

International VIEWPOINT

ISSUE No 47

27 February 1984

Lebanon blows up in imperialist faces

Volunteers for
Nicaragua

Morocco erupts



International Viewpoint

ISSN: 0294-2925

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY	Answer the call of the Sandinista revolution by <i>International Viewpoint</i>	3
SOVIET UNION	Reshuffle on top of the Lenin Mausoleum by <i>Gerry Foley</i>	4
LEBANON	A grave defeat for world imperialism by <i>Salah Jaber</i>	5
	Solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples! Declaration by the <i>Fourth International Bureau</i>	6
MOROCCO	From the Green March to hunger riots by <i>Charles Legrand</i>	8
BRITAIN	Thatcher's new assault on the unions by <i>Steve Roberts</i>	12
INDIA	Perspectives for the left in India by <i>M. Navid</i>	16
EL SALVADOR	The FPL on the split in Salvadoran revolutionary movement Document	23
AROUND THE WORLD	Lebanon, Israel	26
DENMARK	US embassy tries to stem growing Nicaraguan solidarity by <i>Soeren Bech</i>	28

News closing date 20 February 1984

Subscribe now!

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

Sterling: Cheques to International Viewpoint. Bank transfers to Williams & Glyns Bank, Account 14612874, Code 16-00-58, Islington, London.

Mail all subs to: IV, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES :

	6 months	1 year
Surface mail, all countries	95FF	175FF
<i>Air mail</i>		
Europe, Middle East, N. Africa	105FF	195FF
The Americas, Africa	130FF	240FF
Asia	145FF	270FF

Exchange rates :

	95	105	130	145	175	195	240	270
FF								
£	9	10	12	14	16	18	22	25
US dol.	16	19	22	25	31	37	42	47
Can dol.	19	21	26	29	37	40	49	55

1983 collection

A limited number of full collections of *International Viewpoint* for 1983 are available for 100 francs. This price includes surface mail postage worldwide.

These issues nos 21 to 43 contain consistent coverage on the anti-missiles mobilisations, the Central American revolution and the continuing activity of Solidarnosc in Poland.

Included in the collection are major documents of the Fourth International on the Iranian revolution and Southern Africa, and a major theoretical article by Ernest Mandel on permanent revolution.

Individual copies are also available of most issues during the year at a cost of 8 French francs including postage.

Rush your orders now!

BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

LAST NAME FIRST NAME

ADDRESS

CITY COUNTRY CODE

RENEWAL

SUBSCRIPTION

Answer the call of the Sandinista revolution

Organise solidarity brigades for Nicaragua

"Nicaragua Libre" (Free Nicaragua) has always given great importance to the solidarity movements, which throughout the world have testified to the impact of the revolutionary process set in motion by the fall of the Somoza dictatorship on July 19, 1979, and have helped to expose and stigmatize the actions of the imperialists and counterrevolutionary forces against the Sandinista revolution.

This is reflected in the efforts made by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the Government Council for National Reconstruction to accommodate international solidarity brigades. This work has already been going on for some years. In the summer of 1983, hundreds of volunteers from West Germany, Argentina, Belgium, Chile, the United States, Denmark, Spain, France, Euzkadi, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland formed such brigades to offer concrete solidarity to the Nicaraguan revolution.

The participants in these brigades met in August 1983 and issued a joint statement calling "on our respective governments and public and religious figures, on all workers, peasants, and intellectuals organizations, on all political parties and mass organizations," to condemn the Reagan administration, to support the FSLN's efforts to achieve peace, as well as "to step up protest actions in front of U.S. embassies in all countries and to use every means to respond and mobilize — public campaigns, financial solidarity, and organizing more and larger brigades of volunteers."

The Sandinista press gives systematic coverage to the arrival of contingents of volunteers and to their activities in contact with the population. This winter more than 700 solidarity brigade volunteers have already left for the coffee harvest in Nicaragua, including 500 from the United States.

Such brigades serve the Nicaraguan revolution in a number of ways. First of all, they offer real help for the campaigns to harvest the coffee and cotton crops, as well as for building schools, health centers, and other projects. For example, two brigades of Swiss volunteers built a bridge in a neighborhood of Matagalpa in the summer of 1983 in collaboration with the local people. All these actions are concrete contributions to the labor of reconstruction undertaken by the Nicaraguan revolution.

Moreover, the organization of volunteer work brigades takes on another aspect, which is very important. It helps to give the Nicaraguan masses a concrete idea of the international political support that exists for the Sandinista revolution. It shows them that they are not isolated in their enormous mobilization against the counterrevolutionary attacks financed and organized by the U.S. administration.

This more strictly political dimension of international solidarity looms larger when the *brigadistas* maintain a presence in the border areas, where the Nicaraguan fighters stand in front line facing the attacks of the counterrevolutionaries, and will be even more in the forefront in the event of more direct foreign intervention.

Establishing a presence in these areas is exactly what solidarity activists from West Germany are setting out to do. This could play an important role in deterring attacks fomented by the U.S. In early January, a Swiss brigade of twenty persons started working along the Costa Rican border, in the San Juan river area, clearing land.

On the other hand, forming such brigades is also a way

of stimulating the solidarity movement itself in the countries where volunteers are recruited. Far from being an activity isolated from the rest of the solidarity work, this is an effective means for publicizing the real situation that prevails in Nicaragua. It offers a way to get the workers organizations as such, as well as individual activists in them, involved in tasks of concrete solidarity. The reports by returned volunteers can serve as a basis for increasing the number of informational meetings and getting more organizations and individuals to take public stands in solidarity with Nicaragua.

Experience has also shown that after seeing with their own eyes concrete mass internationalist work in connection with a living revolution, a lot of solidarity movement activists come back more committed to the revolutionary cause. Sending fact-finding trips and trade-union solidarity visits also helps the general effort. Moreover, the Nicaragua trade-union movement is anxious to receive solidarity delegations from unions abroad. It has just issued a call for an "International Meeting for Peace" to take place in Managua in April.

The possibilities are shown by the experience of the forty Austrian volunteers who left for Nicaragua at the beginning of January. Responding to the appeal issued by the Rural Workers Association (ATC), the Sandinista peasant and agricultural workers organization, the Austrian solidarity movement hoped to get about 15 volunteers. In a few days, however, it had more than 300 candidates. The Austrian solidarity committee had to make a selection. Finally, it organized about a hundred people to go in two groups.

All these reasons combine, therefore, to make sending volunteer work brigades to Nicaragua an exceptionally important initiative, both for defending the Nicaraguan revolution and for extending the solidarity movement. In many countries, this appeal for internationalist volunteers has gotten a response hardly seen since the Spanish civil war.

In many cases, these brigades represent the achievement of an exemplary unity of the various components of the workers and mass movement in the respective countries. For example, the Austrian brigade includes Social Democrats, members of the Communist Party, of the Catholic workers movement, of the Alternative group (the counterpart of the West German Greens), Trotskyists, as well as activists who do not belong to any political group. Some joined up for purely humanitarian motives, others for more political reasons, because they wanted to support the revolutionary struggle of the FSLN and the Nicaraguan masses.

On October 25, 1983, the National Executive of the Sandinista Defense Committees issued an appeal for "solidarity brigades for Nicaragua," calling for the formation of brigades of volunteers to do medical, technical, and other skilled tasks. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of volunteers from West Europe, North America, and Japan are expected in Nicaragua early this year. This is a first positive response to the appeal by the Nicaraguan masses and their organizations. This response has to be strengthened and built in a systematic way by generalizing the experiences. Now more than ever, it is necessary to do everything possible to stay the armed hand of imperialism.

In the face of imperialist aggression, Nicaragua is not alone! We must answer the call of the Nicaraguan revolution. ■

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Reshuffle on top of the Lenin mausoleum

The world capitalist press's comment on the change of the top bureaucrat in the Kremlin is remarkable mainly for its emptiness. On the face of things, seldom has so much been said about such a nonevent.

The most important fact is obvious to anyone. Andropov's successor is a totally mediocre figure, old and in poor health. He will not be a strong in office or likely to hold the top post for long.

Gerry FOLEY

The implications of this are also obvious in a system where the No. 1 bureaucrat becomes the very symbol of the system and the state. The face of the regime is more and more a nonface, that is, in fact it is becoming faceless.

Constantin Chernenko's undistinguished and undistinguishable portrait will now blossom across the 6,000 mile span of Soviet territory and throughout East Europe as the flag of proletarian power and the hope of humanity.

It is evident that the bureaucracy that usurped political power from the first successful workers revolution and which has lived for many decades as a parasite on the collective property forms that the revolution created, as well as on its prestige, has reached a new stage of decay and decadence.

Appropriately, the decline of the bureaucracy is marked by the apotheosis of mediocrity.

A historic change is underway in the USSR. The regime has never shown such weakness. For the second time in hardly more than a year, the supreme post has passed to a man with one foot in the grave.

What is more, unlike his predecessor, Yuri Andropov, Chernenko offers no hope whatever for new and more effective policies.

Andropov himself, undoubtedly more intelligent and sophisticated than the preceding bureaucratic dictators, represented even in his strongest aspects, the declining period of the bureaucracy.

What the former head of the KGB brought to the Kremlin was the cunning ruthlessness of a totalitarian police chief. He offered nothing, in the last analysis, but a scourge of scorpions for the top bureaucrats who are undermining the system by their incompetence and corruption.

Among the most interesting reports in the voluminous coverage of the Soviet leadership change relate how Andropov relentlessly stalked well protected top bureaucrats and then pounced on them like a ferret on fat rats.

In the February 11 *Le Monde*, the well informed Alexander Adler cited three

cases that made Andropov's reputation as a fighter of corruption. The first was in 1972 in Georgia. (It is interesting in this respect that the strongest odors of corruption tend to hang over the republics where the bureaucracy rules over nationalities with a strong historic antagonism to Russian rule, such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Tadzhikistan, etc.)

Adler wrote: "This republic had been run for nineteen years by Mjavanadze, the first secretary of the Georgian CP and a candidate member of the Soviet Politburo. The local strongman was Lazichvili, a businessman, who by extensive bribery had set up clandestine enterprises.

"For a long time, the local police chief, Chervarnadze, was unable to fight such a powerful figure. Then, at a ceremony he noticed that Mjavanadze was wearing a diamond that had been reported stolen by Interpol. It had been given to him by Lazichvili."

So, Mjavanadze fell, with Andropov's help, and the tough cop Chevarnadze himself took his place — an inspiring example no doubt for the top Soviet policeman.

The bloodhound and the hog

Another case was in the city of Sochi. "The mayor collected bribes for the least service. The affair seemed insoluble because Medunov, first secretary of the Krasnodar territory, was untouchable. By devious means Andropov attained his ends. In 1980, the mayor of Sochi was arrested, and in June 1972 Medunov was ousted."

Western Soviet experts give Andropov credit for improving Soviet economic performance somewhat by clamping down on bureaucratic corruption and incompetence.

Nonetheless, the Kremlin bloodhound's small successes only point up, after all, how extensive such corruption has become. This is a fatal disease for a totalitarian system, undermining both its means of centralized control and its mystique. It now seems to have reached quite an advanced stage in the Soviet Union.

The rise of Chernenko, by all accounts, represents the comeback of the pure parasite layer. He was the heir apparent of Brezhnev and was reportedly stopped from reaching the highest trough because Andropov had his nose to a hot trail of corruption leading right into the Brezhnev entourage.

The long-term direction of the bureaucratic controlled economy is clear. Over the last decade the growth rates have dropped to a level that is hardly spectacular even when compared with those of the old imperialist countries, which have a long lead over the USSR.

In Poland, one of the largest East European states, the Kremlin faces the best organized, deepest rooted antibureaucratic movement that has arisen since the consolidation of bureaucratic dictatorship under Stalin.

An ossified caste

Facing this threat, potentially far greater than that posed by the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Soviet bureaucracy has been notably unable to come up with any innovative policy, not even on the level of police techniques.

It was ironic that Andropov was directly involved in the crushing of the Hungarian revolution and in the adoption of the reform policy that made it possible for the Kremlin to restabilize the bureaucratic system in that country for decades. He was also innovative in police techniques in the USSR itself.

Andropov introduced "grand inquisitor" methods of "debate" with imprisoned dissidents, involving even theological arguments with the religious ones. It was during his stewardship of the KGB, moreover, that the imprisonment of dissidents in so-called mental hospitals and forced exile of dissidents to the West became generalized.

But in Poland the political level of the bureaucracy's response has been hardly higher than that of the barbarous military dictatorships of Latin America, even in the use of the language of the *pronunciamento* and the military trappings that go with it.

The immobilism and obvious indecisiveness at the top level of Soviet leadership now indicates that the center of the bureaucracy itself is becoming seriously eroded and unstable. This makes it clear that despite the long decades of Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union this system is, on the historic scale, nothing more than a transitory product of the delay of the world revolution and the weakness of working-class leadership.

Now, after only one or two human lifetimes, the most powerful monolith in history is starting to look shaky. It was not, after all, a pyramid erected to withstand the ages but a gerrybuilt monstrosity like Warsaw's notorious Palace of Culture.

The Stalinist regime has made the very name of socialism and Marxism repellent to the peoples of the USSR and East Europe. But the Polish experience

demonstrates that once they get a chance to act and learn for themselves, they will quickly come to understand that the only way they can solve their problems is by reorganizing the collective economy in a democratic way, that is, by resuming the course toward socialism blocked by the bureaucracy.

Inasmuch as it demonstrates the decay of bureaucratic rule, the rise to power of a Constantin Chernenko is indeed a good reason to take a new and careful look at the Soviet Union. But in all the voluminous comment by the capitalist press and government figures there is not a glimmer of comprehension of the historical changes it could foreshadow. The fact is, for their own reasons, they are quite unwilling to consider them.

Such comment has focused rather on whether the change of leadership in the Kremlin could slow the arms race or bring back detente. Those, however, are precisely two things that cannot be much affected by who holds center stage on top of the Lenin mausoleum.

Better chance for peace?

The bureaucratic leadership by its nature has always sought accommodation with imperialism and therefore is always for detente. It is the immediate interests of the imperialists that are the variable. It was Washington that initiated the latest detente in reaction to its defeat in Vietnam. It was also the leadership of world imperialism that reassumed a threatening posture and stepped up the arms race as a response to a new rise in the colonial revolution, in particular in Central America.

Undoubtedly a lot of the comment by the capitalist government leaders is designed to disarm opposition to the renewed arms race by giving the impression that the prospects for peace depend on the outcome of Byzantine power struggles in the Soviet bureaucratic hierarchy.

In reality, the dismal shuffle in the Kremlin testifies to the growing ineffectiveness of the Soviet bureaucracy as such to control the forces that are challenging the established world order, the mass struggles against the growing threats of war and want, against mass unemployment, against the hopelessness to which imperialism condemns the peoples of the underdeveloped countries.

What is more, the peoples of the Soviet Union themselves are not likely to tolerate the rule of this ossified caste for much longer. They will renew their struggle for democratic, socialist, rational forms of organization that can meet their needs and aspirations. And that will offer an immense aid to the rest of struggling humanity.

By comparison with that, the bureaucracy's claims to represent progress and hope are no more than the mockery illustrated by the Byzantine rituals played out in the last weeks in Moscow. ■



LEBANON

A grave setback for world imperialism

The new flareup of fighting in Lebanon has clearly marked a qualitative turn in the evolution of the relationship of forces on both the local and regional levels. It has been the push that brought down the house of cards represented by Amin Gemayel's "legal" state.

With the erosion of the last vestiges of the intercommunal "national" consensus that he enjoyed at the time of his election to the presidency, Gemayel found himself without any significant Muslim support whatsoever. The "legal" army that the Gemayel regime made its main card and whose "cohesion" was so highly touted by its American and French instructors, crumbled. The great majority of the Muslim officers and soldiers either joined the opposition forces or stood aside from the battle underway. Gemayel no longer has any support on the ground except his own reactionary communalist party, the Phalangists (Kataeb).

Salah JABER

The British and Italian components of the multi-imperialist force backing Gemayel have pulled out of the game. The American troops are retreating, while the US continues to intervene in the form of air and naval bombardment.

Only the left imperialist Mitterrand is still holding tough. He is keeping his troops in for the moment, trying to prove to the bourgeois regimes in the former French colonies and protectorates that

the French army is a reliable backup. In fact, Mitterrand is hiding under the cover of his proposal to replace the multi-imperialist force with a UN one. That is, he is striking a new neutralist pose with a shameless opportunism, in order to prepare the way for an "honorable" retreat if necessary.

Whatever the outcome of the battle in progress, world imperialism has already suffered a grave setback in Lebanon. Its protege, Gemayel, is completely discredited and his state is in a shambles.

The main local instrument of the imperialists, the Zionist army, is more unable and reluctant to intervene than ever before. The imperialist states themselves are less prepared than ever to offer Gemayel the only means of reversing the relationship in his favor, that is, massive intervention by imperialist troops.

The American imperialists realized a long time ago that "Lebanon is no Grenada," as the armed Lebanon opposition keeps saying. It is, moreover, an eloquent fact that the very troops that carried out the Grenada operation today find themselves obliged to withdraw from Lebanon. Now, with the developments in Central America and the Middle East, for the first time in a decade the American imperialists face the possibility of one, two, many Vietnams. It is true that these struggles are on a relatively small scale, but they are sufficiently strong nonetheless to be daunting, especially with elections coming up in the US.

Rather than go for a wider intervention in the Lebanese "hornets nest," a larger and larger section of the American establishment is openly advocating abandoning Lebanon. After all, the country in itself is not particularly important. It is not an oil producer and it does not have a great strategic significance. But what has been at stake in reality in the fighting in Lebanon since the summer of 1983 is not so much direct influence over the Lebanese central government as it is the whole of American policy in the region, as defined by the Camp David accords and the Reagan plan. In fact, it was the signing of the Israeli-Lebanese treaty on May 17, 1983, that lit the fuse to the powderkeg in Lebanon. (1)

Syria retaliates

Up until that time, the Syrian regime had taken a reserved, if not positive, attitude toward Gemayel, while warning him against accepting any treaty with Israel. After the treaty was signed, it pushed the Lebanese political and military forces under its influence to fight the Phalangist government and the imperialist troops. This was made all the easier by the fact that Israel was becoming less and less of an effective deterrent.

By midsummer of 1983, the Zionist army had to beat a hasty retreat from the Chouf region, while it had not yet consolidated a bulwark in southern Lebanon. The battle of the mountains that followed ended in a grave defeat for the Phalangist militias (the so-called Lebanese Forces), which were backed up by Gemayel's "legal" army. The latter managed, with imperialist military support, to halt the advance of Joumblatt's Druze forces, which were joined by the PLO dissident's forces and given Syrian artillery cover.

The September 25 ceasefire opened the way for a "reconciliation" meeting in Geneva a month later, at which the Syrians hoped to convince Gemayel to abrogate the May 17 treaty. He was in fact instructed by the participants in this

Solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples !

The recent events in Lebanon have demonstrated, if any further proof were necessary, that the great majority of the Lebanese population are opposed to the Phalangist regime of Amin Gemayel that the multi-imperialist so-called Multi-National Force was sent in to prop up.

Under the hammer blows of the armed masses, Gemayel's state, which was laboriously rebuilt after October 1982 with the support of imperialist troops and under their supervision, has crumbled, leaving the true state of affairs starkly exposed: The troops of the "legal" army are as Phalangist as the militias fighting alongside them.

In view of the scope of the defeat suffered by their protege and the pressure of their own public opinion, some of the powers involved in the multi-imperialist force are pulling out their troops. Great Britain and Italy have done this. The Reagan administration has also found itself compelled to announce the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanese soil. But it is continuing to intervene by means of its naval artillery, savagely pounding the anti-Gemayel positions in the Lebanese mountains.

As for the French government, it is trying to extricate itself from the affair without losing face, asking that the multi-imperialist force be relieved by a UN one, in which French troops might participate and which would try to succeed where the Multi-National Force failed, that is, in consolidating the bourgeois order in Lebanon. Such a UN force could also favor the partitionist schemes of the Phalangist far right.

The victorious offensive of the Lebanese opposition calls for anti-imperialist forces throughout the world to redouble their efforts to mobilize opposition to imperialist policy in Lebanon under the following slogans:

All imperialist forces out of Lebanon, including its offshore waters!

Zionist troops out of Lebanon!

No UN intervention!

Solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian masses in struggle!

United Secretariat Bureau
of the Fourth International
February 16, 1984

meeting to examine, together with his American tutors, the means for renouncing this treaty, which had become the precondition for a second "reconciliation" meeting. He went immediately to Washington for that purpose, where he got nowhere. The Reagan administration rejected any abrogation of the treaty, which it had made a point of pride, having presented it as a fundamental step toward Pax Americana in the Middle East.

For the American government, this accord, together with the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, prepared the way for a Jordanian (and Palestinian)-Israeli treaty, which would make Syria rather than Egypt the outcast of the Arab world because of Damascus's alleged "pro-Soviet extremism." Mubarak's Egypt was then, moreover, getting involved in the game by helping Arafat organize the battle in northern Lebanon. (2)

Arafat returned the favor by spectacular action in favor of ending the Arab and Islamic boycott of Egypt, the last obstacle to the reactionary Arab regimes coming out openly in support of the Reagan plan. It was Arafat who opened the way for the sort of meeting that has just been held in Washington between Reagan, Mubarak and Hussein. After years of hypocrisy, the Arab reactionaries decided to put their cards on the table.

It was in this context, marked by Arafat embracing Hussein and the Islamic conference in Casablanca deciding to bring Egypt back into the fold, that the latest round of fighting flared in Leb-

anon. Syria decided to counterattack through Lebanon and to inflict a setback on American policy, forcing abrogation of the May 17 treaty. This time the battle started in Beirut itself, touched off by an offensive of the pro-Iranian faction of the Shiite movement, which is linked to Syria. Gemayel's army struck back so brutally that it definitively alienated almost all the Muslim forces in the country, (the consequences of this were described in the beginning of this article).

Trap closes on Gemayel

The action of the "moderate" faction of the Shiite movement Amal, which is strongly predominant, made it possible to wrest the control of West Beirut from Gemayel at the beginning of February. The intervention of Joumblatt's Druze forces on February 13 opened the way for a link up between the capital and the Chouf mountains, and thus with the areas under Syrian control. The Phalangist redoubt was consequently smaller and more threatened than ever. In fact, Gemayel no longer had any choice but to submit to the Syrian conditions.

At this writing, the news from Beirut indicates that he is going to announce the abrogation of the May 17 treaty. If he

1. See "What Future for the Lebanon Ceasefire?" in *International Viewpoint*, No 38, October 17, 1983.
2. See "The Crisis of the PLO" in *IV*, No 46, February 13, 1984.

does, Gemayel could hope to get a new "reconciliation" meeting (which might be held this time in Saudi Arabia). The result of this would be that for the first time since 1943, the year Lebanon became independent and the celebrated National Pact was adopted that provided for a division of power among the various communal factions of the Lebanese bourgeoisie, we would see an important change in the institutional framework of the country, with the Muslim factions of the bourgeoisie getting a bigger share of the cake. It would lead above all to a return to the 1977 situation, with a Lebanese central government largely under the sway of Syria. Gemayel might manage to stay in the presidency, but he would lose the real power, or at least his monopoly of the power.

One thing is certain, however, the outcome of the latest fighting in Lebanon will not be a settlement going beyond the limits of bourgeois rule, whatever form this may take. All the major forces opposing Gemayel are bourgeois forces, just as their patron, the Baathist regime in Damascus, is a bourgeois government.

The National Salvation Front, which includes the Lebanese Communist Party, is led by three key bourgeois figures, united only by their hostility to the Phalange and their subordination to Syria. One is Frangieh, a former president and Maronite, who was an ally of the Phalange from 1975 to 1978. The second is Karame, a former premier and Sunni Muslim, the longest occupant of this post in Lebanese history. The third is Joumblatt, successor to his father as the bourgeois-feudal leader of the Druze community.

The role of Amal

As for the Amal movement headed by the Shiite lawyer Nabih Berri, up until the last days, it stood to the right of the National Salvation Front, which it refused to join so as to avoid a break with Gemayel. Amal, or rather the "movement of the Outcast," of which Amal is the military wing, was formed in the 1970s. Its clear objective was to organize the poor Shiite masses under a bourgeois leadership that, unlike the traditional Shiite chiefs — who were the most backward hangovers from Lebanese feudalism — was capable of using populist demagoguery.

In fact, the Amal operation was directed mainly against the Lebanese CP, whose spectacular growth in 1968-72 was based on recruitment mainly among Shiites. From 1975 to 1982, Amal did not fight a single battle against the camp of the Phalangists and its allies. Instead, it built itself through battles against the Lebanese CP and the Palestinian organizations, on the basis of anti-Communist and anti-foreign propaganda mirroring that of the Phalange. Under the influence of the Iranian revolution, a minority faction in Amal radicalized in accordance with the Khomeini model. In 1982, it split from the movement, denouncing Berri's collusion with the Phalangists.



Gemayel — looking for a new "reconciliation"? (DR)

Today, Berri is not showing any sign of "radicalism" beyond his opposition to Gemayel in person, whom he blames for the recent events. At the same time, he is showing a very great concern to keep things from going too far as regards a breakdown of the bourgeois state. He has insisted that the militarized police and the ordinary police, or even Lebanese army troops under the command of Muslim officers, take charge of restoring bourgeois order in West Beirut. He is demonstrating a special respect for the legal institutions, insisting that any political change must be carried out through the channels established by the constitution, that is, through a parliament elected in 1972 (!). This parliament has been kept on ice since that time and is made up of people who were the most corrupt representatives of the Lebanese ruling class before the deluge. It was this parliament that elected Sarkis president in 1976, then Beshir Gemayel, and most recently his brother Amin, to whom it gave an overwhelming majority in 1982.

Nabih Berri, moreover, is now calling, along with the Mitterrand government, for the intervention of UN forces in Lebanon, not as a buffer between Lebanon and Israel, but as a backup to the "legal" Lebanese forces, to help them maintain bourgeois order in the country, since UN troops are the only outside forces that might be accepted by the Lebanese masses as a whole. Any such intervention

must be rejected, especially since it could encourage the partitionist inclinations of the extremist faction in the Phalangist camp.

The Revolutionary Communist Group (GCR), Lebanese section of the Fourth International, has participated in the recent struggle to bring down Amin Gemayel and to force the withdrawal of the imperialist forces. Our comrades are active in Beirut, where they have been engaged in defense actions alongside the Lebanese CP, with which the GCR works. They have also been active in the mountains to the southeast of the capital, where they have been engaged in activities of the same type along with the Lebanese Left, as well as Palestinian resistance and Druze forces.

The present evolution of the situation in Lebanon is putting the demand for a constituent assembly back on the agenda, in the context of overthrowing Gemayel. Such circumstances would enable the Palestinian resistance (the forces of the dissidents who are actively involved in the ongoing fighting) to reestablish themselves in the Beirut camps, overcoming Berri's opposition to their return. It is only on such conditions that the Lebanese masses can profit from a victory that they have bought with their blood, rather than see it serve once again only the interests of the bourgeois leaderships, only to remodel a bourgeois state that will remain their enemy. ■

From the Green March to the hunger riots

The victims of the revolts that spread through a number of Moroccan towns in January 1984 should now be added to the death toll of hundreds that resulted from the riots in Casablanca in June 1981. (1) The police, special intervention brigades and Interior Ministry auxiliaries were joined by army units — some of which had been recalled from the Western Sahara — in order to re-establish the strong-arm order of the monarchy.

King Hassan II is going to be able to add another winged phrase to that he came out with in August 1972, after an attempted coup d'état, 'I am prepared to eliminate one third of the population to save the rest'. Or to that of June 1981, 'I am ready to eliminate 5,000 or 500,000 hoodlums if necessary to re-establish order'.

At the moment, the political parties assembled around the king, in his national union for the annexation of the Western Sahara, have only one burning desire — to remove the trouble-makers from the political scene as quickly as possible so that they can continue playing at the farce of democracy. The king is talking about elections in March....The royal family and their close allies are speeding up the transfer of funds to the United States to fatten their real-estate holdings so that they are prepared for any eventuality, and the army is continuing its military-control manoeuvres in the areas around the towns — particularly Casablanca — where the broad avenues allow easy access to armoured cars.

Charles LEGRAND

Scattered reports about the popular revolts in Morocco had been going around for sometime. But they were overshadowed by the comment on the Tunisian revolts, and they remained unconfirmed by the international press. Only the proximity of the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla to the north Moroccan towns of Nador and El Hoceima allowed knowledge of the scope of the demonstrations and repression to become known at the end of January. (2)

The royal palace had learnt from the June 1981 experience, when it was announced that there would be across-the-board price rises for all the basic food-stuffs subsidised by the government that summer. The present rises, demanded as usual by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were to be spread out over several months. The bitter pill was supposed to go down all the more easily as the austerity measures had received support of a vote in an extraordinary session of the parliament.

However, not even all these precautions, even given the decline in the class struggle owing to the policies of the opposition, were enough to diffuse or forestall sharp reactions by the 25-million strong population — a third of whom have less than 50 cents a day to live on.

The various facets of the austerity plan have provoked discontent among many different sectors of the Moroccan people. The proposed measures came at the same time as the price rises for electricity, gas and petrol — without mentioning a pro-

posal to raise the registration fees for the baccalaureat. They were to include a tax of 500 dirham (60 to 70 US dollars) for each exit from Morocco — which would particularly hit at the workers living near the Spanish enclaves — as well as a tax increase that would affect most middle-income employees and some traders for example. As usual, the bourgeoisie would bribe their way out of paying.

Since summer 1983 a wave of discontent over many questions had been mounting. It broke through the flood-gates on January 1984. From January 5 a school students strike affected most education establishments. In several towns, such as Safi and Agadir, the inhabitants from the popular neighbourhoods joined the demonstrations. On January 9, in Marrakesh, a secondary students strike led to the burning of several schools, and several young demonstrators were killed by the police. In Fez and the surrounding region, high schools and universities were on strike from January 12. Young people from the popular neighbourhoods were arrested, as well as political and trade-union activists.

It was the same scenario at Meknes, while student strikes and sporadic demonstrations took place at Rabat on January 17. The state of siege that existed in Casablanca during the summit of the Islamic Conference Organisation, held there in January, undoubtedly explains the relatively small number of demonstrations that occurred in this city, although this economic capital of the kingdom and its huge belt of shanty towns was the

centre of the riots against the high cost of living in June 1981.

In the towns on the Mediterranean coast north of the Rif, where repression was apparently the fiercest, the student demonstrations often combined with those of the poor neighbourhoods. An unspecified number of deaths were reported from Nador as well as a number resulting from the demonstrations that took place in the nearby towns such as Salouan, Zaiou (where there is a sugar refinery), Ferkhana and Zghan-Zghan (against the iron mines management), where a large part of the conurbation was burnt down. (3)

The high level of tension in the villages of the region is explained by the high cost of seed potatoes, which the peasants could not pay. School students in El Hoceima were joined in their demonstrations by all the young people and fishers.

There was a veritable popular uprising at Tetouan on January 21, which was harshly put down by the army. The favourite targets for the demonstrators in these towns were the buildings that symbolise the power, the wealth and the repression of the monarchy.

Hassan II, accompanied by his heir and his youngest son, solemnly addressed his 'dear people' on January 22. First, he denounced the many-headed Marxist-Leninist-Khomeinist-Zionist monster that had allegedly done its worst to keep the Islamic summit from successfully taking place and to prevent the return of President Hosni Mubarak's Egypt to the fold of Islamic believers. Then he announced that there would not, after all, be price rises in January.

The king went on to mete out punishments to some of his subjects. Those in Marrakesh for example, would not have the happiness of seeing him in the next few months — unless a few hundred notables came to ask him for a royal pardon. He promised to make an example of trouble-makers, whatever their age — a sinister warning given that several hundred youngsters are languishing in Moroccan gaols — and take severe action against a vast category of 'those who spread lies'.

Some days previously Hassan II had already reminded the inhabitants of the Rif that they knew each other well — referring to the carnage carried out by General Oufkir in 1959 in this region, which is traditionally hostile to the royal palace. Although Hassan II, like Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, has had to withdraw momentarily faced with the scope of popular discontent, repression will nonetheless continue to be his favourite form of relationship with his 'subjects'. (4) The social and economic backdrop will remain the same in the period ahead.

1. See *Inprecor* (French edition), No 106, July 20, 1981.
2. *International Viewpoint*, No 46, February 13, 1984.
3. See the *Bulletin du Comité de lutte contre la répression au Maroc (CLCRM)*, January 1984.
4. For an analysis of recent events in Tunisia see *International Viewpoint*, No 45, January 30, 1984.

The politics of austerity practised by the regime during the last few years, which flow directly from the injunctions of the IMF, are today driving the majority of the Moroccan people to the limit of what is bearable. They are paying for the brutal social and economic choices made by the big bourgeoisie and the royal family since the beginning of the 1960s. These caused the present large budgetary deficit and the foreign debt that together, including the military debt, total 13 billion dollars. It is these debts that the IMF have focused on.

The present economic stagnation and recession are linked equally to several factors. One is the orienting of the economy towards export agriculture. Another is the policy of trying to fit Moroccan industries into the niches to which they have been relegated by the employers of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United States. Finally, there is the weakness of productive investments by a possessing class that prefers to speculate in real estate and indulge in extravagant personal consumption. The contribution of industry to the Gross Domestic Product has stuck at 15 per cent for the last 15 years.

The growth in the public sector after independence in 1956 — where employment is now to be cut — and emigration — which is now coming up against the closed frontiers of the EEC — could not compensate for the effects of the massive rural exodus of ruined small peasants. This was caused by the greater concentration of land and the new agricultural aims of the big and middle owners. The drought of the last few years has only served to cram yet more people into the swollen shanty towns that hold 20 per cent of the country's population.

A look at industrial investments from 1973 to 1982 shows that the bulk of them have been concentrated in Casablanca (60 per cent of investment and 55 per cent of projects and jobs) and along the coastal towns from Tangiers to Agadir. Very few towns in the interior benefited. This distortion of development is also one of the weightiest factors in the social explosions.

The policy of big 'turnkey' (i.e. ready for use) industrial projects, which bring big pay-offs for the local go-betweens, keeps getting bogged down in the problems arising from questionable industrial choices — lines of activity completely dependent on the ups and downs of the world capitalist market. Moreover, it is being undermined by the fall in the world price for phosphates, a primary product from which Morocco, third producer in the world, obtains a third of its income. The contracts with the Soviet Union on production and transport of phosphates are an insecure economic prop, not to mention those made with the Polish regime. Nevertheless, they have led the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS), the pro-Soviet organisation in Morocco, into some convoluted analyses of the regime having some anti-imperialist sides.

Industries such as textiles and food



Morocco's king cancels price hikes (DR)

processing that produce under contracts for companies in the imperialist countries, have suffered the repercussions of the EEC's economic crisis and the protectionist measures taken. The story of the tomato concentrate factory at Kenitra is a caricatural example. Having been built by the British Heinz group, it was closed after three years. In fact, the subsidies paid by the EEC to its own tomato concentrate producers, mainly Italian, brought a drop in prices that made the Moroccan factory non-competitive. (5) So today, Morocco has to resort to imports to satisfy domestic demand in this area.

Economy bled for Sahara war

This disastrous economic situation is combined with the effects of the eight-year war against the people of the West Sahara. An army of more than 100,000 men waits bogged down in the sector of the Western Sahara delimited by the Moroccan-built 'wall' protecting the phosphate region. More than 50 per cent of the state budget goes on military spending, building garrison towns and into the pockets of racketeers and the royal family. This percentage would be even higher if Saudi Arabia did not systematically pay part of the cost of the Moroccan war effort.

The IMF plan, an imperialist tool of economic intervention in the so-called developing countries, has only aggravated certain aspects of the economic recession in Morocco. Aiming to re-establish the main financial balances, it does not take into account social cost or the necessary radical remodelling of economic development. In fact, it is only cynically exacerbating social inequality, upholding speculative capitalism and corruption that is fed by the massive impoverishment of the working class — in work or out — and the small peasants.

Moreover, the World Bank now recognises that the deplorable economic sit-

uation in Morocco can not be simply blamed on the international crisis. For the first time, the Moroccan economic crisis is not presented as essentially conjunctural.

Since 1981 social and union struggles have had a hard time in really taking off against the attacks on living standards and jobs. The popular demonstrations in January 1984 were not linked to actions by the organised workers movement, as had been the case on June 20, 1981, the date on which a general strike called by the unions drew behind it a mobilisation of all the oppressed sectors. (6) There are several factors that combine to explain the situation today.

The outcome of the June 1981 strike led to a certain ebb in struggles. Firstly, the repression was terrible. Also, the leadership of the Democratic Workers Confederation (CDT) — created in 1978 by the populist petty-bourgeois organisation the Union of Popular Forces (USFP) — who had taken the initiative for the general strike were sentenced to years in prison, along with hundreds of unionists.

The CDT's 1981 strike call was followed by a strange silence from the CDT-USFP leadership — strongly recalling that of the same leadership in 1979 when the regime sacked 500 people in order to put an end to a strike in the health service and education. In both these cases the CDT, a newly-formed union, upset the social consensus and peace for the first time since 1973. But after that it showed itself to be incapable of, and not very

5. This example was given in the Paris daily *le Monde*, January 23, 1984.

6. A declaration by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on June 30, 1981, noted that: On June 20 the Democratic Workers Confederation (CDT) launched a general strike. There was a massive mobilisation of the workers. The small shopkeepers and artisans joined in the protest, as well as the plebeian masses from the poorer and workers neighbourhoods. Casablanca became the scene of a real explosion — the largest since independence [in 1956]. The reaction of the Hassan II regime was brutal. (*Intercontinental Press*, July 27, 1981).

willing to, respond to government repression. Thus it demonstrated the limits of its reformism, its incapacity to lead a confrontation with the regime even on limited questions, and its inability to act when faced with the regime's repressive stance. Although the hopes of many militants, sickened with the bureaucratic practices of the old union, the Moroccan Union of Labour (UMT), were placed in the CDT, it appeared a weak and uncertain instrument in the eyes of the workers.

Certainly struggles developed despite the post 1981 situation, but they did not break out of their usual framework until January 1984. The struggles started at rank and file level among the workers and were rapidly brought under the control of the leadership and diverted into a class-collaborationist direction which did not bring any significant gains. These struggles remained scattered and isolated, the only form of liaison between them being the UMT journal, *Avant-Garde*, which has been banned since 1981.

During 1983 many big mobilisations took place. But these were mainly in sectors peripheral to the working class. Nevertheless, they revealed something about the social explosions to come. At the beginning of January 1983 a general strike developed in the high schools in Oujda, extending to six or seven in Casablanca. It was accompanied by mass leaflettings.

New student and school student strikes broke out in February in Oujda, Berkane, Marrakesh, Fez, Rabat, Casablanca and Taroudant. Fierce repression led to several deaths in this last town. Students in school and in college refused to sit their exams. But these courageous struggles were met with violent repression, made easier by their fragmentation and the lack of co-ordinated structures to fight against the educational reforms of Hassan II.

Once again the leadership of the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM), a member of the USFP, played a negative role. While this union, which has a long tradition of anti-imperialist and anti-monarchist struggle, was the only existing legal framework, and although the students were a barometer of the social exasperation that existed, the USFP abdicated all responsibility by withdrawing from the UNEM leadership at its 17th congress, held shortly after June 1981. In these conditions it is easy to understand that these struggles failed to arouse broad solidarity. For several years they broke out from time to time on topical questions, without being able to spread.

However, the breadth of the popular explosion in January 1984 showed that the social base of the regime had dwindled away. Popular discontent affected practically every sector of the population. Every layer was hit by the crisis, young people had no future, no teachers were being recruited, etc. This partly explains the generalised character of the January 1984 revolt.

But another factor should be taken into consideration: the particular charac-

ter of Moroccan social formation. This within a very short period of time has become a mix of the industrial proletariat, poor peasants forced to leave the land, neglected youth in the cities. The separation between worker and unemployed in the shanty towns is not so clear, and there is a constant interaction between all these sections of the population. This explains the broad front against the regime, and, for example, the fact that the whole mining town of Khouribga was in uproar against the measures.

The policies of the reformist currents, and in particular the USFP, are thus in large measure responsible for the present

ment's repression, but also the obstacles posed by the union bureaucracy — particularly as the local groups often included radical elements close to the left current in the USFP. The rank-and-file union bodies are completely isolated and no longer benefit from the protection or the weight of their union centre.

The activity of the recently-created Human Rights Association — which has registered some important successes with its growth in some towns, with the creation of work commissions and its links with the International Federation for Human Rights — has also been frozen. This is because of a judgment that it was set-

The dictates of the IMF

The measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund of the Moroccan government in 1983, as a return for the rescheduling of its foreign debt, turned around the need to reduce the budgetary deficit which had reached 7,800 million dirhams. This means an increase in state income of around 450 million dirhams and a reduction in state spending of 600 to 700 million dirhams, particularly in the public services budget and state investments.

The decisions of the government's five-year plan for 1980 to 1985 became irrelevant given these demands. State investments planned for 1983 at the level of 13,200 million dirhams were reduced to 8,000 million. These reductions are to continue to the end of the plan. This means, among other things, a stop on building seven dams, 19,000 jobs lost in the state apparatus, a halt to building the Rabat-Casablanca motorway, the port at Agadir, the airports of Agadir and Nador, universities, etc.

In addition, as well as the increase in unemployment that this would mean, the number and value of student scholarships would drop, indirect taxes would rise and new direct taxes be created (particularly the tax of 500 dirhams at the customs for each exit from the country, or the increase in fees to register at university), and a de facto devaluation of the currency, of around 10 per cent, by the adoption of a floating rate of exchange.

impasse of the workers movement, which demonstrated its potential strength at the end of the 1970s. After June 20, 1981, when the USFP should have built mobilisations defending democratic rights and trade-union independence, it made quite a different choice — to freeze all activity. This was more a voluntary political choice than a consequence of repression.

For example, in the weeks after the June 1981 massacres it was not repression which prevented the USFP from taking part in demonstrations organised by the immigrant community in France. Nor was it repression that forced the USFP to cancel the traditional federal council of the UNEM in Europe, which could have organised a response to the undemocratic policies of the government. This attitude was definitely a choice.

But although the USFP put a freeze on all activity opposing the regime for months, it, on the other hand, increased the guarantees to the regime. Only a few days after June 21, 1981, Abderrahim Bouabid, first secretary of the USFP, refused to criticise the palace. When Hassan II went off for the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in Nairobi, Kenya, he packed in his suitcases...the leader of the USFP political group as a political guarantee!

Thus the CDT was deprived of its original dynamism by the USFP-inclined leadership. The few local union committees that managed to get back on their feet had not only to confront the govern-

ing in motion a dynamic that could get out of hand. The USFP made not the slightest response when the regime banned its conference.

The USFP has thus put a damper on all its activities in order to get all the benefits of its compromises with the regime in the national union constructed to annex the Western Sahara.

More royalist than the king

The USFP leadership has achieved its aim. Having participated in the electoral farce of the municipal election in June 1983 and agreeing to keep quiet on the demand for the freeing of political prisoners, it is now in the government. And, since November 1, 1983, Abderrahim Bouabid is a state minister.

It is no wonder that there was growing distrust of this party, that claimed to inherit the mantle of Ben Barka (7), and preferred the corridors of power to the mobilisation of the masses. Even within the USFP itself there was an obvious crisis of confidence with respect to the Abderrahim Bouabid leadership. But the

7. El Mehdi Ben Barka was the leader of the National Union of People's Forces (UNFP), whose left wing gave rise to the Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP). Exiled and condemned to death in his absence by the Rabat government, he was picked up by two French police in Paris in October 1965, and killed. General Oufkir, Moroccan minister of the interior, was involved in this Franco-Moroccan plot to assassinate the most radical leader of the Moroccan opposition.

left current in the USFP did not succeed in elaborating a real alternative, although it was sensitive to all the signs of a rise in struggles. Thus this current showed itself rather in opposition to the positions taken by the leadership, such as for example the elections of June 1983, when it correctly recommended a boycott of elections that would take place without any recognition of democratic freedoms.

The leadership of the USFP tried in every way possible to prevent the left expressing itself, using all the dirty tricks in the book. It decapitated the left by expelling its top leaders, Ben Aneur and Chtouki, by dissolving the branches of the party led by the left, and then, in complicity with the regime, got them arrested.

The left current of the USFP, which had already been the target of selective repression on June 20, 1981, thus suffered at the same time from the attacks of its own leadership. But this was not enough to wear it down.

The demonstrations of last January came up against the holy alliance of the monarchy and all the parties of the national union for the conquest of the Sahara, and imperialism.

Mitterrand's complicity

In France, the Mitterrand government found itself in a ringside seat, given the deep links and many leftovers of the colonial period. He adopted a low profile after the January events. After all, the great geo-political plans of a government that is busy whitewashing the neo-colonial arrangements of its predecessors do not sit very easily with denunciations of the repression and massacres that take place in certain quarters of the globe.

During the meeting between Hassan II and Francois Mitterrand in January 1982, they 'agreed on the need to work together to reconfirm the special and privileged nature of their friendship'. Since that time Franco-Moroccan military co-operation has continued, as well as discussions on

Morocco's role as French imperialism's gendarme in French-speaking Africa. These diplomatic relations take place against the background of the high-level negotiations between Rabat and the Libyan regime in the framework of the project to 'build a Greater Maghreb' and to exchange their good offices on Chad and the Sahara respectively.

For the Moroccan regime the war in the Sahara is the focal point of the situation. It is bogged down in a colonial war which alone eats up almost 50 per cent of the national budget. The Moroccan people are coming to realise more and more that the government policies it has been called upon to accept in the name of this war offer them no hope. The wave of chauvinism generated by the 'green march' — which symbolised the national union for the war of the Western Sahara (8) — could only work in the regime's favour for a limited period. From the time that the real meaning and economic effects of the war became obvious, 'national unity' faded into the background for the masses.

The king responded to this evolution by trying to make a turn on the question of the Sahara. The first trial balloons were sent up in 1980. This new orientation was to sort out the problem as soon as possible and try to come to a political compromise with the Polisario Front. The 'phantom' that the Moroccan regime never wanted to recognise. This desire was all the stronger as Hassan II thought that he could control the military situation in the 'useful triangle' of the Western Sahara, that is where phosphates are produced, and thus impose a referendum with a favourable outcome for him.

But the Polisario Front is not an agent of Algeria or Libya. It has won a certain autonomy, and put the conditions for future negotiations quite high, while continuing its social organisation of the Saharan peoples and continuing its military actions against the Moroccan armed forces.

In these conditions there is little margin for manoeuvre on the road to a solution, and the Moroccan monarchy cannot afford a setback. With a 120,000-strong trained army, which has already tried two coups d'etat, the king has to act with caution. This is all the more the case given the fundamental role the army played in guaranteeing the stability of the state after the last popular revolts. The army is deployed as far as the towns in the north of the country. And the troops from the Saharan front have gone up as far as Sidi Ifni, a town on the Atlantic coast of South Morocco, to re-establish order.

This state of affairs weighs equally heavily in the attitude of the USFP leadership, which has taken for its own the royal speeches about manipulation of the masses by 'Marxist-Leninists', 'Khomeinists' and the 'Zionist secret services'. At the end of January USFP leader Bouabid even declared that 'Leaflets from Ilal Aman [Forward, an organisation claiming to be Marxist-Leninist] and fundamentalists were distributed even before the Islamic summit at Casablanca; and

they were not concerned with the standard of living or unemployment but with the summit itself. By mingling with the demonstrators these groups were trying to give Morocco a negative image and create the worst conditions possible for the summit to take place.'

On the question of the silence of the party and the trade union during the events Bouabid made it quite precise: 'This time, unlike 1981, we told our members not to move. For three reasons. First of all the price rises had not yet been decided. Next, this took place during the Islamic summit. We didn't want to fall into a trap. Finally, there were pro-Polisario elements mixed up in it.' (9)

So, it all comes together. The opposition parties, by being more royalist than the king on the question of the Sahara think that they will be able to benefit in the near future from what they will call a national betrayal if there is a compromise made on this question. (10) In reality they are putting themselves on the terrain least interesting to the masses. What is more, these parties of His Majesty's Opposition have only a relative usefulness for the regime in its attempts to integrate them into the government. While they may be some small use for the regime's institutional game, they are not a great help as a transmission belt for a social pact to get the masses to accept the government's austerity policies. Has this not been demonstrated by the recent social explosions?

The popular masses can today see in practice the effects of the Saharan war on their daily lives and they are not going to turn towards reformist parties that are one hundred per cent in favour of the expansionist policy.

While the workers struggles seem to be essentially weak and defensive, the popular discontent is an explosive reality, which is going, despite the repression, to feed many more revolts. The existence of thousands of militants — students, workers, intellectuals, members of trade-union bodies, student committees or political organizations, whether reformist or revolutionary — who continue to fight for social and democratic demands, is a reality that will also affect the social relationship of forces. ■

8. In the name of national unity in the Saharan war, Hassan II organised a massive people's march in November 1975, the 'Green March', during which hundreds of thousands of Moroccan civilians left for the Western Sahara to express their support for the bellicose policies of Morocco. See *Inprecor* (English edition), No 38, November 20, 1975, 'Beyond the Green March'.

9. *Liberation*, Paris daily, January 31, 1984.

10. There is no doubt that Abderrahim Bouabid is more royalist than the king. In September 1981, while Hassan II was making a tactical turn by accepting the organisation of a referendum in the Western Sahara, the USFP leader put his name to a communique in which he denounced, 'the predisposition of the regime to concede, indeed to abandon, the Saharan provinces'. He was then sentenced to one year and imprisoned for these words. Still today Bouabid seems to want to play the card of the hard-line wing of the army on the question of the Saharan war and the chauvinist reflexes of the masses. But the economic and social effects of this war have now become more pressing realities for the popular masses than they were in 1981.

SUBSCRIBERS !

We are making a special appeal to readers whose subscriptions run out with issues 49 or 50 to renew now. The number in the upper right-hand area of your address label gives the issue number at which your present subscription will run out.

Subscribers due to renew at issue 49 will receive their first reminder with this issue, those due to renew at 50 will not receive a reminder till the next issue. But we are asking you nonetheless to renew now as a large number of subscriptions are due for renewal at that point and we do not have the capacity to cope with hundreds of last minute renewals. Avoid missing an issue, renew now!

Thatcher's new assault on the unions

A new and fundamental assault on the rights of Britain's ten million trade unionists is being launched by the Thatcher government. In 1984 laws will be enacted which aim to radically weaken the traditional ties between the trade unions and the Labour Party. Legislation already introduced by the Tories in their 1979-83 term of office will be used to decimate trade union membership by destroying the 'closed shop' system.

The trade union movement, led by the Trades Union Congress, the single confederation to which the overwhelming majority of unions are affiliated, is in poor shape to resist. In the first serious test of the new trade union legislation last December the printers union, the National Graphical Association, suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of the government. Far from drawing any lessons from the experience, the majority of the union leaderships have now approved a new strategy which aims to compromise with the Tories, moving along the road to American-style 'business unionism'.

However there is an increasing polarisation between the right and left in the trade union bureaucracy as a reaction to this policy of capitulation. At the base of the unions 'Broad Left' currents are winning increasing support for their platforms of union reform and are linking up with the left of the Labour Party.

The coming year will pose major tests for this new left. 1984 could be the year which sees the face of the British labour movement undergo its most fundamental change for fifty years.

Steve ROBERTS

Mass unemployment has been a potent weapon for the Conservative government in their battle with the unions. Even using the official statistics, which understate the true total by over a million, unemployment has risen from 1.2 million in May 1979 when Margaret Thatcher came to power to 3.2 million in December 1983. The level of economic militancy has declined accordingly.

In British Leyland, where the workforce has been reduced by nearly 100,000 and where the number of shop stewards has declined by over 50, the management have managed to jack up productivity from six cars a worker in 1979 to 40 cars a worker in 1983.

However, despite all this, the Tories have not so far managed to crack the fundamental organisational strength of the trade union movement. The proportion of the workforce in trade unions in 1979 stood at 52 per cent. This has declined only marginally to its current level of 49.6 per cent largely due to the continuing influx of new female membership.

Living standards of those in work have risen by seven per cent in the last four years, while hours worked, although still among the highest in Western Europe, have declined from an average 46-hour to a 44-hour working week for a male manual worker.

This latter figure is attributable in part to the effects of the recession rather than victories won in collective bargaining. And the average incomes of families taken as a whole have fallen by two per cent in the last four years. But it is by no means the case that the British working class have suffered any defeat comparable in its effects to the defeat of the General Strike of 1926 — the traditional bench mark for assessing the health or otherwise of the labour movement in Britain.

The Tories aim to inflict precisely this type of defeat on the unions in the period

leading up to the next general election, due in 1988. They have two principal objectives. The first is to radically restrict the right of the unions to organise their own political activities independently of the bourgeois parties through the Labour Party. The second is to reduce trade union membership by anything up to a half of its present figure.

The Tories and employers are using the legal system more and more intensively to achieve their goals. Two Acts of Parliament passed in Thatcher's previous term of office had the effect of:

- removing the right to picket by restricting numbers on each picket to six;
- removing legal immunity for 'secondary' action by unions in cases where either workers in dispute picket other branches, suppliers or customers of their own firm, or where workers take solidarity action in support of other strikers;
- outlawing the closed shop system whereby one has to be a member of a union in order to work in certain workplaces;
- making unions and their leaderships liable for up to £250,000 damages to anyone who can claim to have suffered loss as a result of many different types of trade union activities.

Union-busting bosses

All these facets of Tory policy on the unions were deployed during the dispute between the National Graphical Association (NGA) and the Stockport Messenger group of newspapers. The battle between one of the strongest and richest unions in the Trades Union Congress and a particularly belligerent newspaper employer was rightly seen as a test case in the confrontation between the unions and the government.

The dispute has to be seen against the background of attempts by all the newspaper proprietors to introduce new technology into the industry. The largely successful resistance of the unions to the effects of changes in working practices made the newspaper employers one of the most vociferous sections of the bosses in demanding an end to the closed shop. So when Eddie Shah, a newspaper group owner in the northwest of England, decided to sack six of his employees belonging to the National Graphical Association, the most aggressive sectors of the capitalist class rallied to his side, backing him through the right-wing bosses' organisation, the Institute of Directors.

Shah hired scab labour to replace the sacked workers and mass pickets of up to 4,000 militants battled with police outside the plant. The NGA called on the Trades Union Congress to back them with industrial action in line with previous policy. But both the TUC and Labour Party leadership refused to support the NGA beyond the limits of the law. Both the picketing and solidarity action taken by the NGA during the dispute were outside the terms of the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts. Any effective

YEAR	NO. OF STRIKE DAYS LOST (IN MILLIONS)
1979	29.5
1980	12.0
1981	4.3
1982	5.3
1983	3.6

The level of trade union membership has dropped from its high point of 12.2 million in 1979 to below 10 million today. But the effect at the rank and file level has been even more radical. The number of shop stewards (trade union representatives elected in the workplace by section) has declined from 130,000 to 80,000 in the manufacturing sector over the same period. Among those, the number of shop stewards who work full time in their union activities has fallen from 4,000 to 2,000.

action by the NGA in its own defence was ruled out by the terms of support dictated by the Labour and TUC leaders. The NGA caved in and the government claimed a famous victory.

The second front on which the government has attacked union organisation in recent months has been the right to strike in the so-called 'essential services'. The unlikely arena for the government to begin its attacks on the public sector unions in the health service, the fire brigades, the power stations and elsewhere was the secret communications centre in Cheltenham. The 7,000 staff at the centre are to be banned from trade union membership 'in the interests of national security'. The workers are to be offered £1,000 as an inducement to give up their rights. Those who do not accept are to be transferred to other government offices or sacked.

The TUC leaders correctly saw this move as having more general implications for public sector trade unionists. Following the announcement thousands of other civil service staff went on strike to protest against the government's decision. However, without taking any further action and despite government confusion on the issue, the TUC leaders offered the government a 'no strike' clause in return for the right of union organisation. Given that such a clause is exactly what the government is looking for elsewhere in the public sector, the TUC's attempted compromise, like their betrayal of the NGA, is a major blow.

New Tory laws

The public sector unions are sure to be in the front line of the government's attacks. In the health service, for example, independent trade unionism is under attack with the growth of Joint Consultative Committees with management which militate against independent trade unionism. In addition the widespread 'privatisation' of public services which contract out to private capital, either in part or whole, services previously supplied by the state has as one of its principal objectives the destruction of union organisation in the public sector.

However, it is the very structure of the labour movement that the Tories mean to change with their next round of trade union legislation.

Legislation currently before Parliament would:

- demand ballots within the unions to ensure that union executives should be directly elected by their members at least once every five years;
- make industrial action called by the union without a secret ballot of the members involved subject to legal action by employers;
- require union members once every 10 years to ballot on whether they can have a 'political fund' which allows them to contribute to the Labour Party.

Given the undemocratic structure of many of Britain's trade unions, the Tories feel that they command widespread sup-



Mobilisation against Tebbit's anti-union law (DR)

port for the first of these two clauses. But their overall effect will be to allow the state to intervene at will into the internal functioning of the unions with demands of secret ballots and court actions taken by individual union members who claim irregularities in the functioning of the unions.

But it is the clause relating to the Labour Party which will have the most far-reaching effects. The Labour Party was established by the unions in order to carry out the fight to defend living standards at the political level. From the very beginning the orientation of the Party has been controlled by the union leadership, checked only by the tendency of the Parliamentary Labour Party (consisting of the party's MPs) to be responsible to the state apparatus.

Given that 77 per cent of the party's funds comes from the unions, a significant reduction of that amount would force the Labour Party to turn to state funding, which would be used to establish an even greater autonomy of the Parliamentary Labour Party from any form of labour movement control.

The attitude of the TUC to these attacks has undergone a major change in the four years of Thatcher's rule. When the government's intentions were first announced the TUC adopted policy to oppose them, up to and including industrial action to support unions who ran foul of the laws. The TUC also refused to have any discussions with the government on the question of laws restricting trade union rights arguing, rightly, that any such collaboration would give the legislation legitimacy.

The first major change in this policy occurred at the TUC Congress which took place in September 1983. The Congress was the first opportunity for the labour movement to assess the results of the June general election where the Tories won a massive 144-seat parliamentary majority on a reduced share of the vote, thanks largely to the large number of votes won by the Social Democratic Party/Liberal Alliance which finished only 2 per cent behind the Labour Party. (See *International Viewpoint*, No 33, June 27, 1983.)

Coalitionist strategy

At the Congress, instead of accepting the policy urged by the miners' leader Arthur Scargill of the necessity of extra-parliamentary action to confront the Tories massive majority, the delegates voted for a major step to the right. On the advice of Len Murray, the TUC general secretary, the Congress voted to meet the government to discuss the proposals for trade union reform.

Murray went on to talk of the need to discuss with 'any political party which has a chance of forming a government in the future.' This was a clear endorsement of proposals made by the right-wing leaders that the trade unions should break their political strategy of exclusively pursuing their political goals through the Labour Party and instead also have a relationship with the candidates of bourgeois parties, particularly those of the Alliance.

This political line of coalitionism has a long and dishonourable tradition in the

British labour movement. Before the founding of the Labour Party in the shape of the Labour Representation Group in 1900, the trade unions pursued a policy of backing the Liberal Party. Even after this date many trade unions continued to back both Labour and Liberal candidates.

Even at the 1983 Congress almost one-third of the TUC was not affiliated to the Labour Party. Five major unions have a majority of their members opting out of the political levy for the Party and recent opinion polls show that other major unions like the Transport and General Workers Union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, the General and Municipal Workers Union, the electricians' union, the shopworkers' union and the National Union of Railwaymen would also disaffiliate if ballots of the membership were held. Among the major unions polled, only the National Union of Mine-workers and the National Union of Public Employees would have supported continued affiliation to the Labour Party.

When the government's proposed legislation is passed it will compel the affiliated unions to hold 'mini-general elections' in the form of ballots to decide whether Labour Party affiliation is to be continued. Obviously, given the decline of commitment to Labour within the unions (the 1983 general election saw, for the first time, a majority of trade unionists vote against Labour), a major campaign will be needed to reverse the trends evidenced above.

However, the present leadership of the TUC are not prepared to lead such a campaign. In response to calls by Frank Chapple of the electricians union and other right wing leaders for wholesale changes in the trade union movement to 'blunt the attacks made on us...and strengthen our appeal in the final part of the twentieth century' general secretary Murray produced a document entitled *Strategy for the Future*.

Approved by the January general council of the TUC, the paper calls for collaboration with governments and parties of all political colours, polemicises against the use of strike action and implies strongly that the unions should again advocate an incomes policy.

General Council acceptance of the plan was unsurprising since the TUC leadership had moved radically to the right at the 1983 Congress. While this shift was partly due to constitutional changes which diminished the weight of smaller and traditionally more militant unions, it also reflected a growing shift to the right amongst the major unions.

Even in the mine-workers union the recent election for general secretary produced a wafer-thin majority for the candidate of the left. Another close result is predicted for the result of the upcoming election for the general secretary of the million-strong Transport and General Workers Union, the traditional bastion of the left-centre within the labour movement.

Polarisation in unions

Another vitally important union to swing to the right in the last decade was the AUEW, the metal workers union, once a motor force of the left under Hugh Scanlon at the beginning of the 1970s, now a major force of the right under Terry Duffy.

With the exception of Arthur Scargill, the reaction of the left bureaucracy to the trend to the right has been at best acquiescence and at worst active collaboration in such major betrayals as that of the train drivers and healthworkers strikes in 1982.

But the NGA dispute produced a polarisation within the general council of the TUC. The left strongly opposed the overturning of TUC policy by Len Murray and called a separate meeting to discuss how to support the printers union in the dispute. The meeting produced nothing, partly due to the defeatist attitude of the NGA leadership. However, the division revealed major tensions within the union movement and the potential for the left to organise itself in opposition to the trend towards apolitical 'business unionism'.

The forces that could fight for the organisation of a new Minority Movement (1) in British trade unions certainly exist among the rank and file leadership. Their most obvious expression has been through the growth of new 'Broad Left'

formations in a certain number of unions. These Broad Lefts have emerged most strikingly in the telecommunications engineers union, the civil servants union and other white-collar unions, the electricians' union and one has been recently founded in the Transport and General Workers Union.

Such formations have existed before in the unions, most notably in the AUEW. However, previously they have served as a mechanism for the British Communist Party to cement their alliance with the left trade union bureaucracy and most degenerated in the downturn of the latter part of the 1970s into networks of middle-layer bureaucrats.

While these features are not absent from the make-up of the new Broad Lefts, the dead hand of the Communist Party does not exercise decisive control over them. This reflects the decline of both the numerical and industrial strength of the CP. In the last 15 years the membership of the party has declined from 28,000 to 15,000. From 1967-73, through the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, the CP was able to call conferences of thousands of rank and file delegates from workplaces and even, on occasion, to call unofficial industrial action.

The impetus for the growth of the new Broad Lefts has not come from the CP therefore, but from the impact of the rise of the Bennite left inside the Labour Party. The Bennite current set out in 1980 to reform the Labour Party in such a way that there could be no recurrence of the disastrous experience of the Wilson and Callaghan governments of 1974-79.

Their platform consisted of direct election of the leader by the party instead of by Labour MPs, reselection of MPs by the local branches of the Party and the drawing up of the election manifesto by the party's national executive on the basis of conference policy rather than by the parliamentary leadership.

While the reform programme succeeded in the first two of its objectives, the struggle for leadership of the Party by its author Tony Benn, foundered on the rock of the block vote exercised by the unions in the Labour Party conference. The block vote, which entitles the unions to six million votes in the Labour Party conference as opposed to the 600,000 exercised by the local parties, gives the union bureaucrats an effective veto to left advance.

A section of the Bennite left, therefore, turned its attentions to the problem of how to overcome this veto and to take on the right-wing leadership of the unions in an analogous way to that of the Labour Party leadership.

However, as is traditional with British left social democracy, the Bennite cur-

1. The Minority Movement was founded in 1924 through an initiative of the British Communist Party guided by the Comintern. At its height it represented over a million industrial workers. It declined after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike and was wound-up in the 1930s.

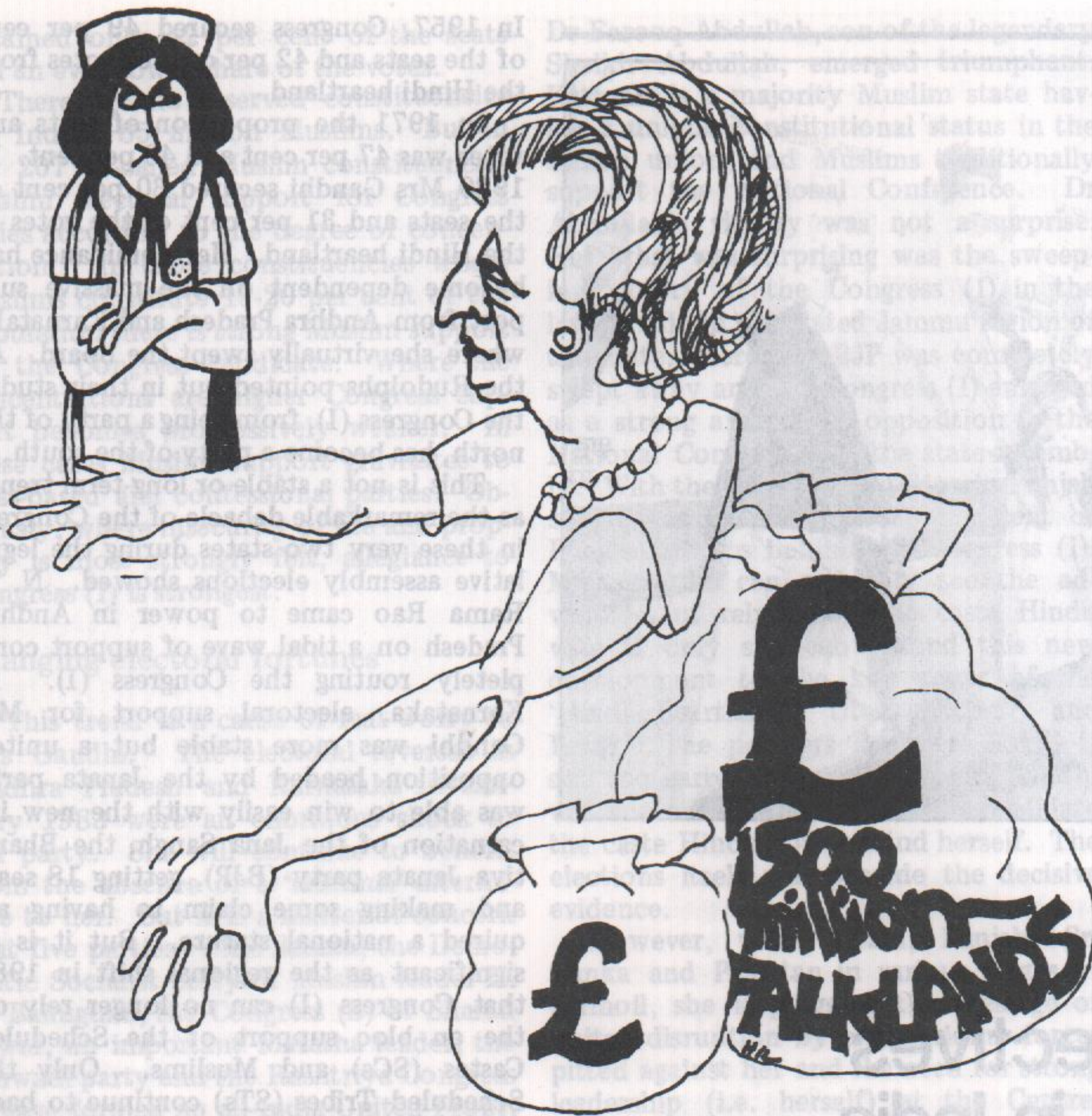
Trades Union Congress debates 35-hour week

The Trades Union Congress held a national conference in London on 3 February to discuss how to achieve the 35-hour week. The main guest at the conference was Ernst Breit, secretary of the West German DGB trade union federation.

Len Murray, TUC general secretary called on the British trade unions to accept 'solidarity contracts' of the type that now cover 100,000 workers in France and 30,000 workers in Belgium. Murray rejected a pay cut to get shorter hours but said: 'There is a trade-off here. It is a trade-off between incomes and jobs...workers choosing between pay increases alone or smaller pay increases with shorter hours.'

Opposition to this policy came both from Breit and Arthur Scargill, the miner's leader. Breit, whose metalworker members are currently launching a struggle for the 35-hour week, called for no loss of pay and for 'social control' to curb technological unemployment.

Scargill said, 'I do not believe that we should refrain from pressing for pay increases in return for a cut in the working week.' He went on to call for a general ban on overtime to cut the dole queue. This reflects the current action of Britain's miners who are fighting pit closures through an overtime ban.



rent was not organised efficiently at the base of the unions. The one figure who could have given such a movement national leadership, Scargill, was focusing his efforts exclusively on the miners union.

The major new force that benefited from this Bennite impulse was Militant, a centrist tendency within the Labour Party, whose number of supporters now probably stands at 4,500. However ironically for a Labour Party tendency, the Militant has not sought to direct the new Broad Left forces towards active engagement within the Labour Party and instead has concentrated on getting its supporters elected to high-ranking positions within the trade union movement. While its gains in this respect have been impressive, the growing rightward drift of the Militant's politics in general (they refused to call for the recall of the British task-force from the Malvinas) and their economic practice inside the unions, has meant that they have been unable to offer a distinct line from that of the Communist Party — still the major force on the trade union left.

Left alternatives

The decline of the Socialist Workers Party, the 1,500-strong organisation led by Tony Cliff, in the trade unions also diminished the possibilities of the left alternative being built. The SWP diagnosis of a downturn in the class struggle while based in a reality led them to a sectarian and abstentionist policy towards the battle in the unions. While they closed down their frontist 'rank and file'

organisations, they declared their indifference to the outcome of the left/right fight inside the Labour Party and concentrated their fire on 'exposing' Scargill, Benn and Livingstone.

The SWP analysis that nothing could be built at a national level also meant a de facto boycott of the Broad Lefts. Instead they concentrated on rebuilding basic trade unionism in the workplace. Their ultra-left attitude towards the Labour Party led their militants to oppose affiliation to the Labour Party in such unions as the local government officers which balloted on the issue. This orientation has meant that many of the numerous shop stewards who joined the organisation in the 1970s have now left, some of them taking the SWP's advice at face value and devoting themselves exclusively to trade union work, others drifting out of activity altogether.

Supporters of *Socialist Action* have been a significant component of Broad Lefts in some of the unions. Their general strategy was spelled out by Pat Hickey, the paper's industrial correspondent, in the 6 January issue of the paper.

'What the defence of the trade union movement now depends on is the effective organisation of the left wing within it. Furthermore that left — those forces which really fight for independence and Labour-affiliated trade unionism — has to be organised at every level.

'Attacks such as that on affiliation to the Labour Party, or on the closed shop, cannot just be fought on the local level — although the struggle starts there. It demands national organisation of those prepared to defend an independent Labour-affiliated trade union movement

and basing that on local organisation at every level.

'This perspective for reversing the whole right-wing trend inside the unions is today a minority one within the trade unions — there is no doubt of that. But the right wing can only be defeated if that minority is organised to lead the fight back against the Tories at every level.

'It needs a quite different type of organisation to that which the left trade union leaders have relied on. Arthur Scargill and others have opposed the right wing mainly on the committees in the TUC or their own particular sectors. They have not challenged the right wing across the trade union movement as a whole...

'There is no point in waiting for an initiative to come from the top. The left on the TUC has talked much of its opposition to Thatcher and to the present line of the general council. *Action* has come much less often.

'In order to win the ballots on affiliation to the Labour Party and on closed shop organisation, locally and in each union preparation has to start now.

'Each constituency Labour Party needs to establish a campaign to win the ballot on affiliation to the Labour Party locally. Every trade union branch, every Broad Left needs to campaign to win the vote on affiliation and the closed shop. Coupled with support for every individual struggle which takes place, these are the single most important issues facing the trade union and labour movement in 1984.'

The fact that the basic organisation of the British working class remains intact means that the Tory offensive will be met by major struggles in the next period. However, given the predominance of the right wing within the leadership of the trade union movement and the possible loss of jobs involved for those who do fight, many workers will be cautious before taking on the employers and government. That caution will be reinforced by the debacle of the NGA dispute.

A dual process is needed to combat this pessimism. Firstly a national lead, however inadequate, has to be given. Secondly those militants who have drawn the lessons of the succession of defeats suffered by the labour movement at the hands of the Tories need to be organised, as a minority, to struggle for the leadership at every level. It is within such a current, in action, that workers will begin to draw revolutionary socialist conclusions and decide on the necessity to break with all varieties of reformism.

Neither are such hopes utopian. Plans are afoot for Benn and Scargill to launch a joint newspaper which will ally the left in the unions and the left in the Labour Party in a much more durable way than heretofore. The ability of revolutionary Marxists to project a line of march within the forces attracted by such focii will be an important factor both in influencing the struggles and the face of the left in the years to come. ■



The perspectives for the left in India

The general elections scheduled for the end of the year in 'the world's largest democracy' provide a focus for a whole series of deepening problems of what is in fact the world's biggest neocolonial state.

This second of a two-part series on India in the year of general elections deals with such questions as Indira Gandhi's chances for maintaining a strong regime, the role of the regionalist parties, religious and communalist questions. It also goes in some detail into the recent development of the Indian labor movement and the left.

The article, moreover, deals with trends in Indian foreign policy, in particular toward Pakistan and the opposition movements there.

M. NAVID

Mrs. Gandhi won a landslide victory in the 1980 elections — over two-thirds of the Lok Sabha seats with 42.5 per cent of the votes. She proved once again that she was the only truly 'national' personality who could appeal to a sufficiently wide cross-section of the Indian people. But her massive victory could not disguise the growing volatility of voting behavior and the weakening hold of the Congress (I) on the core minorities, or the fact that if the non-Congress vote had not been broken up, Mrs Gandhi would have lost heavily. (1)

The long period of Congress electoral dominance has been based on its support in the Hindi heartland of India — the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachel Pradesh and Haryana. This heartland has 42 per cent of all parliamentary seats in the Lok Sabha and 38 per cent of the electorate. It is a region with a common language,

cultural parochialism and high levels of economic and social backwardness.

South of the Vindhya mountains, India has relatively higher living standards and Dravidian-based languages. The upper south (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) have generally favoured national parties. The lower south (Kerala and Tamil Nadu) have generally favoured regional parties and coalitions.

The Nehru Congress relied on gaining a disproportionate share of the votes and seats in the Hindi heartland. Crucial to this strategy was the en bloc support of the core minorities for whom this 'national party' was the one source of justice and protection in an environment where they could not expect justice at the state or district level let alone at the sub-district or village level.

Since the 1967 general elections there has been a marked trend of deteriorating support for the Congress in its various national incarnations, which the 1971 and 1980 elections do not fully reverse.

In 1957, Congress secured 49 per cent of the seats and 42 per cent of votes from the Hindi heartland.

In 1971 the proportion of seats and votes was 47 per cent and 40 per cent. In 1980 Mrs Gandhi secured 30 per cent of the seats and 31 per cent of the votes in the Hindi heartland. Her dominance had become dependent on the massive support from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where she virtually swept the board. As the Rudolphs pointed out in their study, the Congress (I), from being a party of the north, has become a party of the south.

This is not a stable or long-term trend, as the remarkable debacle of the Congress in these very two states during the legislative assembly elections showed. N. T. Rama Rao came to power in Andhra Pradesh on a tidal wave of support completely routing the Congress (I). In Karnataka, electoral support for Mrs Gandhi was more stable but a united opposition headed by the Janata party was able to win easily with the new incarnation of the Jana Sangh, the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), getting 18 seats and making some claim to having acquired a national stature. But it is as significant as the regional shift in 1980 that Congress (I) can no longer rely on the en bloc support of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Muslims. Only the Scheduled Tribes (STs) continue to back Mrs Gandhi in their overwhelming numbers.

The constitutional rejection of separate electorates for these minorities in favour of a system of reservation and joint electorate representation for SCs and STs has meant that these communities could not emerge as independent political forces of any real strength.

The SCs, unlike the Muslims, are less heavily concentrated, rarely forming a majority even of the reserved constituencies. They have generally required the support of the majority community. The role played by parties like the different factions of the Republican Party of India (RPI) which are based solely on the SCs in Maharashtra is that of brokers on the level of state politics. They will link up in the appropriate alliances depending on the favours received. Although they are helping to break up the bloc of SC votes otherwise going to Congress (I) they are not an alternative to it at the national level or at Lok Sabha elections.

The 1980 election results revealed that in Uttar Pradesh which has the most SCs of any state, the Janata and the Lok Dal got a high percentage of votes in the SC constituencies. Admittedly the Congress (I) won 61 per cent of all SC votes in the reserved constituencies but a breakdown of this is much more revealing of the true state of affairs. In five states of the Hindi heartland having 49 per cent of all SC reserved seats, the Congress (I)

1. The best electoral analysis, to which much of this is indebted, is "Transformation of Congress Party: Why 1980 Was Not a Restoration", *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 2, 1981.

obtained only 42 per cent of the seats and an even lower share of the votes.

There are no reserved constituencies for India's 85 million Muslims. But in the 207 so-called Muslim constituencies Muslim electoral support for Congress varies according to the degree of concentration. In those constituencies where Muslims constitute 10-20 per cent of the population there is strong Muslim support for the Congress candidate. Where the concentrations are higher Congress support becomes progressively weaker. In these cases Muslim support gravitates to class-based and confessional parties. Obviously, where insecurity of life and property is most strongly felt, allegiance to Congress (I) is strongest.

Changing electoral fortunes

This trend is a cause of real worry to Mrs Gandhi. The electoral reverses in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in January 1983 were an enormous shock to her party. She will continue to benefit from the absence of a 'national' alternative to her. But it is a matter of concern that five parties — the Janata, the Democratic Socialist party of Muslim leader H. N. Bahuguna, the Congress (S) of Sharad Pawar, an important Maratha leader, the Janwadi party and the Rashtriya Congress — have formed an all-India United Front, though the unity is very fragile and liable to irreconcilable disruption.

Even more threatening though, is the Lok Dal-BJP electoral alliance under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). These two parties, having as they do, a social base in the emerging 'intermediate' castes will be the biggest threat and competitors to Mrs Gandhi in the Hindi heartland. All the more so as there are now signs of a possible shift in her basic electoral strategy from reliance on the core minorities to wooing the Hindu caste vote. A combination of favourable circumstances and conscious effort by her have suddenly made this look like a viable strategy. Given her declining support in the core minorities, she has had to try and develop new constituencies.

The Delhi municipal and metropolitan council elections in February 1983 were the first indication of a new stirring in the wind. Delhi, a Union territory with a very high proportion of urban traders and petty bourgeoisie, has traditionally been a stronghold of the Jana Sangh/BJP who were widely expected to win. Instead they suffered a serious and surprising defeat at the hands of the Congress (I) although just a month before, Mrs Gandhi had been dramatically defeated in the south. Sikhs in the capital by and large disregarded the call of the Akali party spearheading the Sikh agitation in Punjab to vote against the Congress (I). But the main reason for this remarkable victory was a sizeable shift of petty bourgeois caste Hindu votes from the Jana Sangh/BJP to the Congress (I).

In the Kashmir assembly elections that followed, the National Conference led by

Dr Farooq Abdullah, son of the legendary Sheikh Abdullah, emerged triumphant. Kashmir is a majority Muslim state having a unique constitutional status in the Indian union, and Muslims traditionally support the National Conference. Dr Abdullah's victory was not a surprise. But what was surprising was the sweeping victory of the Congress (I) in the largely Hindu populated Jammu region of the state. Here, the BJP was completely swept away and the Congress (I) emerged as a strong and united opposition to the National Conference in the state assembly. With the Akali-led agitation in Punjab sure to consolidate the 48 per cent of Punjabi Hindus behind the Congress (I), Mrs Gandhi can suddenly see the advantages of relying on the caste Hindu vote if only she can extend this new development to the key states of the 'Hindi heartland', Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The pointers are there but it is still too early to say whether Mrs Gandhi will succeed in the effort to consolidate the caste Hindu vote behind herself. The elections itself will provide the decisive evidence.

However, with Assam, Punjab, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in various stages of turmoil, she is plugging the message of unity, disruption by anti-national forces pitted against her and the need for strong leadership (i.e. herself) at the Centre.

This was the theme of the AICC (I), the All-India Congress Committee (Indira), meeting in Bombay in October 1983. On one hand it was a preparation for coming elections with the basic themes for a future manifesto aired in front of the party collective. On the other it was a carefully orchestrated effort to promote the stature of Rajiv Gandhi as the future successor to the mantle of Mrs Gandhi.

When are the elections likely to be held? Mrs Gandhi has publicly stated that elections ahead of schedule can be ruled out. But this is not necessarily the last word. Indeed, recent populist measures like the nationalisation of 13

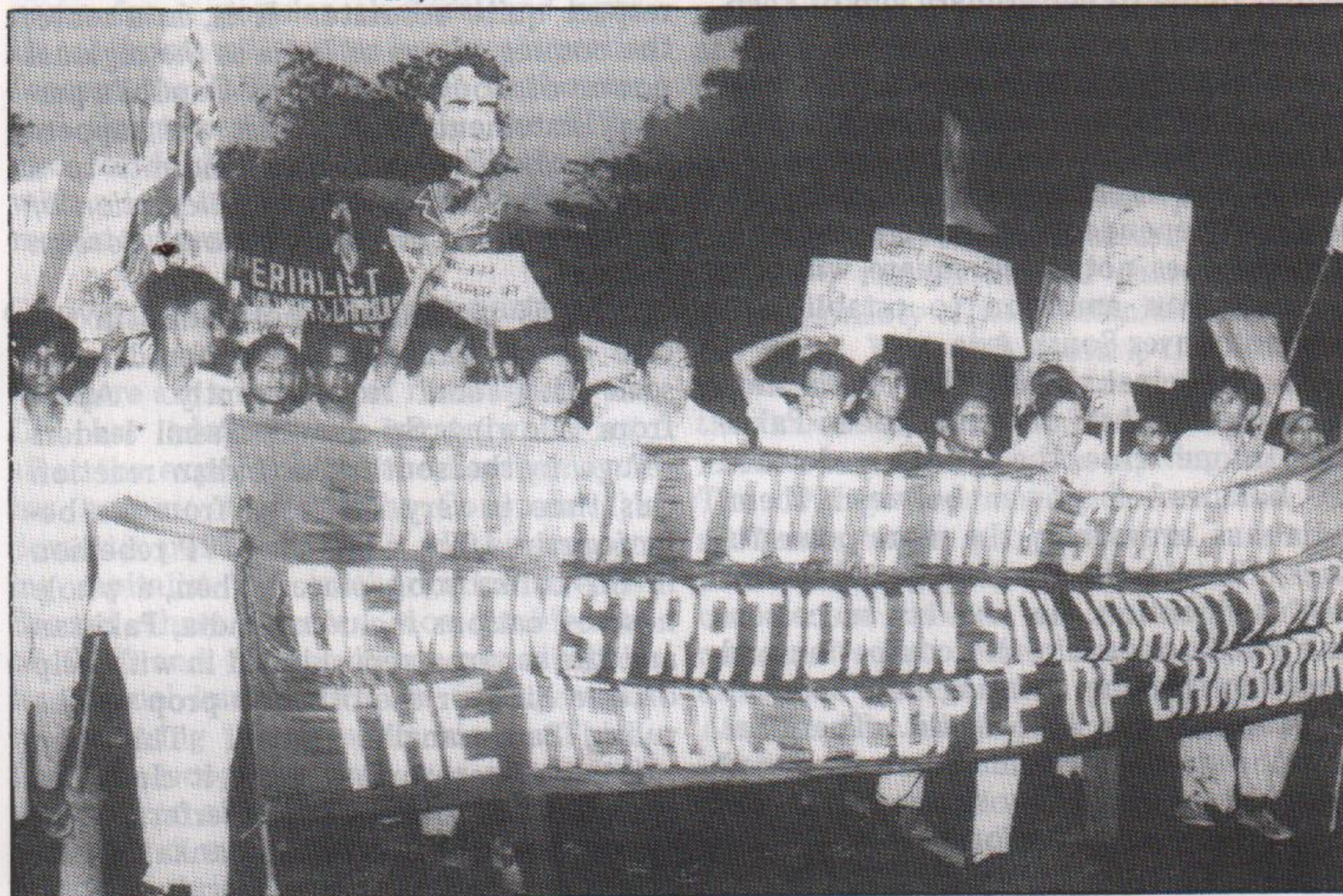
ailing textile mills to save 45,000 jobs, the declaration of a one-off bonus to central government employees, which will cost the exchequer roughly 20,000 million rupees, raising the minimum wage in 29 sectors of the economy (implementation is, of course, an altogether different issue) suggest the opposite. But the timing of the elections is not the central or crucial issue. To win them, whenever they may be held, Mrs Gandhi needs one of the states in the upper south, either Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh. The stock of the Congress (I) in Karnataka is low and sinking lower after the latest revelations of utterly blatant Congress (I) attempts to buy over opposition legislators.

Probable national victory

In Andhra Pradesh the chances appear brighter. The popularity of the Telegu Desam party of chief minister N. T. Rama Rao is falling after his failure to meet pre-election promises, his ham-handed treatment of the grievances of government employees and his tolerance of nepotism and corruption. The Congress is far from replacing him, however. But overall the circumstances may be increasingly propitious for an accommodation of sorts between Telegu Desam and the Congress (I). The Congress (I) victory in the Peddappaly by-election (November 1983) which was previously held by Telegu Desam is a significant pointer.

It would probably be along the lines of of, say, half the Lok Sabha seats in the state to be given to Congress candidates in a joint electoral campaign, in return for which the Telegu Desam can reign supreme in the legislative assembly, and can have the solid financial support of the Centre, always an important carrot for all state governments. In Tamil Nadu the Congress (I) should be able to secure an effective electoral arrangement with the ruling AIADMK, headed by chief minister M. G. Ramachandran.

Left students demonstrate their solidarity with Cambodian people (DR)



The timing of the elections may make a difference to the margin of Mrs Gandhi's victory but the most probable outcome of the coming elections is her victory once again. She will not get the two thirds majority of 1980. She may even be denied an absolute majority by a small margin, requiring a coalition with one or two small regional parties, but when all is said and done she remains the only 'national' leader capable of getting a cross section of votes from all stratas and classes in India society. Once again it would be a victory because of the absence of any other national alternative. Once again it would be a victory for her rather than her party. But it will in no way halt the erosion of the Congress (I) or resolve the crisis of bourgeois political leadership.

Indeed, the elections could be a decisive pointer to the future. If the decline in Congress (I) popularity is particularly steep, then the possible emergence of the 'Italian syndrome' of changing coalition governments at the Centre, which was much talked about in the months preceding the 1980 elections, will once again become a feature of political debate. Alternatively, a good showing by one of the opposition groupings, e.g. the NDA, will give rise to hopes of another 'national' alternative emerging. In brief, the 'crisis' will have become more acute.

Bid for Indian hegemony

Indian foreign policy has been strongly determined by its relationship with two countries — China and Pakistan. Ever since the Bangladesh war of 1971 and victory against Pakistan, the driving ambition of the Indian state has been to dominate South Asia and to be acknowledged as the dominant power of this region. Mrs Gandhi has been the most relentless and astute spokesperson for this cause. The chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) fell to India during her premiership. She has sought to utilise this status to enhance her prestige at home and internationally. But it plays a second fiddle to her primary aim of keeping the South Asian region free of 'super-power hegemony' i.e. keeping it free for Indian domination. Indeed, leadership of the NAM with its declared principles of mutual non-interference and equality between independent, sovereign member nations, does not at all square with the covert Indian ambition to establish its hegemony over South Asia.

The principal rival to the Indian state in South Asia has, of course, been Pakistan. In one sense, the 1971 war decided the balance of power between them. India was irrevocably the more powerful force. But despite Bhutto's genuflections in this direction, he and his successors have tried to sustain the competition and rivalry by forging a strong link between Pakistan and the Arab world. There has been the so-called Islamic bomb produced by Pakistan, funded by some of the Arab regimes, presumably for their own use as well. With the United States of Amer-

ica continuing to regard Pakistan as a 'strategic ally' in the region (especially after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), and the indications of a strong link between China and Pakistan (there is strong evidence of the former giving crucial help to the latter in making the nuclear bomb), the Indian government is distinctly unhappy about Pakistani temerity.

Within the Indian foreign policy establishment, there have long been two camps so to speak. One has favoured the break-up of Pakistan. The other has feared that such a break-up, especially if it resulted in the creation of radical regimes e.g. in Baluchistan. This would constitute a greater danger than a united Pakistan, albeit one hostile to New Delhi, but in time capable of acknowledging the realities of power on the ground and thus moving towards greater accommodation with the Indian state. Events have, in a sense outstripped this perspective. After the recent outbreak of mass resistance against the Zia regime, in the Sind province of Pakistan, it is clear that the eventual break-up of Pakistan can only be a matter of time, even if there were to be an interregnum of PPP (the Pakistan People's Party of former premier Bhutto, now led by his wife and daughter) rule. This fact may or may not have yet crystallized in the thinking of the Indian foreign ministry, but Mrs Gandhi (really her own foreign policy maker) has been determined to draw what advantages she can from the turmoil in Pakistan. India's relative stability contrasts favourably with events across its northwestern border, and the lesson of this cannot be altogether lost on the US.

There is a common thread that unites Indian reaction to both the turmoil in Sri Lanka and in Pakistan. Forsaking the supposed role befitting an ordinary member of the NAM, let alone its head, the Indian government has made pronouncements which are examples of deliberate interference in the 'internal affairs' of the two countries. The angry rebukes of both President Jayawardene of Sri Lanka and President Zia of Pakistan are in this respect quite accurate. It is, in a sense, the coming of age of India as the regional power of South Asia. Mrs Gandhi's partisan statements about what was happening in the two countries amounts to a much more *self-conscious articulation of a much more assertive regional foreign policy.*

This is particularly noticeable in the case of Sri Lanka which suffered large-scale anti-Tamil riots recently. Apart from allowing Sri Lanka Tamil leaders refuge in the south, the Indian reaction this time is very different from its behaviour in 1971 when the JVP rebellion in Sri Lanka took place. Then, a whole host of nations including India, Pakistan and the superpowers chipped in with help of one kind or the other to prop up the ruling Bandaranaike regime. This time the Indian government made it clear that it would not tolerate any interference by an outside country in Sri Lanka affairs. New Delhi reacted very sharply and in

unequivocally hostile terms to reports that President Jayawardene was seeking western help, including the possibility of using British troops to keep control over the deteriorating law and order situation. This was not merely a matter of Indian sympathy for the plight of the Sri Lanka Tamils. Previous Indian behaviour, in particular the infamous Shastri-Shrimavo pact of 1964, are evidence enough of basic Indian callousness in this respect. Though domestic considerations about the negative impact of Congress (I) popularity in the state of Tamil Nadu if Mrs Gandhi failed to adopt a forthright stand were important, the main reason for Indian intransigence was the conviction that it had to be seen to be involved in resolving the Sri Lanka crisis if its present credibility and future authority as the region's premier power was not to be jeopardised.

With respect to China and the superpowers, optimism early on in Mrs Gandhi's term has given way to more sober attitudes and appraisals of the possibilities of an improvement in mutual relations. In late 1981 she refused, despite strong Soviet pressure, to go to the USSR on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty first signed prior to the outbreak of the Bangladesh war in December 1971. By the beginning of 1982 it was clear that Mrs Gandhi was preparing to take an important initiative to improve her relations with the US.

Relations with US, USSR

The essential contours of Indian foreign policy were established in the late 1950s. There is a conscious tilt towards the USSR for political-security reasons (the Sino-Indian war of 1962 when India sought western help being the only exception). There is a growing interest in improving its economic relationship with the west. The Soviet tilt was necessary because of its diplomatic support for the Indian stand on the Kashmir question; the fact that Pakistan was generally the preferred ally of the US (India was too large and powerful a country to accept the kind of status that the US would demand in a Third World ally); and until at least the late 1960s Soviet economic aid was vital for building up the public sector.

After the establishment of this industrial infrastructure, the decisive defeat of Pakistan in 1971 following two indecisive earlier Indo-Pakistan wars, the pre-conditions for a limited turn towards the US on the part of the Indian state was established. This tendency could only be strengthened by the pattern of capitalist economic development in the country, the greater need for advanced western technology and by the fact that the Russian invasion of Afghanistan had brought the Soviets uncomfortably nearer the borders of what the Indian state would like to consider its own 'sphere of influence'. With the USSR carrying on with its own overtures towards China and Pakistan, Mrs Gandhi has also felt



Trade unionists on the march (DR)

the need to somewhat broaden her own options.

But despite the great fanfare with which Mrs Gandhi's 1982 visit to America was received, the concrete result of that initiative has been extremely limited, no momentum of the kind Mrs Gandhi was seeking was sustained. The basic reason for this is the American preoccupation with Pakistan as a front-line state against Soviet-occupied Afghanistan and as a potential ally in the Gulf, and therefore the need to militarily (via heavy armament sales) and politically prop up General Zia. Though it is possible to have a qualitative improvement in US-Indian ties, it would have to be preceded by a shift in Washington from 'strategic' and multilateral preoccupations towards greater emphasis on the 'bilateral' advantages of its link with India.

India's relations with China have improved perceptibly but they do not amount to a significant thaw. The unresolved border dispute is the major reason, especially since the Chinese are now less prone than the Americans to underestimate the degree of Indian independence from the USSR. China has proposed a 'package deal' whereby mutual claims are resolved on the basis of the line of actual control. The Indians have suggested a sector-by-sector approach which the Chinese have now come close to accepting. Time is the most significant factor for what is most important: from the Indian point of view, the creation of a climate of opinion whereby concessions of territory once-claimed as Indian to the Chinese will not be seen by domestic opinion as a betrayal. Without such concessions there can be no resolution of the border question. In the meantime both sides are emphasising the need to improve other aspects (cultural exchanges, trade, etc.) of bilateral relations and to keep the momentum of border talks going.

The mass reformist parties of the left, the Communist Party of India (CPI)

and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) are, in their separate ways, stuck in the ghetto. The CPI is a party on the wane. Its electoral support is scattered. Its influence through party-controlled unions on the urban workforce is declining. Its trade union federation, the All-India Trade Union Congress, no longer dominates the Bombay textile workforce. The party has already split between the pro-Dangeites (S. Dange was a former politburo member and the CPI's most prominent trade union leader) who favour a close alliance with Mrs Gandhi and have formed a separate rump organisation, the AICP (All-India Communist party) and the parent body, the CPI. But even within the parent body there is a serious cleavage between those who would like to pursue the formation of an 'anti-imperialist patriotic front' i.e. an alliance with Mrs Gandhi's Congress (I) against 'communal forces' i.e. the BJP, and those who accept the official policy of a 'left and democratic front', the code name for a popular electoral and agitational front with other bourgeois parties (except the BJP) against the 'authoritarian' Congress (I). Officially, the CPI is also for forging closer ties with the CPM with a long-term view of uniting the communist movement.

Convergence of reformist parties

There are a number of reasons why the CPI has adopted this strategy. First, after the experience of the Emergency it has become wary of the Congress (I)'s domestic policies which it sees as promoting capitalist and 'authoritarian' trends. Second, there is now almost an identity of CPM and CPI positions regarding international issues, with the CPM generally endorsing the Moscow view. Third, the CPI recognises that it is now much the weaker of the two main communist parties and where else is it to go if it is to extend its influence?

But for the same reason, the detractors of the official CPI policy are opposed to too close an identification or co-operation with the CPM which it fears would easily dominate it if now swallow it altogether. Furthermore since no section of either of the two communist parties disagrees with the basic thrust of Mrs Gandhi's foreign policy which they and Moscow assess as basically 'progressive', these CPI dissidents believe that the emphasis must be on maintaining a strong centre against 'anti-national' forces whether external or internal. In the case of the Assam and Punjab agitation the CPI and CPM do not have fundamental differences with Mrs Gandhi's stands. Thus, with some help from Moscow, the CPI dissidents would like to push the party away from the CPM towards the Congress (I) and away from the 'left and democratic' front and the CPM.

Their position has of late deteriorated, largely as a result of the Yogendra Sharma affair. Sharma was expelled from the CPI politburo and removed from the editorship of two party publications after it was discovered that he had acted as a courier for Mrs Gandhi to Moscow. The Indian prime minister had asked Sharma to carry a personal letter to the Soviet chief, Yuri Andropov, in which she implicitly asked Moscow to use its influence with the Indian left to get it to support her rather than join hands with what she described as a rightist onslaught. It was extraordinary that both Mrs Gandhi and Sharma should behave in the manner they did. Even the supporters of the pro-Mrs Gandhi-Sharma line in the CPI had to disassociate themselves from the affair, which the leader of the CPI, Rajeshwar Rao skillfully used to bolster his position and to strengthen the official line of the party.

Declining radicalism of CPM

Apart from a rhetorical line of forging a closer relationship with the CPM at the level of their mass organisations, the CPI has a totally electoralist strategy and really nothing else. The CPM as a regional force holding power at the state level (West Bengal and Tripura) has two basic strategic orientations. One, is to consolidate its regional hold in West Bengal/Tripura through somewhat progressive programmes in the rural areas (Operation Barga — registration of sharecroppers) and reasonably efficient administration of the state. What this means is that it must also seek to accommodate and win over the 'intermediate castes/classes' especially in the countryside i.e. the aspiring kulaks. The CPM government, therefore, had to set limits to its programme of rural reforms. Indeed, even Operation Barga can be interpreted as an ameliorative measure which eases the transition to capitalist development of agriculture. Also, as part of its policy of strengthening its regional dominance it seeks to join up with other regional forces against the Centre so as to weaken the latter's powers and strengthen those of the states. These

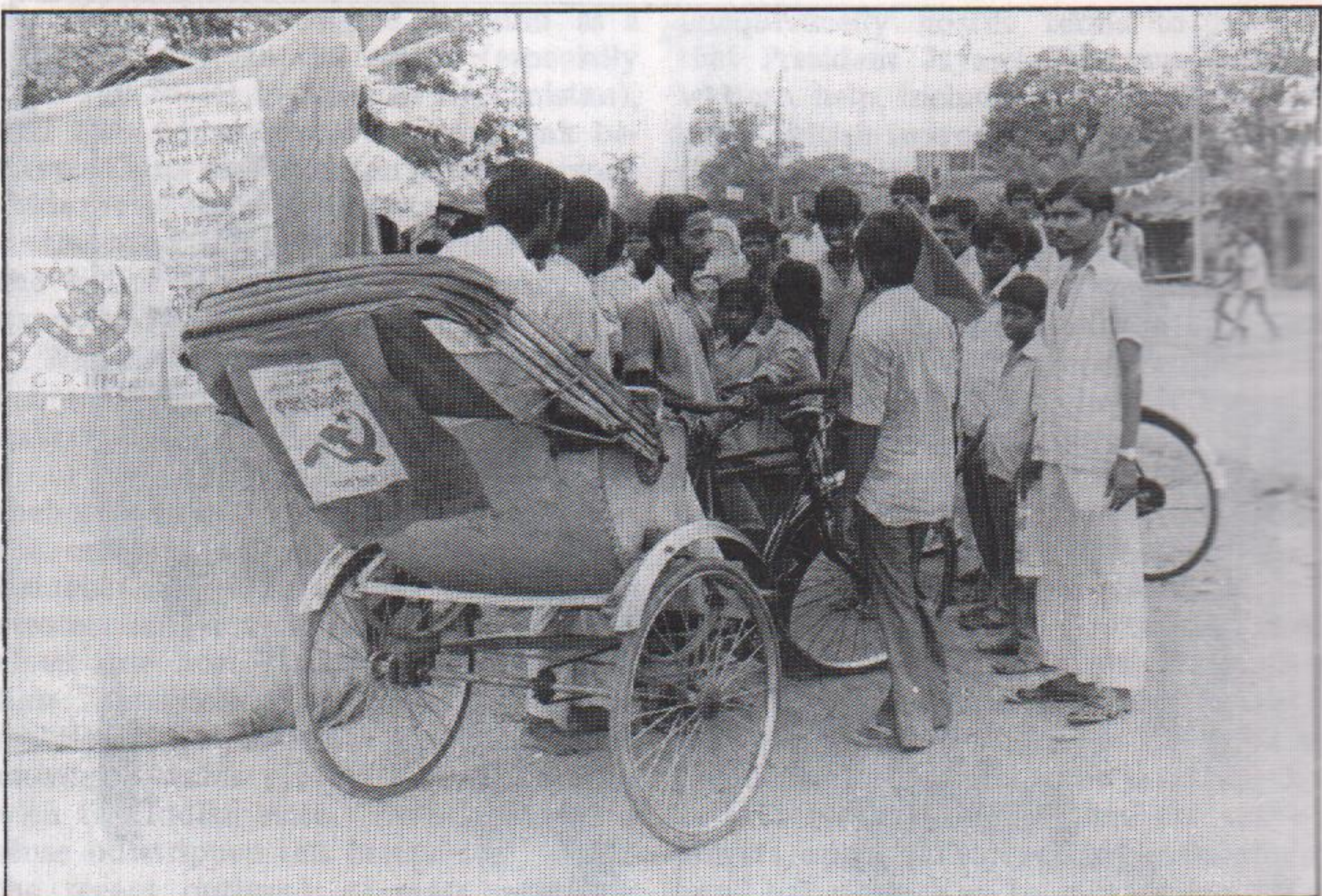
aims lend additional weight to the pursuit of a 'left and democratic front' against the 'authoritarian' government of Mrs Gandhi.

The CPM stand on regional movements like Punjab agitation is somewhat different from that of the CPI. Even where it is in broad agreement with the Centre (as on the Assam situation) it will also tend to be more critical of it than the CPI. In general, however, the CPM favours regional struggles against the Centre because these help to divert Mrs Gandhi's attention away from West Bengal and the state Congress (I) attempts to unseat the CPM government there (Congress (I) is the second most popular party in West Bengal).

The year 1977, when the CPM came to power for the third time in West Bengal, was a turning point of sorts. Before this it had served in two coalition governments as the senior partner — in 1967 for nine months and in 1969-70 for 18 months. But in the 1977 anti-Indira wave it acquired an absolute majority in the legislative assembly and formed a 'left front' government which it dominated. It has been in power ever since — an unbroken reign of six years which has left a strong effect on its strategic perspectives.

In the past, the ambiguity of the CPM's programme and actions meant that it could not be simply dismissed as reformist. To a large number of people its revolutionary credentials were still legitimate and it did encourage serious class struggle in many areas. However, it is now abundantly clear that the CPM is becoming conservatised. The years of administrative power have further buttressed its bureaucratic structures and made it more concerned with proving its capacity to maintain 'order' so as not to provoke serious response by the Centre (e.g. a declaration of President's Rule in the state) than with the promotion of the demands of sections of its social base, for example, the urban working class. Indeed, part of the reason for its declining radicalism is the broadening of its social base both in urban and rural areas, while previously its support was much more concentrated in the millions of refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh). This uprooted strata comprising workers and a very large layer of unemployed lower petty bourgeoisie had always imparted a more radical thrust to the CPM. The CPM is now more keen on establishing its 'respectability' than on promoting the 'class struggle'. In fact, it is doing everything possible to reduce days lost due to strikes so as to encourage private investment from domestic capitalists and multinationals in order to reverse the position of the Calcutta region as a declining industrial centre.

Its second strategic preoccupation is to use its regionally consolidated base to launch a systematic drive to increase its influence in the 'Hindi heartland' of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, particularly the more backward areas where it might hope to capitalise on the conditions of poverty



Gearing up for elections in Calcutta (DR)

and brutal, overt exploitation. The CPI has more of a cadre presence in these regions and closer CPI-CPM relations should benefit the latter's efforts in this direction. Agitational and not merely electoral politics is in this case of rather more consequence. So far, however, it has failed to make any breakthrough. It remains really only a regional force in Bengal.

The ML movement

In Kerala, the politics of caste and religion rule out anything but a shifting rearrangement of ruling coalition governments. And in West Bengal, the Congress (I) is the second largest and fastest growing party. The CPM's perspectives do not go beyond assuring itself of another five year term in the next legislative assembly elections, and establishing itself as a strong, if not the strongest, component in any 'left and democratic front' that might eventually be forged. Its ideological formulations remain trapped within the framework of a two-stage theory and preparation for the 'people's democratic revolution'. Its practice is based on the ready acceptance of India as a functioning bourgeois democracy and an electoral and coalitionist strategy for expanding its influence.

The ML (Marxist-Leninist) groups of Maoist origin who were responsible for the Naxalite upsurge continue to exist. Indeed, according to an important secret study by the government (quoted by Kuldeep Nayar in *Free Press Journal*, August 25, 1983) there has been a substantial overall increase in membership of Naxalite groups in the post-1980 period. They number approximately 35,000. But they are scattered and quite incapable of uniting. The study cites the existence of 38 'identifiable factions, the major ones being: the S. N. Singh group, the Anti-Lin Biao faction, the Chandra Pulla Reddy group, the People's War Group, the Pro-Lin Biao faction; and the Central Reorganising Committee'. These groups

have a presence in more than one state and account for around 75 per cent of the total membership.

There is a common commitment to armed revolution, an increasing disillusionment with post-Mao China, a hostility to 'Soviet social imperialism' and an ideological acceptance of India as a 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' country requiring a 'new democratic revolution'. Flowing from this are certain weaknesses in political practice — a lack of balance with regard to the evaluation of the Indo-Soviet connection and a corresponding underestimation of the degree of independence of the Indian bourgeoisie and state; a manipulative attitude to the question of electoral participation and alliances which can oscillate from total boycott of elections to opportunist alliances with right-wing groups; a consistent failure to grasp the dynamic of Indian economic development and, therefore, the ready assumption that the economy is in crisis and what is needed in practice is to provide the 'trigger' (even if the 'mass annihilation of class enemies' theory is no longer widely accepted) to unleash the revolutionary fury of the oppressed masses; a strong rural orientation despite growing recognition of the importance of 'mass work' among the urban working class. This orientation flows naturally from the 'semi-colonial, semi-feudal' thesis.

But these generally common features should not be allowed to disguise important differences in practice between groups or the fact that some of these groups, despite the weaknesses of their ideological formulations, continue to act 'progressively'. Thus ML groups organise landless labourers in certain areas to fight for minimum wages, employment in public works programmes, and in doing so take on the rural rich and 'middle' peasants which theory would suggest are allies against the 'feudal' landlords. Their cultural fronts (in Kerala) have played a positive role in small towns, in raising public consciousness over issues like corruption, and even somewhat adventurist

activities of setting up 'people's courts' to dispense ready justice to employers known to be corrupt and exploitative have definitely been popular.

But useful though these activities have been, the ML, by and large, even its most lucid and 'progressive' elements, lack any organisational perspective for consolidating and extending the activity of the urban and rural oppressed. Little or no thought is given to the forms that such activity might take, such as unions under the control of its members. Serious attention is not given to the promotion of a united front of the far left, as well as of the left in general, based on a common action programme. Thus, despite a temporary growth in membership (which should not disguise the wide disparities in theory and practice), the ML movement, if it can be called that, is as a whole trapped within its own ghetto.

Growth of anti-Stalinist left

Within this dominant milieu of the Indian left, however, it is worth noting small but important changes within the last six or seven years. The collapse of the early Naxalite promise of an immediate and successful revolution, the rightward drift of the CPM have also promoted the rise of a variety of 'independent' Marxist groupings whose lineages are equally varied. Some have broken away from Stalinist origins in the CPM and the ML movement. Others have emerged from the limited but nevertheless real radicalisation of the Catholic and Protestant church in India. The effects of this are to be seen, for example, in tribal areas (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra) which have always been an arena of Christian missionary activity, and where new Marxist groups have sprung up with leaders who have effectively severed their previous relationship to the church. Yet others are gravitating towards Marxism after the break-up of the one-time Socialist Party in the post-Janata period. Among a small section of students in major universities where access to Western Marxist literature and ideas is greater an anti-Stalinist trend has emerged.

In brief, within a large section of the left there is now much greater openness to new ideas, a greater reluctance to carry sectarianism to the point where anti-Stalinist thinking or groups are simply dismissed as counter-revolutionary. They may be wrong but that is not the same as saying they are counter-revolutionary in thought and practice. Events like the degeneration of the Chinese revolution, the rise and fall of Solidarnosc in Poland, Afghanistan and the Indo-Chinese wars have all had their impact in challenging the absence of self-doubt that has traditionally marked the groups and parties of the Indian left. There is a distinct geography associated with these developments. In the eastern part of the country (West Bengal), traditionally the bastion of left politics and where the left has a mass influence, traditional modes of

thought and debate continue to operate. It is in the west, e.g. Maharashtra, that the left is engaged in more advanced discussion and practices. It is the more advanced material conditions of the western region — the relatively high rate of industrial growth, the rise of a modern industrial workforce with newer kinds of problems to which older parties and unions have little to contribute, and where potentialities for participation in the democratic process are considerable — that explains this. Similarly, it is hardly surprising that among groups operating in the hinterland, discussions about the bourgeois democratic character of the Indian state should seem much more unreal. Traditionally tight-knit underground structures survive and there is a relative absence of open debate.

The future perspectives for the left must, of course, be tailored to the likely forms and content of class struggle and social movements in India in the coming period. The urban working class has, roughly, a three-tiered structure. There is the unorganised workforce in the small-scale industries. There is the middle-level organised workforce in 'traditional' industries, docks, railways, textile, etc., which is dissatisfied with existing unions and has seen its real wages steadily eroded by inflation. There is a modern well-paid workforce capable of running its own independent, rather than party-controlled or affiliated unions, or those led by 'outside' trade union leaders such as Datta Samant, R. J. Mehta, etc.

The problems that Indian leftists will have to address are necessarily different in each case. Unionisation itself is the most important issue for the unorganised. This holds true also for the rural landless who are increasingly resorting to this form of organisation. For the middle-tier, basic economic demands are increasingly having to be accompanied by some perspective with regard to the redundancy effects of modernisation (mechanisation of textile production, rail-

way computerisation, etc.). The level of technology being introduced may not be very high by international standards but it will still be causing serious dislocation in these industrial sectors. In the most modern sector, the nature of workplace problems will have much more to do with issues of control over the production process and the workplace environment. This trend will in all likelihood lead to newer forms of shop-floor organisation which may be integrated within existing union structures, but are more likely to co-exist and operate alongside the unions.

Obstacles to class unity

The enormous unevenness of Indian industrialisation thus poses grave problems for the generalisation of demands capable of uniting the urban working class across its structural divisions. If there is one lesson of the national movement, it is that the weight of social issues (caste, communalism, ethnic and linguistic discrimination, sexual inequality) is extremely strong in India. One of the strengths of the Congress and the national movement under Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was its ability to link campaigns around widely-felt social needs to an expressly political demand — the erosion and then elimination of British colonial rule. Just how such experiences can be relevant for the purposes of generating the broadest possible working class movement is not clear. But without such generalised action it is difficult to see how even a state weakened by endemic and growing political instability can be decisively threatened by the imminence of revolutionary political change.

That has been the lesson of the failure of the public sector strike by 125,000 workers in Bangalore, of the 1974 railway strike, which was brutally crushed, and of the historic textile strike which in terms of the financial and moral support and sympathy strikes by other sections of the

Jayaprakash Narayan (DR)



urban working class, and similar financial and material support from the rural environs of Maharashtra, was the most generalised working class struggle in India's post-independence history. It was not enough. The textile strike failed to win any of its basic demands. Even these defeats leave their deposit of demoralisation. This does not mean that long plant-level strikes or even prolonged industry-wide struggles will not again break out. They will. But the capacity of the Centre to wait them out cannot now be underestimated, nor indeed its willingness to physically repress such struggles in the last resort.

Communalist clashes

There is little doubt that caste conflicts and communal clashes will continue to take place with sufficiently disturbing frequency. The social and economic changes that underlie these struggles are not about to disappear. No section of the left has been able to intervene effectively in these movements because they have not been able to effectively address themselves to the problems of cultural alienation or to provide cultural solace rather than simply explanations of the socio-economic rationale of caste and communal outbreaks. Nor has the left been able to organise defense networks for the threatened minorities. Even effective solidarity work with the capacity to immediately intervene whenever trouble brews could pay enormous political dividends for the left. But it means that the left must take such issues much more seriously and prepare an adequate infrastructure for such practical intervention.

If the preservation of a bourgeois democratic structure is so important for the ruling classes because it is the best possible form for the resolution of non-economic conflicts, such conflicts are also the principal threat to the existence of bourgeois democracy. Perhaps the single greatest threat today comes from communalism — Assam; Punjab; Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian clashes in the south; the rise of the RSS and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) as the organised reflection of Hindu reaction; the 'Ekmata Yagna' or north-south, east-west nationwide pilgrimage organised by the VHP to promote 'Hindu integration'; the explosive beef tallow issue in which manufacturers of vanaspati, a vegetable oil cooking medium, have been accused of (with some evidential basis) importing animal beef and mutton tallow and adulterating their product with it (since one of the major importers is close to the Congress (I) which bears responsibility for overseeing general import policy, the opposition parties have been trying to get as much mileage out of the issue by deliberately stoking the fires of religious anger); the deliberate wooing by Mrs Gandhi of the Hindu caste vote in a manner calculated to arouse communal sentiments (she is the most reliable protector of their interests and of Hinduism). For the vast mass of the petty



Indira Gandhi's repressive forces in action (DR)

bourgeoisie in the small towns and big cities, this is often the most deeply felt issue.

It was Leon Trotsky in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* who observed that it is the self consciousness of the petty bourgeoisie which is one of the most important determinants of the form of bourgeois rule. By that same logic it is the communal passions of this strata that might create the strongest pressure for a transition to an authoritarian form of the state and, even before such a point is reached, for an extended though still selective erosion of democratic rights that exist.

There is, finally, one last point. As things stand and for some time to come, the weakest point of control of the Indian state does not lie within the geographical boundaries of India. The state structures of its surrounding neighbours, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are much weaker than their Indian counterpart. The Indian state will in-

creasingly have to take responsibility for securing the stability of bourgeois rule in these countries. The likelihood of external Indian intervention in these countries in the future is strong. Currently, the weakest link in the South Asian chain is Pakistan. The managers of the Indian state will have to think in terms of a collective strategy for assuring South Asian stability including the necessity for, at least, tacit cross-country alliances.

The Indian left will have to begin to think in a similar manner. If the intervention of the Indian state in neighbouring countries means that the power of oppressed nationalism can be harnessed to the revolutionary struggle to overthrow this state, it also means that the Indian left must be able to effectively combat the power of great Indian chauvinism (so visible during the three Indo-Pakistan wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971). If the Indian state is thus the principal enemy, the arena of revolutionary struggle and strategy is South Asia, not India alone. ■



The FPL on the split in the Salvadoran revolutionary movement

Toward the end of 1983, a split took place in the People's Liberation Forces (FPL), the largest component of the Salvadoran revolutionary front, the FMLN. The FPL minority formed the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MOR), which is outside the front. The statement of the FMLN was published in the last issue of *IV*. The following is the statement of the FPL, which was issued in El Salvador. For the comment of the Mexican section of the Fourth International on these two communiqués, see the previous issue of *IV*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.

The Central Committee of the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti (FPL), member of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), communicates to the working class, to the Salvadoran people, and to the other people of the world, to sister revolutionary organizations, to the world revolutionary movement and to progressive governments, that in the course of the complex, difficult, self-sacrificing and victorious struggle of the Salvadoran people for their liberation — in face of the oligarchy's rabid and genocidal military dictatorship, supported, equipped and trained by Yankee imperialism — the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti, together with the other revolutionary organizations that make up the FMLN, have been applying, developing and enriching their strategic line, assimilating the rich revolutionary experience of our people and of other peoples of the world.

In August of this year we held the Seventh Plenary Meeting of our Revolutionary Council, the highest leadership body of our FPL-Farabundo Marti party. In the framework of intense work, great seriousness, responsibility and an increased level of political and ideological cohesion, the delegates discussed and deepened their understanding of the major problems facing the people's war, our organization and the people of our country. This has made it possible to provide our party and people with:

A. A profound assessment of the [April 6, 1983] assassination of our second-in-command, Commander Ana Maria, and of the [April 12, 1983] suicide of our chief leader, Marcial, including a scientific assessment of the facts.

B. A strengthening of our party's highest leadership bodies, the Revolutionary Council and Central Committee, for which first and second secretaries were elected.

C. A profound scientific analysis of the national and international situation including the development of the war and the relationship of forces domestically and abroad. On this basis, strategic guidelines were drawn up for the present per-

iod — guidelines that enrich our general strategic line.

Following investigation and assessment of the sorrowful and repudiated assassination of Compañera Melida Anaya Montes (Commander Ana Maria) and the suicide of Salvador Cayetano Carpio (Marcial), the FPL Revolutionary Council has concluded the following:

That Salvador Cayetano Carpio, who was our chief leader and commander-in-chief of the People's Armed Forces for Liberation, embarked in recent years on a process of ideological and political decomposition. This led to grave distortions that eventually resulted in Compañera Ana Maria's assassination, which Carpio was the main organizer and responsible for. Among these deviations were the following:

1. Marcial developed an exaggerated estimation of himself. He began to consider himself the most consistent, pure and flawless revolutionary of our country and of the entire region, as the sole genuine spokesman for the Salvadoran proletariat and people.

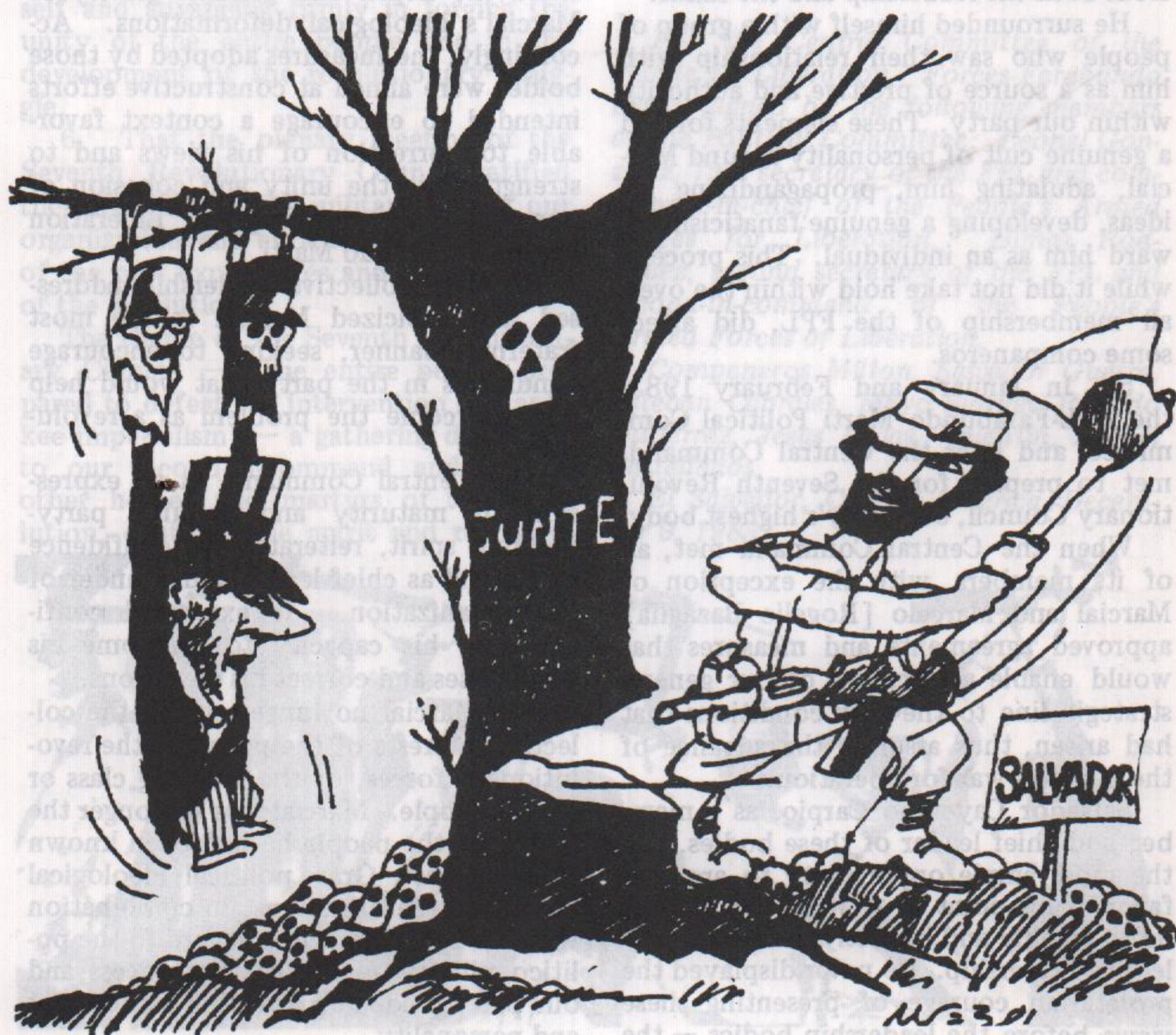
He developed a strong inclination toward receiving praise and adulation, toward placing himself and his opinions above those of the collective leadership and of party bodies, to protect and pay attention solely to those who applauded him blindly.

At the same time, toward others he expressed a lack of confidence. He looked on those who did not accept his views as a danger to the revolution, as unconscious instruments of the enemies of the revolution.

2. As a consequence of this exaggerated self-esteem, Marcial became the victim of serious political backwardness and became incapable of thinking and acting at the level required by the historic demands posed by the development of our revolution.

Marcial clung tightly to dogmatic and sectarian schemes and plans. This, together with his obstinacy about prevailing at whatever cost, became an obstacle to the progress of the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti and exercised a negative influence on the process of unification of the revolutionary forces as a whole, thus harming the effort to liberate our people.

Meanwhile, a living experience in struggle, attained at the cost of the lives of thousands of compañeros and the assimilation of the revolutionary teachings of other peoples, led our organization as a whole — leadership and ranks —



to advance alongside the struggle of our people. Our thinking became enriched, our line and orientation developed. This, naturally, opened up a confrontation of ideas, within the framework of party norms and statutes.

3. Marcial's deviations deepened with the development of the people's war and with the development of the necessary internal ideological struggle to keep pace with these advances. Holding stubbornly to his opinions and demonstrating the negative characteristics of his personality, Carpio used his position as chief leader of the FPL-Farabundo Marti to make his point of view prevail.

With increasing frequency and on increasingly important points, he violated our party's revolutionary principles of functioning. He paid no attention to the leadership bodies, or to the decisions and accords they had already reached, and instead acted behind the back of our party.

The brunt of this conduct by Carpio was directed against the companera Commander Ana Maria, Melida Anaya Montes, second-in-command of the People's Liberation Forces, whom he saw as a rival. Acting out of deep-seated egocentrism, and finally out of hatred, he expressed the view that Ana Maria was undermining his own personal prestige.

Marcial increasingly distanced himself from the dynamic of collective thinking in our organization and leadership bodies, which never supported him in his attitude against Ana Maria.

4. While the collective leadership of the FPL-Farabundo Marti was linking itself closely to the ranks of our party, to the masses and combatants, carrying out alongside them the daily struggle of our people, Marcial distanced himself from both the leadership and the ranks.

He surrounded himself with a group of people who saw their relationship with him as a source of prestige and authority within our party. These elements formed a genuine cult of personality around Marcial, adulating him, propagandizing his ideas, developing a genuine fanaticism toward him as an individual. This process, while it did not take hold within the overall membership of the FPL, did affect some companeros.

5. In January and February 1983, the FPL-Farabundo Marti Political Committee, and later the Central Command, met to prepare for the Seventh Revolutionary Council, our party's highest body.

When the Central Command met, all of its members, with the exception of Marcial and Marcelo [Rogelio Bazaglia] approved agreements and measures that would enable application of our general strategic line to the new conditions that had arisen, thus assuring the advance of the people's war for liberation.

Salvador Cayetano Carpio, as a member and chief leader of these bodies, had the most ample opportunity to argue in favor of his point of view, but he did not do so frankly and honestly before the collective leadership. He never displayed the proletarian courage of presenting these views before the leadership bodies — the

Political Committee and the Central Command.

To the contrary, he used methods that were incorrect and worthy of condemnation. At the meeting of the Central Command he tried to confuse its members. Against Ana Maria he launched denigrating accusations that were in contradiction with the most elementary norms of revolutionary ethics, accusations that only ended up in his degrading himself morally.

In light of such foul procedures, his unhealthy methods and intentions were rejected. Marcial was thus dealt a political and moral defeat by the entire Central Command, with the exception of Marcelo.

However, the Political Committee and Central Command did not yet understand the depth and genuine gravity of Marcial's ideological deformations. Accordingly, the measures adopted by those bodies were aimed at constructive efforts intended to encourage a context favorable to correction of his views and to strengthening the unity and cohesion of our party — the Popular Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti.

6. The collective leadership addressed and criticized Marcial in the most fraternal manner, seeking to encourage conditions in the party that would help him overcome the problem as a revolutionary.

The Central Command, in an expression of maturity and genuine party-building spirit, reiterated its confidence in Marcial as chief leader and founder of our organization. It expressed confidence in his capacity to overcome his weaknesses and correct his deviations.

But Marcial no longer shared the collective interests of the party, of the revolutionary forces, of the working class or of the people. Marcial was no longer the leader of the people he had been known as in the past. Grave political, ideological and moral deformations, in combination with his recalcitrance in regard to the politico-military reality of the process and our party, ended up affecting his conduct and personality.

7. Salvador Cayetano Carpio lost all perspective and respect for the FPL-Farabundo Marti, an organization that has earned the confidence of our people. Blinded by political ambitions and fanatical self-aggrandizement, he ordered and planned, along with Marcelo, the assassination of Ana Maria, thus stripping himself of his qualities as a revolutionary and leader of our people. To carry out the crime, he used a group of combatants placed under military discipline, in complicity with the companera's security personnel.

Discovered in his crime Marcial opted, in a final act of political cowardice, for suicide, attempting to evade his responsibility and save his reputation, already stained by the infamy he himself had cast over it. He preferred to die stubbornly maintaining his egocentrism and self-veneration.

Before committing suicide, Marcial added a new infamy to his already incorrigible political cowardice. He wrote several letters, one of them to the Central Command, in which he presented the events as a conspiracy by false revolutionaries against him and what he called his unimpeachable course as a genuine revolutionary.

Marcial thus left behind poison to continue harming the revolution and our organization, in an action that was equally a desperate and blind attempt to preserve his own image above all.

But his murder of Ana Maria is totally and absolutely proven.

The Seventh Revolutionary Council of the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti, held in August 1983 in Chalatenango, received conclusive proof of this. It studied the phenomenon in all its depth, in all its determining and conditioning factors, and adopted a unanimous resolution condemning Marcial for the crime.

Such events, deformation and deviations have no precedent in the life of the FPL-Farabundo Marti. However, as a result of the confusion, resentment, opportunism and the fanatic personality cult around Marcial, a few ex-companeros were taken by surprise and have gone to



the extreme of separating themselves from our party.

They are seeking to split and divide the internal unity of the FPL, using methods that are deviate and harmful to the revolution and to our people and that benefit only the enemy.

This group holds the backward, sectarian, and antiunity positions put forward by Marcial. They deny the FMLN's role as the vanguard of the revolution and proclaim themselves the sole representatives of the working class. They deny the role that all democratic and progressive forces, together with our working class, can play in our process. They are deeply impregnated with an antiparty way of thinking and acting.

Linked to this group of individuals in the recently emerged Revolutionary Workers Movement-Salvador Cayetano Carpio. With this group, they are seeking to elevate the figure of Carpio before our people, hiding and covering up what is now clear and proven: because of his ideological disintegration, Marcial ended up betraying the interests of the working class and our entire people, doing irreparable damage to the revolution.

In the face of all the slanders spread by this group about supposed deviations of the FPL-Farabundo Marti and of the entire FMLN, there is an undeniable fact that the entire world can see: the powerful advance of the revolution; the striking political and military victories won by the people's forces; the critical political and military situation in which the dictatorship finds itself; and the unquestionable advances in the process of unification and consolidation of the FMLN.

Revolutionaries know well the practices and measures developed by imperialism and world reaction to destroy revolutionary movements. One of their primary objectives is to sow division among the vanguard organizations of the people. In our country Yankee imperialism and its domestic puppets have carried out innumerable efforts to divide the vanguard of our people, the FMLN, and each one of its member organizations.

No one is unaware that recently in Grenada a group of revolutionaries was used either directly or indirectly by imperialism to provoke division and confrontation within the New Jewel Movement. This created propitious conditions for Yankee imperialist aggressors to justify and carry out the invasion of Grenada, dealing a strategic blow to the revolution.

We call on this group [Revolutionary Workers Movement-Salvador Cayetano Carpio] to exercise good sense and reflection, to understand that their attitude is harmful to the interests of the proletariat and of the entire world, that it benefits only the enemy. In face of the treacherous plans of imperialism, the oligarchy, and its puppet dictatorship, the attitude of every revolutionary must be to strengthen internal unity among revolutionaries and to consolidate the FMLN.

To conclude, the Central Committee of the People's Liberation Forces-Fara-

bundo Marti states before the people of El Salvador and the world:

1. That we are making clear to all companeros who have been confused or deceived that the ranks of our organization are open to all who wish to return and rejoin, to close ranks and unify around our efforts to defeat the enemies of the people.

2. That we condemn the brutal assassination of our companera Ana Maria, second-in-command of our organization, and that we hold responsible for that crime Salvador Cayetano Carpio (Marcial), Rogelio Bazaglia (Marcelo) and other participants. In like manner, we condemn Carpio's cowardly suicide.

3. That the irreparable loss of our unforgettable companera Melida Anaya Montes, champion and bulwark of the desire for unity of our people, has strengthened the combative morale of our organization, the decision to strengthen the development of unity inside the FMLN, and the decision to struggle relentlessly.

It has deepened our love for the people and our determination to win. It has deepened our desire to be free and to bring the revolution against imperialism and exploitation to a victorious conclusion.

4. The FPL-Farabundo Marti is irrevocably committed to the working class and the people. Our strength, our conviction and our determination rest on the unshakable confidence in the unlimited creative revolutionary capacity of the proletariat and people and on absolute confidence in the people's victory.

5. The FPL-Farabundo Marti, as a revolutionary organization forged in the course of the heroic struggle of the Salvadoran people, is capable of purging itself and advancing firmly in forging the unity of the entire people and in the development of the revolutionary struggle.

6. That the plenary meeting of the Seventh Revolutionary Council ratified the strategic politico-military line of our organization and enriched it on the basis of the new experiences and requirements of the revolution.

The theme of the Seventh Revolutionary Council — "The entire people prepared to defeat the intervention of Yankee imperialism" — a gathering dedicated to our second-in-command and to the other heroes and martyrs of the revolution, captures the spirit and readiness

of the FPL and of the entire people to fight and defeat Yankee troops or those of other puppet countries of imperialism that may try to attack our soil.

At the same time we drew up guidelines aimed at contributing, alongside the FMLN, to attaining definite popular victory.

7. Finally, we call on the working class, on all working people, and on democratic and progressive sectors not to allow themselves to be confused by the campaign of slanders and lies propagated by the enemy and by all those who, directly or indirectly, are playing the enemy's game.

Join massively in the armed revolutionary struggle, help bring about the decisive and definitive battle against the enemies of the people!

Vigorously promote the struggle for immediate political, economic and social demands!

Take all measures to prevent intervention by the Yankees or other forces in our country, and confront with determination any attempt at aggression against our country!

Strengthen the unity of the people around their vanguard, the FMLN, and close ranks against our class enemy!

Long live the political, ideological and organic unity of the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti!

Long live the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front!

War on imperialism, the oligarchy and its puppet dictatorship!

Revolution or death; the armed people will win!

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

United to fight until the final victory!

Revolution or death, we will win! ■

For the Central Committee of the People's Liberation Forces-Farabundo Marti, signed by the following members of the Political Committee: Leonel Gonzalez, first secretary of the FPL and commander-in-chief of the People's Armed Forces for Liberation. Dimas Rodriguez, second secretary of the FPL and second-in-command of the People's Armed Forces of Liberation.

Companeros Milton, Salvador Guerra, Esteban Cabrales, Mayo Sibrian, Ricardo Gutierrez, Jesus Rojas, Valentin, Miguel Castellanos.

El Salvador, Central America, December 9, 1983.





AROUND THE WORLD



The position of the Lebanese Fourth Internationalists on the fighting in Tripoli

The following are major excerpts from a resolution adopted on November 22, 1983, by the Revolutionary Communist Group, Lebanese section of the Fourth International, on the fighting in the Tripoli area involving the factions in El Fateh and Syrian forces.

1. To formulate a correct revolutionary communist position toward the fighting in northern Lebanon between the supporters of the traditional leadership of El Fateh and those opposing it, these clashes have to be put in their overall factual and political context. This is necessary to avoid being misled by the allegations of the Palestinian right, which have been given a big play in the mass media in the imperialist countries. These statements were designed to give the impression that in these conflicts the rightist camp, which is a client of Arab reaction and a suppliant of world imperialism, was waging "national struggle." However, the attitude of the reactionary Arab governments, most prominently the Saudi and Egyptian regimes, and of the various imperialist governments, first and foremost the French but also the US administration, should be sufficient to put revolutionary militants throughout the world on their guard against any unthinking support of Arafat's claims....

2. The agreement by the rightist leadership of the Fateh-PLO to evacuate Beirut in August 1982 represented the final stage of its degeneration. It marked the transformation of this leadership from the leadership of a petty-bourgeois national liberation movement that it was in the 1960s to a bureaucratic bourgeois leadership endeavoring, in concert with the reactionary Arab regimes, to fit itself into the American plan for settling the Arab-Zionist conflict. The resolutions adopted at the meeting of the Palestinian National Congress in Algiers last February confirmed this transformation by accepting the plan for a Jordanian-Palestinian federation. This represented a major shift to the right, even by comparison with the 1974 resolutions that set the goal of creating an "independent" Palestinian ministate on the West Bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza Strip....

4. The behavior of the Arafat group after the interruption of its talks with the Hashemite regime last April is entirely consistent with the context we described. This group chose to act in a provocative way to create the split that it wanted,

knowing that it would risk nothing more than having to evacuate its forces from Lebanon, which it had decided to do anyway before the split, and which in fact was one of the causes of the break.

The first provocative step taken by Arafat was to remove the leaders of the patriotic current in El Fateh from their military responsibilities, which they had fulfilled with honor, as even Arafat's hacks did not dare to deny. He replaced them with members of his group, who had distinguished themselves by running away from the Zionist invaders in June 1982 in a way that in any army would deserve the severest penalties and not promotion!....

Arafat and his collaborators knew very well that accepting the rebels' primary demand, which called for organizing a democratic congress of El Fateh, would have put them in a very difficult situation with respect to the rank-and-file-fighters, since the political and organizational points raised by the rebels were very grave and quite well founded. In fact, the Arafat group cannot face having to account to the fighters for its actions and its financial management. The ground of political struggle, of public argument on the theses and demands of the rebels, was not at all favorable for this group. That is why it deliberately chose to shift the struggle onto another terrain, that of armed conflict, in order to obscure the terms of the debate.

In a nutshell, the responsibility for the recent fighting in northern Lebanon falls squarely on the rightist leadership of the Fateh-PLO. It acted as if it sought these clashes, behaving in conformity with the provocative attitude it adopted when it decided to break with the Palestinian and Arab parties opposed to its line. We should note in this respect that the members of the arbitration committee set up pursuant to a decision by the PLO executive committee during its last meeting in Tunis, declared last month that Arafat was responsible for the failure of their mission. He rejected all the proposals for democratic debate between himself and his opponents made by this committee, whereas the rebels said that they were prepared to accept this.

5. Despite all the facts cited above, Arafat and his collaborators have succeeded in presenting the fighting in northern Lebanon as a struggle between a Palestinian lamb and a Syrian wolf with Palestinian fangs. They have succeeded in

gaining acceptance for their presentation of the conflict as one that from the start was not between two Palestinian lines but between Syrian domination on the one hand and "autonomous Palestinian decision making" on the other. So, it is necessary to examine the reasons for this success, which was reflected in a dramatic way by the heroic demonstrations of the West Bank Palestinian masses in support of Arafat, who they imagined was re-fighting his 1976 battle [against the Syrian intervention in Lebanon]. On the West Bank, of course, as elsewhere, there are bourgeois and rightist personalities who support Arafat in full cognizance of his rightist policy. However, the overwhelming majority of those who demonstrated for Arafat were misled about what was really at issue in the fight led by Arafat and blinded by the illusions that he has been adroitly sowing for several months.

Two realities have to be taken into consideration in this respect. The first is that in taking part in the fighting that has been going on for several months the Syrian regime indeed is seeking to achieve its longstanding ambition of dominating the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. This would considerably bolster its position in any negotiations with the imperialists and Zionists on the terms for settling its conflict with Israel....It is essential to take this reality into consideration in order to pursue a correct national revolutionary policy. To entertain any illusion that the Syrian regime is a "strategic" ally for a whole historic period would not only be extremely shortsighted as regards the foreseeable future, but means ignoring the most elementary lessons of the recent past and the clear signs of the present.

6. The second reality that has to be mentioned to understand Arafat's success in deluding very broad masses of people has to do with the rebel current. In this respect, it is useful to recall the position taken by the Revolutionary Communist Group, formulated in the political resolution adopted at its Fourth Congress last June:

"The duty of the Arab and international revolutionary forces today is to support the dissident current in El Fateh in its struggle to form a fighting organization for the liberation of Palestine by replacing the corrupt bureaucratic organizations that have abandoned this goal to go looking for a piece of territory under the sun of American imperialism and side by side with the state of Israel. However, we must offer this support to the patriotic current without any illusions. Revolutionary realism obliges us to take cognizance of the considerable dangers and dif-

difficulties that lie on the path of the dissident current.

"In the first place, it is arising in a period of ebb in the Arab national revolutionary movement, in contrast to the conditions in which the Palestinian resistance first emerged at the end of the 1960s. This limits its possibilities for development, in particular since the Lebanese masses, to say nothing of the Palestinian masses in Lebanon are living in a climate of defeat and are not very receptive to revolutionary agitation....

The dissident current can succeed in overcoming its difficulties and establishing itself as a radical independent patriotic current, and this could be the point of departure for a new phase in the history of the Arab revolutionary movement. However, the condition for this is that the dissidents make a radical revision of the whole past political line of the Palestinian resistance and its structures on the basis of a conception of their struggle that goes beyond "Palestine-centrism" to a correct understanding of the liberation of Palestine, which necessarily involves the revolutionary overthrow of the Arab regimes. If the dissident current does not manage to do this, it will fail and fall prey to cooption and bureaucratic degeneration, and finally this would lead it to accepting the role of a left "front," along with all the others, within the framework of the line and structures that have led to the failure of the Palestinian resistance as a whole. In any case, the dissident current has to be very wary of the Syrian regime, which is supporting it today and may turn against it tomorrow and become its fiercest enemy as soon as Damascus no longer needs a Palestinian opposition to the American settlement.

The fact is that up until now the patriotic current in El Fateh has not demonstrated the capacity to meet these conditions, which we consider essential for establishing itself as an independent radical patriotic current. Its main failing so far has been in its relations with the Syrian regime. It is true that the patriotic current has not abased itself to the point of singing the praises of the Syrian regime, as Arafat himself did not so long ago, but it has missed several opportunities for differentiating itself from Damascus. The patriotic current should have proclaimed its opposition forthrightly to any Arab regime interfering in its conflict with the Arafat group. It should have condemned any attack by the Syrian forces against any position held by Arafat.... Last but not least, it should have categorically refused to let the Syrian regime interfere in its conflict with the Arafat group in the Tripoli region and refuse to take part in the fighting as long as Syrian forces were involved....

7) The realities described above determine our position toward the battles in northern Lebanon. While we back, and continue to firmly support, the demands of the patriotic current that rebelled against the rightist leadership of the Fateh-PLO and especially its demand for a democratic congress, just as we sup-

port the fight of the Lebanese Communists against the Islamic Unity Movement allied with the Arafat group, the fact remains that the participation of the Syrian forces in the fighting in northern Lebanon, marked by their indiscriminate bombardment of residential areas, compels us to assume a position of neutrality in these conflicts and to call on the Palestinian fighters to withdraw from them. Moreover, we support the general framework of the five points put forward in the joint statement of the leaderships of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine on November 20, which call for an end to the fighting in northern Lebanon. We reiterate our warning to the patriotic current in El Fateh against pursuing its present line of dependence on the Syrian regime. And we appeal to the revolutionary members of this current to fight for a change of line or to form a distinct revolutionary tendency within the very heterogeneous patriotic current in order to maintain the continuity of the Palestinian patriotic line, if not the very continuity of the Palestinian resistance itself. ■

On the Arafat-Mubarak meeting

This article is from the December issue of Matzpen Marksisti, the Hebrew-language paper of the section of the Fourth International in the state of Israel.

The Israeli government was appalled at the meeting that took place in December between the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt.

"A stab in the back," a "gross violation of the Camp David Agreement," "a blow to the peace alternative" — these were only some of the characterizations of the Egyptian president's agreement to meet with Yasser Arafat.

There were more than a few people on the left in this country who drew a hasty conclusion from the furious reaction of Shamir and Arens. That is, if these people are unhappy, it must be a good thing. However, while the leaders of the government coalition (as well as of the opposition, although they did so in a more subdued way) attacked the Egyptian president, Reagan hailed his meeting with the PLO chairman. Thus, it is clear that we cannot just put a plus where our enemies put a minus.

The question that we have to pose is the following: Who is going to be strengthened by this meeting between Arafat and Mubarak? Obviously, the Palestinian national movement has to take political and diplomatic initiatives. What is more, normal relations with a considerable number of Arab regimes has been a guarantee of the independence of the movement and a means of limiting the influence of any one Arab regime on the PLO.

However, in the present political context, it is hard to avoid the impression that the meeting in Cairo did not serve the interests of the Palestinian movement but rather those of its enemies.

What was President Reagan so pleased about? In the first place, the meeting increased the confusion in the PLO and the division in its ranks. Arafat must understand that his embracing the Egyptian president will be interpreted, and correctly so, as a gross violation of the decisions of all the leading bodies of the PLO, including those of the last Palestin-

ian National Council meeting.

Secondly, despite the evasions of the PLO chairman, there are now clear signs that he is heading toward the Reagan Plan. This plan cannot provide a means for a just solution of the Palestinian question but rather is a scheme for reinforcing the position of Washington's allies in the region at the expense of the Palestinian struggle.

However, it is a great exaggeration to claim that the meeting between Arafat and Mubarak put an end to the militant and progressive character of the PLO and the resistance. The PLO has gone through various turns in the past and still maintained its character as the national liberation movement of the Palestinian Arab people.

The achievement of a very large majority for a vote of confidence in the leading bodies of El Fateh cannot conceal the fact that there is strong opposition in Arafat's organization, even if his rivals prefer to express this opposition behind closed doors.

The path that leads from Camp David to the Reagan plan is a steep and slippery slope with a yawning abyss below. What Arafat wants to do is perform acrobatic tricks on this slope, and this cannot help but upset the majority of the fighters, who understand very well the character of American policy in the region.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the PLO will be able to stop in time, and not just because of the many obstacles the Israeli government has put in the path of implementing the American plan. ■

continued from page 28

a peace camp since December, in which they stay as 'Peace Witnesses.' And there are a lot of other Americans, West Germans, Austrians, Dutch and French.

"We hope that we will be able to get a common West European peace camp including prominent figures from a whole series of countries. That will attract a lot of attention both in Western Europe and North America. The Sandinistas have asked us if we can organize a Scandinavian peace camp. ■

US embassy tries in vain to stem growing solidarity with Nicaragua

COPENHAGEN — The US embassy here has now intervened actively to try to block the work of organizing a Danish peace-watch brigade for Nicaragua.

In an attempt to discredit the people who launched the peace-watch initiative, US embassy officials have given "captured documents" from Grenada to handpicked representatives of the press.

A journalist for *Politiken* [a right-wing daily], Jan Stage, claims that these documents show that "leading Danish Social Democrats have been manipulated into supporting the initiative." The manipulators, of course, are supposed to be the Cuban Communist Party and a number of Central American revolutionary organisations.

Klassekampen has gotten hold of these "incriminating" documents, and we can testify that *Politiken's* sensation mongering journalist is deliberately trying to mislead the paper's readers about the real content of the documents.

In no place are there statements that the Central American organizations should try to "lure friends in the Socialist International to show their solidarity with the Sandinista regime."

Such enticement is quite unnecessary, since most of the Social Democratic parties in Western Europe — as the document itself says — are "ready to accept the Latin-American revolutionary process."

It is other organizations in the Socialist International — including the Social Democrats in Portugal, Italy and the USA — which are described in the documents as "sworn foes" of the revolution in Latin America and which should be excluded.

There is still less support for the suggestion that a meeting in Managua is behind the setting up of the peace-watch project in Denmark. The document says not a word about that.

On the other hand, it is true the document says the meeting in question discussed various initiatives to "neutralize the forces in the Socialist International" that are working against us. And it is also correct that the meeting decided to send a top-level delegation to Western Europe to increase understanding, not only for the revolution in Nicaragua, as Stage suggests, but throughout Latin America and the Caribbean area.

Whether the document is genuine or forged, what the story about it shows is how ready *Politiken*, or rather the so-called clique of pundits in its top editorial offices, is to let themselves be used by the US embassy to spread misinformation.

The objective of this is clear. It is to stem the growth of solidarity in Denmark with the revolutionary movements in Central America. To the great dismay of Reagan's friends here, solidarity with Central America is more widespread than ever, thanks among other things, to the peace-watch initiative. The following article from *Klassekampen*, February 2, describes the growth of the peace-watch project.

Soeren BECH

Hans Peter Dejgaard was terribly busy. He hardly had half an hour to talk to *Klassekampen*. Afterwards, he rushed out the door to meet the minister and author Johannes Moellenhave in Virum, one of the first well-known Danes who wants to be a peace watcher in Nicaragua. Hans Peter wanted to go out to show a bunch of photos from a trip he made a while ago to the small war-threatened country in Central America.

Charlotte Falk from the Nicaragua committee also showed up in the little house with a back garden on Istedgade in Copenhagen. On all the tables and shelves were books and articles about

Nicaragua, including an impressive picture book about the Miskito Indians and the new town of Tasba Pri.

The pictures told quite a different story to the one presented by Danish foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen on January 22, when he maintained that the Sandinista forces attacked and oppressed the Indians.

Hans Peter is one of the "idealistic youth" that the foreign minister did his best to try to dissuade from participating in the peace camp in Nicaragua. Hans Peter Dejgaard and Charlotte Falk were overjoyed. Uffe's broadside has only got more people talking about the peace watchers, and they think that the solidar-

ity work in Denmark is on the verge of a breakthrough.

In mid-February, Hans Peter and a colleague, Ingrid, together with a representative from the Danish building brigade in Nicaragua will organize the reception of the three prominent Danes who are arriving on February 26 — Ib Schelde, Johannes Moellenhave and Christian Balslev-Olsen from the Oecumenical Council. These three personalities will spend part of their time in Nicaragua in the peace camp in the northern part of the country, where they will have the help of two Spanish-speaking Danes.

At home in Denmark, Charlotte is one of the activists in the Nicaragua committee that is now preparing for a multitude of solidarity meetings across the country with returned peace watchers as speakers.

And there is no lack of people for the peace watch. So many prominent and not so prominent people are applying to go to Nicaragua at their own expense to serve in the peace watch that they are nearly standing in line. Every second Sunday a group will be sent off.

Flood of interest

Never before during the five and a half year history of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua has there been so much interest in Denmark in defending the 2.6 million war-threatened Nicaraguans.

"Aren't the Danish peace watchers taking a chance of getting caught in machine-gun fire if the US-backed counterrevolutionaries start an offensive?" I asked Hans Peter Dejgaard.

"The peace watchers are not going that far north, and we do not even think it is necessary to fly a white flag over the house in which they will live. They will not be in danger of coming under fire."

I asked, "Well, then how can they keep watch for peace?"

"By living for a time in northern Nicaragua in a village in the countryside, living on brown beans every day, talking with the farmers, traveling around the country and talking with representatives of the trade unions, church groups and the Sandinista government. They can show the world that they support Nicaragua and come home to Denmark and tell people about Nicaragua through newspaper articles and lectures."

Charlotte Falk added: "And that's where the Nicaragua Committee in Denmark comes into the picture. This is an excellent chance to organize meetings and get a solidarity campaign rolling."

I asked: "What sort of interest are you finding in the peace watch?"

"We are getting a near flood of telephone calls from trade unionists and people in peace groups who would like to go, even though they know that they will have to pay all their expenses."

I wondered: "Are the only peace watchers going to be Danes?"

"No, the idea came from a group of American Quakers, who have maintained

continued on page 27