

ADEL: What is the role of the Palestinian left? Is it to try to find out what is good in the Accord? If the Palestinian left continues to do that it would seem they continue to follow Arafat, as was the case before. It is my view that now is the time to cut this form of relationship and the left should look for its own programme. Especially now because the agreement itself is a continuation of the occupation — a permanent colonialism of the Occupied Territories. If the left was trying to find out what the good points of the agreement are, then it will lose its supporters.

My last point is that how can we support an agreement where, for instance, land, water, indirect taxation are in the hands of the Israeli civil administration. The structure of this "Palestinian self-rule" is just to fit better into the structure of occupation.

MICHEL: So, Adel is convinced, and I am convinced with him, that this agreement cannot by any means bring Palestinian independence. It is a train which is going to Tel Aviv, but there is an argument that you can hijack the train — that it is possible to confront such a situation in a positive way by putting on the agenda concrete demands and mobilisations which will achieve or prove your case.

SALAH: We all agree that these Accords do not amount to the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people as we understand it. The two main points of the debate were: is it possible to work within the framework of the Accords or do you have to fight against its very framework? Are the Accords a first step forward or are they a kind of self-limitation imposed on itself by the Palestinian leadership, under pressure from the Israeli government and the USA. These were the first elements of the debate. On this level, I think that after the Hebron massacre we can try to make a balance sheet of the present position of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO): It is in a sense a prisoner of the Accords — Rabin has said, "You have signed. You cannot put the settlements on the table today... a discussion on the removal of settlements is out of the question. You

can only discuss things which are within the framework of the agreement ..."

The second element of our debate was about how you relate to the PLO. On this question my view was that you can not have the same relations with the PLO on both sides of the border, the "green line". If you are working in Israel you cannot say "Down with the PLO!" and things like that. But on the other hand the Israeli left should not criticise the Palestinian left because they have a critical attitude towards the PLO leadership. I think that if the Palestinian left had not taken the position it did — if it had taken a position in favour of working within the framework of the agreement in order to better it or



The Israeli police will continue to keep an eye on the Palestinians even after withdrawal

to "hijack" it — then the only real opposition current on the ground would have been the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas. They would have said this agreement is a fake, a betrayal of some basic rights, a self-limitation imposed on us, a capitulation by Arafat — and they have been saying that for years now — and if they were the only people to say that then the result would have been much more disastrous than it is. We all agree that the growth of Hamas is not a positive factor. But it could have been worse if the Palestinian left had continued, as in the past, to tail-end the PLO leadership. Nevertheless, the main issue is not to fight the agreement as such but to continue to fight for rights, dismantlement of the settlements, for withdrawal of the Israeli army — despite the agreement and beyond the agreement.

ADEL: I think there are some points which should be clear, not only for the left in fact, but for all those who are oppose the agreement, including Hamas. The chance of explaining, working or fighting for your position inside the Occupied Territories is not available for those who reject the agreement. There is no Israeli democracy inside the Occupied Territories, and if there is now some lee-way it is only for Fatah and other supporters of the Accord. It is important to emphasise that because the international media believes everyone has the same chance and that it is a democracy.

The second point which I wanted to make is that the left should continue to develop its social programme and understanding of the situation in the Occupied Territories, not only according to the agenda of

the agreement. The left should not limit itself to the agreement. If there are some points which the agreement already guarantees for the masses we should use them without accepting the agreement itself. If there is a chance for us to be represented in the municipal councils, why not? But we do not have to say that we agree with the Accord and the occupation because it has made these things available for us.

Concerning the PLO, it is necessary to differentiate between its leadership who signed the Accords and the militants on the ground. If the PLO remains a captive of the Arafat leadership then I think the left should start to develop its own front. By this, I mean to fight for the leadership of the Palestinian masses and their struggle, both inside and outside. The most important thing is for the left to have its own front and programme and to continue to insist on the Palesti-

nian Charter. The most important point is that the PLO leadership around Arafat is finished and we should not try to support him. This leadership is now a captive of the Israelis and there is a clear division between this leadership and the masses.

MICHEL: The main success for the Israelis is that they have achieved their primary objective since the PLO became a political force. They have tried for more than ten years to build a local leadership outside the PLO, against the PLO, but since they found that they could not do that, then it was better to take the PLO leadership outside the Occupied Territories and make it the leadership inside. The main achievement of the PLO was to be the embodiment of the Palestinian national question. The next step could be, and this would be a catastrophe for the Palestinian people, that there will be two PLOs. There will be a PLO "inside", the one now based in Tunis, and there will be a PLO "outside", whether it is inside or outside the Occupied Territories, who will continue to represent the Palestinian national question as a whole and not just those resident in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Concerning the potential of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories: In the last few months, specifically since the Hebron massacre, the idea which was very strongly situated amongst Palestinian political currents, among Palestinian opinion makers, and quite a lot among progressive Israeli specialists (I would say it has had an impact even within *Matzpen*) that the problem with which we are confronted is the fact that the Palestinian movement has had no support from Arab states with regard to Israeli-American dictates, and therefore it had to change its policy. The option of the Arab world is closed. The option of the Intifada is closed. So what remains? I have to say, even from a self-critical point of view, that we discovered a tremendous potentiality. It is far from over. After the Hebron massacre, twenty-nine people have been killed. And you have an explosion — people are not afraid of anything. It reminds me of the first days of the Intifada.

But here we can see the crime of the Palestinian leadership. I am convinced that if, the day after the massacre, the PLO leadership or any other authoritative leadership had said "We do not accept the curfew. There will be no curfew", everyone would have been in the streets. I am convinced. There is the fee-

ling that people are waiting for leadership — the kind which the "united leadership" of the Intifada used to be. It is totally lacking. As someone said, the Palestinian organisations in their leaflets acted as if they were in solidarity with the Palestinian people (rather than acting as a leadership). There is still a tremendous amount of energy among the masses in the Occupied Territories which is not harnessed either to improve the Palestinian options in the negotiations, or to confront the PLO line in the negotiations. It is a wasted energy, but it exists. To say simply that the page which was opened in December 1987, with the Intifada, is closed is mistaken.

SALAH: What is your assessment of the line which the PLO leadership is following now, in the wake of the Hebron massacre? They are to sign an agreement with Israel to carry on the implementation of the Washington Accord.

MICHEL: I believe that here too we will agree. James Baker said you go on the train or you stay on the platform. The PLO has accepted this conception and there has been, and will continue to be crises. This is not making Israel unhappy because time is on their side. At the same time Jerusalem is becoming a Jewish city completely. The Greater Jerusalem area is becoming more and more a part of Israel, more and more settled, more and more integrated through a new network of roads. The problem — for Rabin obviously, but Arafat is stuck in this conception too — is that it is a zero-sum game. We have a mass and we have to divide it. Every time the Palestinians gain the Israelis feel they are losing. If there is a massacre you have to pay. This is why from left to right in Israel everyone said Baruch Goldstein had ruined the bargaining position. "We killed forty Palestinians now we have to add forty policeman, or sixty policeman, or six-hundred policeman — release a few hundred prisoners." If tomorrow the Palestinians make a mistake they will have to pay and instead of Jericho fifty-kilometers it will be Jericho forty-kilometers. This is the whole framework, in the narrow sense, of the negotiations. But in this framework it will go on.

I think the Israelis will have to make some small amendments to the agreement concerning Hebron, some small changes concerning the settlement in Hebron itself. But it will not be accepted by the Palestinian population in the

West Bank. It will strengthen the opposition to Arafat but it will go on. I still think that as long as there is no accepted alternative leadership Arafat can go on. And while there is a very large opposition to Arafat, and while there are currents rooted in the masses — Hamas on the one hand, the radical left on the other — it is acting as an opposition, as a critic, and not developing a counter-strategy which can harness this potential combativity among the masses and turn this into a real alternative. It doesn't express itself as coherent action. Rather, there is a reaction to the occupation, a reaction to what the Israelis are doing, and many jokes and sharp articles against Arafat, but it hasn't resulted in an alternative leadership. It's not easy, certainly. But it is a task to be fulfilled. There were attempts to rebuild a national leadership of the Intifada presenting, as it used to, concrete perspectives for the population in the medium and the short-term, and presenting a kind of strategic alternative. For the PLO the strategy is in Oslo. This is their strategy. When other Palestinian leaders say that the Intifada must be escalated this must be translated into a concrete perspective understood by the masses.

ADEL: Two points: I agree with Michel about the potential of the Palestinian masses.

The other point is this: Since Rabin rejected any amendment to the Oslo agreement itself it proves there can be no positive developments in the agreement.

Concerning the future, it's clear, as we have both said, that the current PLO leadership is a captive of the Israeli government and the USA. This did not occur only after Madrid, it has a long history, developing significantly after 1982 when Arafat left Beirut for Cairo although Egypt had signed a peace treaty with Israel. It was sign of where he was going. He is the leader of a large organisation which is rooted in the Palestinian community and until most or a large part of this community are persuaded that Arafat and his leadership is finished we have a lot of work to do. That is why Arafat still has some steam. Until now I agree that the rejectionist view has not crystallised as an alternative leadership which has its own programme. I agree that the left, until now, has been unable to draft its own programme for the new era, whether this means creating a new PLO leadership or a new PLO, or creating a front for the left who reject the Accord. The critical point is that the most noticeable forms the struggle, for

example Hamas' violent actions, attract the most people. Even when the left has been responsible for a certain campaign or initiative the Israeli media has attributed it to Hamas. It might be that they want to support the idea that the only people who are opposed to the agreement are religious and that it is simply against the Jews, and therefore it is not related to a national struggle.

The left should also concentrate on producing a social programme. We believe that the agreement, as it is now, will continue and will be applied because the rejectionists have so far been unable to stop it. There is some debate between the leftists in the rejectionist camp on whether to stand in the forthcoming legislative elections, in the West Bank and Gaza (according to the Washington Accords). Most are for boycotting these elections but these points should be clarified and explained in the social programme of the rejectionist front and especially the leftist front. At the moment these things are not elaborated in a proper way, but I think the time is coming when these things have to be elaborated, and quickly.

SALAH: The last question is for Michel. Both the Zionist left and the Palestinian right in general are trying to sell the idea that the Rabin government wants this whole process to lead to a two state solution but that they need time. So, what comments would you make on that and what do you think should be the tasks of the Israeli left?

MICHEL: This is the main line of division in the Israeli peace movement. The main-stream identified the Labour Party with its own aspirations and for that reason they drew clear conclusions. They had to support the government because they are dedicated to a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Therefore they sharply criticise everyone who is in opposition to this government.

They believe that if you oppose Rabin then you oppose peace. Our conception is exactly the opposite. The burden of proof that Rabin intended to translate the framework of Oslo into Israeli-Palestinian peace is on him. Firstly, because of his personal biography. Secondly, because in the agreement itself he did everything he could to make it unclear. Thirdly, and most importantly, everything since the Accord has gone the other way. Every step taken, or not taken, by the government was opposite

to the optimistic reading of the Accord. The government says that what it wants the public is against, whereas the truth is that it's exactly the other way round. After Oslo the majority of public opinion was ready for anything — a withdrawal in six months, a Palestinian state.

The right was totally disorganised. If we look at the demonstrations organised by the right they involved a very narrow segment of the population. It is a religious, settlers', right. The masses of Likud are not coming out for demonstrations. The Israeli government has two positions, those of Rabin and Peres. Peres' conception does not deal with the Palestinians — they are small change. It is an overall conception about the role of Israel. It is an economic vision of how Israel can strengthen itself. It is an understanding of what the "New World Order" is, that the "Cold War" has ended, that there is no Arab nationalism in this period, the modus operandi for achieving their aims. This explains why the Palestinians were ready to accept something which was a huge risk. They paid cash and all they got was some vague promises.

But Rabin and his friends are not the authentic representatives of Israeli capital. They are the representatives of crude 1948 Zionism and the army establishment. And they said, in effect: "this is what we have signed — there will be nothing more." Rabin is pragmatic — not ideological. He doesn't want a Palestinian state, but on the other hand, he is not opposed in principle. If the relation of forces or pragmatic reasons require a Palestinian state he will get on with it. While Rabin identifies with the settlements he will not fight for every settlement. But he will fight as much as possible to keep as many as possible, not out of tactics, but because he is a Zionist. Peres is thinking in terms of the Zionism in the 21st century. Rabin is thinking in terms of 1948.

Matzpen decided after the Oslo agreement to make clear inside the radical and peace movement that we are against the government. This is the line of division. We don't oppose everything Rabin is doing but we are in opposition.

Our main task is to create a movement of opposition to the government, because this government is not leading to peace. You can believe what you want about the Oslo agreement but this government is not leading to peace. ★

Wind in the Islamic sail

THE Turkish municipal elections of 27 March received a great deal of attention in the international press. This was essentially as a result of the Muslim fundamentalist's relative success. Even though this victory, which our correspondent analyses, will have major consequences, the stakes of the elections were not limited to this aspect alone. Indeed, the most important aspect was the clarification of the process of political recomposition currently underway.

ERDAL TAN

Istanbul, 20 April 1994

THIRTEEN formations contested the elections, with nine of them garnering some 25 percent of votes cast. This confirms the extreme fragmentation of political life in the country.

The 1980 coup d'état led to a break-up of the traditional political system, based on two big parties — one of the centre-right, the other of the centre-left. Since the coup, the centre-right (which had majority support in the country in the 1950s) has been divided into two rival formations which are each other's throats. The Motherland Party (ex-President Özal's ANAP) and the Just Path Party (President Demirel's DYP).

Division

The bourgeoisie deplores this division and for three years has been calling in vain for a rapprochement and a coalition between these two nearly-identical parties.

The centre-left split into four parts after 1980, giving birth in the early 1980s to the social democratic Populist Party (SHP, currently in a government coalition with the DYP) and the Democratic Left (DSP, of former Prime Minister Ecevit). Then followed the creation of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Kurdish nationalist

Democracy Party (DEP), which both left the SHP in 1991.

This extreme fragmentation of political life — which threatens the stability of the bourgeoisie's system of rule — is accompanied by the difficulties in bringing forward a new generation into the ruling elites. This has been highlighted by Özal's death last year, the current President Demirel (who is virtually a retiree) and the retirement of Erdal İnönü from the presidency of the SHP.

One of the central issues of the elections was the settling of the conflict over the leadership of the right-wing, between Prime Minister Ciller (president of the DYP) and Yılmaz (president of the ANAP). The ANAP, which is present above all in the big cities, was favoured by a big bourgeoisie nostalgic for the time of Özal which it sees as its golden age. The DYP, which has a more rural character, representing the small and medium-sized provincial bourgeoisie, is not trusted in this milieu due to its populist tendencies.

It is for this reason that the arrival of Tansu Ciller — a young bourgeois careerist from Istanbul educated on the American model, who has the stated ambition of becoming "Turkey's Iron Lady" — at the head of the DYP was encouraged and greeted with joy in Istanbul business circles. They hoped she would incarnate Özal's liberal reformism, as opposed to Demirel's prudent and populist conservatism.

But Ciller's record in office, where she has been for less than a year, was soon to disappoint her supporters in the media and the big bourgeoisie. Helped along by their male chauvinist attitude, they quickly called her incompetent and re-directed their support to the ANAP and Mazut Yılmaz, Özal's young successor.

But the election battle produced a confused result with no winners. During the campaign, neither of the two forces stood out in relation to the other, nor did either manage to push ahead of the other in the election results themselves. Only 200 thousand votes separated the two (the DYP polling 21.5 percent, and the ANAP about 21 percent).

Nevertheless, these results are a victory, even if only psychological, for DYP leader Ciller over the ANAP's Yil-

maz. Indeed, in spite of polls which pointed to an electoral defeat, Ciller managed to put up unexpected resistance, even though support for the DYP fell by about 5 percent compared to the 1991 legislative elections.

While this 5 percent fall in the governing DYP's support may seem normal — given the crisis of democracy and a near 50 percent devaluation in the value of the Turkish pound — the 3 percent drop in votes for the ANAP (in relation to the 1991 elections) is much more difficult to explain, except as a result of its inability to present itself as a credible governmental alternative.

Political manoeuvres will therefore have to take the place of a clear verdict from the results of the election. But the problem remains for the bourgeoisie, which has still not found a charismatic and powerful leader of the Menderes, Demirel and Özal variety.

The situation is even more confusing for the left, which has suffered a major defeat. The combined vote of the three parties (SHP, DSP and CHP) hit a historic low at 27 percent. It was at 31.5 percent in 1991 and 37.7 percent in 1989. The SHP remains the strongest left-wing party with 13.6 percent, but it has lost one third of its voters in the space of two years (and one half in relation to the last local elections in 1989), along with most of the local governments it had captured in 1989, including the country's three major cities: Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.

Defeat

With a 7 percent drop in the SHP's score (in relation to 1991), these elections are a political defeat for its new leader, Murat Karayalçın, who succeeded İnönü last September and dreamed of becoming the "Felipe González of the Turkish left".

The DSP of Ecevit (an old charismatic leader from the 1970s, the "Turkish Papandreou", ran a highly chauvinistic and rightist campaign, especially on the Kurdish question. The party's vote dropped to 9 percent.

The CHP received 4.5 percent.

That said, the actual defeat of the social democratic left is much more limited than the psychological impact,

given the loss of the three major cities and cities in the southeast (including Diyarbakir) to the Islamic fundamentalists. The SHP and the CHP received 18 percent of votes, which is only a 3 percent drop from 1991, when they ran together. In many cities — including the three major ones — the SHP candidate only lost by a few thousand votes, and would have won with the support of the CHP or the DSP.

This factor can be explained in part as a result of the disaffection of a sizeable minority of the Kurdish electorate following the split of the DEP. This was their way to censure the coalition parties — in particular the SHP — for the repressive policy of the government in the Kurdish region.

The coalition government has been burned on the Kurdish question. Its effective complicity with the policy of repression has discredited it in the eyes of the Kurdish electorate, while its verbal opposition to the most extreme measures of repression has angered the nationalist wing of the Turkish electorate.

In this way, the SHP is paying for two years of complicity with the DYP in the right-wing government that has kept hardly any of its promises of democratisation, and which has chosen to manage the capitalist crisis on a day-to-day basis. Corruption scandals in SHP-run municipal governments also lost it some votes.

Promises

The Kurdish question in part determined the outcome of these elections. Ciller came to power promising democratic reforms, especially on the Kurdish question. But very soon, the weakness of her political base forced her to ally herself with the army, lining up behind the policy of full-scale repression advocated by the “hawks” of the State.

In response to the dramatic increase in repression, the DEP withdrew a few weeks before the election date and the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) called for a boycott.

This clearly skewed results in the Kurdish region and in the big cities in the west (where the majority of Kurds actually live). The real participation figures in the Kurdish region are a subject for debate. Kurdish nationalists place them at 50 percent in certain cities, whereas the national figure was 92 percent. A high number of blank votes and spoiled ballots was also reported, particularly in Diyarbakir where the figure is

said to have reached 50 percent of ballots cast.

But the Kurdish movement, which received a number of blows — for example, the arrest of the 96 DEP deputies and the suspension of the nationalist daily *Kurde Özgür Gündem* — is losing speed. The PKK is having difficulty in the military arena. The systematic destruction of Kurdish villages suspected of supporting its guerrilla forces has reduced its support significantly.

The Turkish army, which has been responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 people in the southeast of the country, is proceeding on a sector by sector basis and has organised operations right into northern Iraq to destroy PKK bases. It hopes to be able to declare a “military victory” sometime between now and the end of the summer, leaving the “settling of the Kurdish question” to civilian politicians who would make some superficial reforms. But reality could be very different.

The rise of Turkish nationalism in reaction to the Kurdish national movement and the actions of the PKK has certainly let Ciller make up the electoral ground lost as a result of the economic crisis. She took the lead thanks to her aggressive propaganda on the theme of the struggle against separatist terrorism (a DYP poster even declared, “each vote for the DYP is a bullet against the PKK”).

This also explains the success of the semi-fascist Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which doubled its votes from the last elections, thus achieving its best score ever with 8 percent of votes cast.

At the same time, the absence of nationalist candidates worked to the advantage of the Muslim fundamentalists in the Prosperity Party (RP), which won the majority of municipal governments in the Kurdish region. It won 19 percent of votes nationally, increasing its score by 4 to 5 percent compared with the legislative elections of 1991.

If one adds the number of Islamic fundamentalist-type and semi-fascist candidates elected from the “centrist” parties, it is clear that the country is sliding towards the far-right, which took 30 percent of votes cast (between the RP, MHP and small far-right parties).

Politically, the DYP/SHP coalition government has come to an end. DYP, ANAP and MHP deputies collaborate systematically in parliament, creating a de facto right-wing coalition.

But the question of making a government out of this de facto coalition runs up against the problem of the lea-

dership of the right-wing. For the moment, this stumbling block has allowed the Ciller government to survive.

As a result, the bourgeoisie finds itself in a very uncomfortable situation. There is a government and a prime minister that no longer enjoys the confidence of the house and the country, but it has no choice in the short-term but to support it, insofar as the government has adopted the programme of austerity and radical restructuring that it has been demanding for three years.

However, the implementation of such a plan — which calls for privatisations, the closing of so-called unprofitable public firms (such as the coal mines), radical tax reform, price rises up to 100 percent, and a semi-freeze on salaries — requires a strong government that can confront social discontent.

For the bourgeoisie, the fear of social revolt is very real. The main trade union federation, *Türk-is*, reacted very strongly to the social elements of the package, threatening the government with a general strike. There is furious agitation among workers in firms slated to be closed down — such as the Petlas factory in Kirsehir, the shipyards of Haliç and the Tekel factory in Cibali.

Anger is rising in the Zonguldak and Karabük mining regions. More than 35 thousand miners and their families demonstrated in response to the call of the miners trade union of Zongulalak — against closure and privatisation. The president of *Türk-is*, M. Moralmi, participated as did ANAP and CHP deputies.

Reply

That said, the trade union movement does not appear up to organising a real and massive reply in all sectors. 1993 was one of the calm years in the area of trade union struggles. Upcoming struggles will likely be largely defensive in nature. The effects of demoralisation caused by the economic crisis and the lack of a political alternative — the absence of a real “class struggle” party and the divisions and discredit of the social democratic parties (which all have a right-wing line on the question of the economy) — weaken the working class movement.

Rumour has it that trade union leaders are even in the process of negotiating a kind of social contract with the employers. One of the questions raised on the eve of the elections was whether in coming years Turkey would go through a period resembling “the Spanish model” — with sustained economic

growth (6 to 7 percent on average for the last few years, with an inflation rate of 70 percent and a foreign debt of US\$65 billion), the stabilisation of a bourgeois democracy, with a social contract and democratic reforms, a peaceful and reformist outcome to the Kurdish question, and continued integration into the European Union.

Financial crisis

The fundamentalist victory in the municipal elections comes at a time of deep financial crisis, the implementation of austerity measures, the degradation of the traditional political system, the current impasse on the Kurdish question and growing instability outside the country (the Balkans, the Caucasus, Iraq and Cyprus).

For nearly 25 years the independent Islamic fundamentalist current — represented by the Prosperity Party (RP) of M. Erbakan — has had a constant presence in Turkey's political life. For a long time it was a marginal force restricted to certain cities in central Anatolia and in the Kurdish region, based primarily on traditionalist rural currents. This party underwent serious internal changes in the 1980s and began to set down roots in the cities.

Taking advantage of the integration of the conservative Islamic current of the traditional right into the State apparatus — particularly at the time of Özal's prime ministership, ideologically rehabilitated by Özal's "neo-Ottoman" ideological line, and profiting from a favourable conjuncture (Iran, Afghanistan, Algeria), the Muslim fundamentalists grew in force.

The new municipal governments won by the RP — thanks to the split in the liberal and secular vote — could well become "liberated zones" and a basis for future gains.

While the national score of the RP (19 percent) remains rather limited, its gains are no less real, especially if one considers the moral and material victories represented by the winning of a high number of municipal governments, including nearly all the cities in central Anatolia and the Kurdish region.

To this should be added the victories in Ankara, the political and administrative capital and in Istanbul, the economic, cultural and social capital of the country. The RP won by less than 10 thousand votes in Ankara (3 million inhabitants) in front of the SHP, and by less than 100 thousand votes in Istanbul (10 million inhabitants) ahead of the ANAP. In

Izmir (2 million inhabitants and the country's third largest city), it was an "undercover fundamentalist" (a candidate on the DYP slate) that won, only 20 thousand more votes ahead of the outgoing SHP mayor.

The RP is not just an ordinary party and its victory in a number of large urban centres could have a dramatic effect on the country's future. It is clear that the victory in the municipal elections is only a first step for the fundamentalists in their strategy for the conquest of State power — which would mean a total change in the government and in the way of life.

The possibility of such an outcome has plunged secular milieux into disbelief and consternation — especially women, worried by threats on their freedoms and way of life. In the euphoria of the RP victory, there were random incidents of "beards" threatening and committing acts of aggression against women in the streets. The craziest rumours have begun to circulate and an atmosphere of "fear in the city" has emerged, particularly in Istanbul. The possibility of army intervention has been raised, as has a development along Iranian and Algerian lines.

Beyond the psychological impact, however, the reality is much more complex and the fundamentalists' task is not so simple. Had there been two rounds of voting and an alliance of the centre, the RP would have won no more than 3 or 4 municipalities in central Anatolia. Moreover, it seems that the RP committed mass fraud in neighbourhoods under its control. But the State did not dare cancel elections, fearing a radicalisation of the RP and a dangerous test of strength.

The RP vote did not have the same meaning, and will not have the same consequences, everywhere. While it seems probable that it will strengthen the fundamentalists' hegemony in central Anatolia, the management of Kurdish cities — where nationalists and the PKK retain a real presence — will be more difficult and conflict-ridden. In Diyarbakir, for example, where the RP candidate won with 35 percent of votes cast, its real score — taking into account abstentions and spoiled ballots — was only 14 percent.

In Ankara, the new RP mayor is more of a fascist-type dissident than a fundamentalist activist. He is a former member of the MHP and the nationalist wing of the ANAP, and his victory is due in part to his personal popularity in nationalist circles. As a mayor of the

capital city, protocol demands that there be co-operation with State leaders and the army — and this will be a check on fundamentalist excesses. He could very well leave the RP and join a new party of the reunited centre-right.

In Istanbul, the situation is somewhat different. The new mayor, M. Erdogan, is a pure product of the RP, a committed and intelligent fundamentalist, and a leader of the "renovator" current of the party.

The RP won in nearly all the popular suburbs that surround the city, as well as in three municipalities of prestigious neighbourhoods (now rather impoverished), including Beyoglu, the city's cultural and commercial centre. The RP finds itself in command of a considerable amount of power (and money), and will have greater access to the media. This will enable it to expand its audience.

Difficult

Nevertheless, Istanbul is a difficult piece to swallow. Running a cosmopolitan and industrial city of 10 million inhabitants is a much more complex affair than an Anatolian village or a distant suburb. In spite of the knowledge of its activists, the RP may very well stumble in the process.

The RP is based primarily among new layers of migrants who come in their large majority from the Black Sea region and the east of the country. The RP vote reflects the socio-economic disarray of these uprooted and disinherited layers, a cultural shock and rejection of city life based on the western cultural model and of a capitalist mode of consumption to which they only partially have access.

For the moment, the RP victory is more a defeat for the traditional bourgeois parties than a fundamentalist victory. The main parties have virtually identical profiles and programs that the voter no longer sees the difference. If the RP is the only party making gains, it is because it is the only one that claims to represent a global and radical alternative to the system and "clean and uncorrupt" management.

In other words, it is above all the absence of a coherent left-wing force in government that has let the RP emerge and fill the void. Taking this reasoning a bit further, and given the discredit of the main bourgeois parties, it can be argued that the growth of the RP remains "modest" due to the rejection of its overly fundamentalist and backward image

by the overwhelming majority of the population. This explains the attempts at "renovation" within the RP, which tried to change its image before the elections. It even recruited a number of modern women — a dentist that does not wear a scarf over her head, a former model from Istanbul's "high society", and so on.

In Istanbul, the RP is up against a number of dilemmas that could prove fatal. If its municipal government takes on a fundamentalist hue (to appease the extremist fringe), the RP will come up against considerable opposition from the majority of the population, which is hostile to fundamentalism and has a secular way of life that it would be impossible to change without the use of force.

But as long as the RP does not have power on a national level, it will not have the means for such a confrontation. On the contrary, the State apparatus could well try to champion hostility to fundamentalist excesses itself, in order to avoid popular self-organisation and mobilisation.

Important

Istanbul is far too important a city on the international level and for tourism. The "cultural innovations" of the RP would not go unnoticed, and would create scandals and provoke a reaction from the ministers of tourism and culture.

If the RP government aims first and foremost to meet the social aspirations of its voters in the poor suburbs, and takes on radical populist hues, it could well run up against tremendous resistance from established economic forces (large industry, the banking sector, foreign enterprises, organised crime) — which would lead to economic bankruptcy, in turn leading to intervention by the State apparatus.

If on the other hand the RP takes a low profile and tries to make a temporary compromise with the powers that be in the city — within the framework of a stagist strategy — it could be corrupted by the old city.

This would appear to be the evolution preferred by the major employers. One of its main representatives declared, "Turkey is not adapting to the RP, but the RP will adapt to Turkey."

This is the real question: will the RP maintain its identity as a radical Islamic party that hopes to change the system, or will it become a conservative "Islamic-democratic" party integrated into the system?

In other words, will the new RP governments be satisfied with a strong dose of Muslim conservatism added to the current system (which the big bourgeoisie could easily accommodate), or will they orient themselves to a radical shake-up with the goal of setting up an Islamic Republic, thus directly confronting the powers that be?

To be sure, as the Iranian example shows, the fundamentalists' "change of the system" is limited to the political and social superstructure and does not touch capitalism as such, in spite of all the populist and anti-imperialist posturing.

Among the RP's financial backers can be found Saudi Arabia and many "fundamentalist" Turkish capitalists, such as the head of the giant agro-business firm Biscuits Ülker. But the RP cannot be considered a simple bourgeois party that is more conservative than others.

Due to the many internal contradictions and divergent social interests, the future evolution of the RP may even lead to a split. But for the moment, it has the wind in its sails, and it is the radical sectors that hold sway.

The fundamentalists hope to set up an Islamic Republic, a new "Ottoman Empire" that would take out its revenge on the West and on the secular republican government, to once again become the "leader of the Muslim world".

Turkish fundamentalism, unlike the Arab variant, has an imperial, nationalist hue. A fundamentalist government would inevitably unleash a military adventure.

Its project also implies radical changes in social life and in the functioning of the State apparatus. A shift from "bourgeois democracy" (however militarised) to a theocratic Islamic dictatorship would not be without consequence for Turkish capitalism. It is oriented entirely towards the European Union (more than half of foreign trade), and the big bourgeoisie has gambled everything on integration into the EU.

The radical Islamic fundamentalists are pushing the leadership of the RP into a confrontation with the State. The depth of the current crisis in the country has

The united socialist alternative

The revolutionary left was divided on the question of whether it should participate in the municipal elections or call for a boycott in solidarity with the Kurdish national movement. A number of groups (a majority of which had neither the means nor the intention to participate in the elections) called for a boycott, going so far as calling those who participated "lackeys of the Turkish State" and "collaborators in the dirty war against the Kurdish people". Others ran independent candidacies in certain regions. Two parties ran slates on a national level: the (Maoist) Workers Party (IP) and the Socialist Unity Party (SBP), with each winning about 80,000 votes, or 0.3% of votes cast.

The SBP ran a unitary slate, the United Socialist Alternative (BSA), in which other currents participated — the SBP (ex-CP), Kurtulus, Emek (which withdrew from the elections but remained in the BSA), and Yeniyol (Fourth Internationalists).

One of the main themes of the BSA campaign was solidarity with the Kurdish people and the struggle against the dirty war and the repression meted out to Kurdish deputies. Candidates of the BSA defended this line in all their public meetings and in their television spots.

This unitary effort — a very recent undertaking — met with real success (on its modest scale) and holds out promise for the post-election period. The goal is the building of a unitary party, not on the basis of an ideological debate and total programmatic sterile impasse), but based on united action around a platform of common demands and on democratic internal functioning that respects the identity of each component.

The important common work carried out during the elections bodes well for the future, and other currents have already decided to join. ☺

given the RP a key role. Its course in the coming period will determine much of what the future holds for the country. ★

FRANK RIDLEY (1897-1994)

FRANK Ridley, the founder of the Marxian League, the first organisation to disseminate the writings of Leon Trotsky after his expulsion from the Soviet Union, died on 27 March 1994. Ridley was the inspirer of the first comrades who were later to form the backbone of the International Left Opposition and the Fourth International. Although he parted with Trotsky over his opposition to Ridley's premature call for a Fourth International — he was considered a "Trotskyist" by the Brockway-McNair-Maxton leadership of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) to which he had gravitated in the 1930s. He consistently opposed the Stalinist frame-ups — from the Moscow Trials to the Titoist trials after the war. He sent a message of solidarity to the Fourth International on its fiftieth anniversary celebration at Conway Hall in 1988. In his latter years he worked with the broadly-based British journal, *Revolutionary History*. Despite his maverick role in the history of the movement, his importance in its formative phases should not be understated. ★

RUTH BULLOCK (1909-1994)

RUTH Bullock, for decades a pillar of the Canadian Trotskyist movement, died 8 April 1994.

Early in life she was exposed to hard work on her family's farm and to the socialist ideas in her family's collection of books.

Personal experience brought her up against societal and legal obstacles which denied women access to abortion and even to birth control. For her, the informal networking among women seeking access to birth control and abortion led to semi-clandestine activity arranging abortions for women who were referred to her.

In 1934, she joined the recently founded Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Although a social democratic party, it had the stated goal of eradicating capitalism. Ruth did not fail to notice the number of independent women who were prominent in the CCF.



VIETNAMESE TROTSKYISTS IN GERMANY

During World War Two, Ruth rejected the policies of the CCF and the Communist Party, both of which fell in behind the war effort of the Canadian government. When she was first accused of being a "Trotskyite" she wasn't sure what this term meant. At the end of the war, she and her husband Reg joined the branch of the Canadian Trotskyist movement in Vancouver.

Ruth was very demanding of herself and demanding of others. Numerous women remember meeting Ruth when they joined the movement and her encouragement of their personal and political growth. For many, it was Ruth who led them into their first study of the situation of women.

When the women's liberation movement emerged in the late 1960s, our organisation was ready to embrace it, in large part due to Ruth's preparatory work.

She did not cut back activity because of advancing age. In October 1970, for example, when the Canadian government invoked the War Measures Act, suspending civil liberties across the country, Ruth and Reg abandoned their vacation, heading back to Vancouver, and reported into our headquarters, ready for action.

Over the years, Ruth contributed thousands of hours to the Vanguard Bookstore, making it a prominent distributor of radical literature in Vancouver. And she was a formidable presence at Canada Customs when they were tempted to intercept certain periodicals. ★

A DELEGATION of Vietnamese Trotskyists, led by Hoang Khoa Khoi, visited Germany twice in the month of February. They had been invited by several Vietnamese magazines to speak on the recently released Vietnamese translation of Trotsky's "The Revolution Betrayed".

Many different categories of Vietnamese live in Germany. There are refugees who left Eastern Bloc countries before the fall of the Berlin Wall. There are those who took advantage of the fall of the Wall to live in Germany. And finally there is the most recent immigration of those that used a "tourist" visa for Moscow and subsequently made their way to Germany.

There are four magazines. In Berlin, the *Spark* is put out by Vietnamese social democrats. *Good Will* is put out near Dortmund and recently published extracts from "The Revolution Betrayed" and Khoi's preface. *Hope* is distributed in the Mainz area and has already published an interview with Khoi.

Hope and *Good Will* invited the delegation to Germany. Meetings brought together as many as 70 people, including many youth and some "old timers" from the party, highly impressed by Trotsky's book and by the Trotskyist theory of the bureaucracy.

A fourth magazine, *Swallow's Wing*, put out in Nuremberg by 20 people, invited the speakers last year.

The meetings were very fruitful, and brought together people who are much more politicised than Vietnamese immigrants in the USA and France — anxious to understand what they had lived through and very receptive to the delegation's explanations. ★