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Spanish workers fight plant closures

Women in the British miners' strike

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Tension and manoeuvres grow in Gulf war

Diplomatic and military moves have been speeding up in the Persian Gulf area as the momentum has built up in Iran for another big push into Iraq.

On Friday, June 8, the Iranian government issued an appeal for all persons with military training to report to mobilization points before Thursday, June 14. For some weeks, there had been reports of volunteers leaving for the front.

On June 1, the Iraqi military reported that Iranian forces had begun new attempts to infiltrate the marshes in the Basra area, in particular around the Majnun Islands. It claimed that "ten enemy landing attempts have been annihilated."

After the mobilization appeal, it seemed likely that Iran would launch its new assault on the anniversary of Imam Ali's murder on the 19 of Ramadam, 661 A.D. (June 19).

Gerry FOLEY

In its June 1 issue, the *Iran Times* (an independent Persian-language weekly serving all the overseas Iranian communities) reported that the Revolutionary Guards had been demanding a new offensive because "there are now sufficient human and moral resources, and the marshes in the Basra area are dry."

The response of the Iranian regular military reportedly was that these conditions had existed also during the previous assaults but that the end results had been defeats and heavy losses.

In his Friday sermon preceding the mobilization order, Mullah Khamenei, president of the Islamic Republic, issued a new warning to the Arabian peninsula states in particular to back off from supporting Iraq:

"Put pressure on Iraq so that it will stop setting the Persian Gulf afire. If you think that after all the help you have given Iraq that it will not listen to it, then stop helping it. Stop offering it your money and your propaganda; get out of this war. We have nothing against you. If you continue, if the countries in the region do not want to recognize the power of the Islamic Republic, if they do not want to be reasonable, we will be justified in moving against all those who oppose us."

Despite these threats, however, the Islamic Republic Khamenei represents has moved notably cautiously during the countdown for its long promised "final offensive."

The outstanding example was when interceptors guided by US Awac radar tracking planes and refueled in the air by other American aircraft shot down two Iranian F-4 fighters over the Persian Gulf on June 5.

The Saudis played down the incident, reporting only that an unidentified aircraft had been shot down. The Iranian propaganda machine remained silent. The first notice of the event was the report on Iranian radio June 7 that a diplomatic note of protest had been delivered to the Saudi government. The note in question contained only a vague threat:

"The Islamic Republic of Iran warns that if such an act is repeated, and if Iranian planes, whose only mission is to stabilize the region, are again attacked, the Islamic Republic will respond severely."

Interestingly, it was "diplomatic sources" (*International Herald Tribune*, June 6, 1984) in Washington who gave the biggest play to the clash, describing the American technical assistance involved and portraying the military confrontation as larger and potentially more serious than the Saudis did.

According to the US authorities, a major air battle was averted when eleven Iranian fighters on their way to join the fight turned back.

US officials failed, if they tried, to conceal satisfaction at the confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabai.

The *International Herald Tribune* (June 6, 1984) quoted a "Washington source" as saying, "This was a big psychological breakthrough for the Saudis." The paper commented: "US officials have expressed irritation with what they viewed as Saudi Arabia's reluctance to take a leading role in protecting Gulf shipping against air attacks, preferring instead to call on outside help."

The Paris daily *Liberation*, which is well informed on the Middle East, commented on the US reaction:

"The Pentagon specialists are not bothering to hide their satisfaction and relief at seeing Saudi Arabia 'finally agree' to confront the Iranians."

When attacks on Gulf shipping first escalating in May, the US authorities stressed that in order to defend the oil routes, the American forces would need bases on the Arabian peninsula. That is, they used the danger to the oil trade to step up the pressure on Saudi Arabia to accord them bases, a step that the Saudis are obviously reluctant to take.

US plans for Saudi Arabia

In the June 2 *Christian Science Monitor*, a paper known to be a faithful reflector of State Department briefings, a staff writer described the key strategic problems for the US in the Gulf war as follows:

"The military balance of power in the troubled Persian Gulf region increasingly focuses on a kingdom with modern weapons but little experience or appetite for conflict and a Goliath of sorts that is forced to remain on the sidelines.

"The first is Saudi Arabia and the second is the United States.

"As military analysts look at the threats that continue to spread from the Iran-Iraq war to neighbors in the Middle East and beyond, they see a situation in which theoretical military advantage is not necessarily the key determinant.

"If Saudi Arabia were to jump wholeheartedly into the war against Iran, it might easily tip the balance in Iraq's favor. And if the US had only sporadic attacks on Gulf shipping to worry about, it could do the same. But geography and geopolitics are complicating the issue for both countries....

"The main dampers on US military action are lack of an invitation from friendly Gulf states and the prospect

that the Soviet Union could be drawn in if Iran were to become any less stable than it already is.

"We are not in a position to dictate or to conciliate, since we have no relationship with Iraq," Dr Brzezinski said. "The Soviets gain if we do nothing or if we do something on our own.

"Still, attention in Washington is focusing on the military balance in the Gulf and efforts to tip that balance in Saudi Arabia's favor."

The US strategic aims at this point seem rather clear. Washington is anxious to prevent an Iranian victory, but it puts this in the context of extending the gains it has already derived from the Gulf war — that is, to deepen the conflict between Iran and the Arab states and in the process to force Saudi Arabia to accept a closer relationship with, and greater dependence on, the United States.

The Islamic Republic's stated aims remain to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. What the ruling Iranian group actually expects and how far it is prepared to go, of course, are unclear. It itself probably cannot entirely determine the pace of events.

The argument between the military and the Pasdaran is evident. All of the moral and material pressures in the mass organizations created by the Islamic regime are for continuing and escalating the war.

Furthermore, the longer the war goes on and the greater pressure it puts on Iraq, the more decisive moves become a military necessity. The Iranian government representatives and press have been saying, for example, that the only effective answer to Iraqi attempts to disrupt Iranian oil exports is by a big escalation in the land war.

On the other hand, the attacks on tankers carrying Iranian oil seem to have been having an uneven effect. Exports, which were halved at the start of the campaign, from 1.8 million barrels a day to 0.8, were reportedly back up to 1.2 to 1.4 million barrels a day by early June.

The enduring effect has been to swell the insurance rates enormously, offering the imperialist companies a bonanza as long as the attacks remain sporadic, even if numerous.

The Iranian propaganda buildup for the offensive has been notably muted by comparison with the previous big onslaughts. Despite the mobilization order and the massive numbers massed on the Iraqi front, it was not clear in advance of the expected Ramadan offensive how ambitious the Iranian objectives were. It could be simply to make further tactical gains, as in the previous offensive, and to maintain the credibility of the war for the Iranian masses, and in particular the base of the Islamic regime.

The credibility of the war and the "advance of Islam" are particularly important to those layers that benefit from the institutions created by the Islamic Republic and to the unity of the whole clerical machine.

The recent elections for the Islamic parliament were marked by sharp divisions among the clerical factions and personalities. The results were annulled in some places and Khomeini had to make appeals for the interested parties to respect the electoral tribunal's decisions, "for the sake of Islam."

Since the elections, an argument has developed among the clergy about how far to carry the rules on "female modesty." For example, a Friday or two before Khamenei's sermon on the war, his subject was the dangers of oncoming summer weather and the tendency of women to cover themselves less carefully:

"Why are they unheedful of the feelings and passions of men. Don't they know that men will become nervous? Don't they know that brother and sister Hezbollahis [members of the "Party of God"] will react?" (*Iran Times*, June 1, 1984.)

On the other hand, the more liberal wing of the clergy has been complaining about zealots who carry the separation of the sexes in education to the point of building walls to separate male and female students.

In this atmosphere, continuing the crusade is obviously important to maintain the coherence of the clerical system and the morale of its devotees.

In the recent period also, the repression against the Tudeh Party has continued to deepen, accompanied by more "confessions" of imprisoned Tudeh leaders.

Ayatollah Khomeini now lives in retirement in Qom (DR)

For example, in early May, the Islamic regime put Ehsan Tabari, the leading theoretician of the Tudeh party on TV. He repudiated his life's work. The *Iran Times* of May 11 reported (in English), "He said his works on Islamic history and philosophy should be discarded because they were based either on foreign sources — Zionists, imperialists or Marxists with their own axes to grind — or on Iranian sources who toadied to the shah or were the agents of freemasonry."

Tabari said over TV that he had suffered a stroke in prison and had come to his new understanding only after a long period of reflection in his prison cell. He made a special attack on the Soviet Union, saying that the World Council for Peace, which he described as a Soviet creation, had never condemned Iraq for attacking Iran.

Soviet press on Iran

The May 30 *Izvestia* carried a statement in response from the exile leadership of the Tudeh Party which said, among other things, "The ruling regime in Iran, which is wracked by a deep political and social-economic crisis produced by the continuing destruction of the Iran-Iraq war and the inability of the regime to run the affairs of the country, ran into opposition from the popular masses in the Majlis elections. In order to distract the masses from the sorry state the country is in, they are preparing a new evil operation.

"The Iranian courts are preparing a wave of trials against hundreds of Tudeh Party members. In order to whip up an atmosphere of terror and to suppress expressions of mass discontent, they intend to sentence arrested Tudeh Party members to death. The recent TV spectacular organized with the help of former agents of the shah's secret police who are now in the service of the Islamic republic indicated the beginning of this bloody plot."

Nothing appears in either *Izvestia* or *Pravda* on international political questions except by express decision of the Soviet bureaucracy. In general, the Kremlin does not let repression of local Communists become a stumbling bloc in relations with regimes with which it seeks good relations.

In the present context, the appearance of such an article almost certainly reflected antagonism by the Soviet leadership toward the Islamic Republic on foreign policy questions.

In recent weeks also, Yasser Arafat has travelled to the Far East to try to persuade the North Koreans and Chinese to stop selling arms to Iran. He has declared the PLO's demand for peace "with no annexations of Arab land."

Furthermore, in the last few weeks, an Iranian delegation travelled to the Soviet Union for talks with the Kremlin leaders. The upcoming Iranian offensive must certainly have been on the agenda. The Soviet Union could easily

tip the military balance by giving Iraq missiles that could put Kharg Island out of operation.

Furthermore, the Gulf war is one of the main points on the agenda at the imperialist London summit.

Most recently, the Iranian and Iraqi governments for the first time accepted a limitation of the hostilities under international control. They agreed to a truce on bombing civilian targets beginning June 12 under UN supervision.

In the context of all these maneuvers and pressures it is obviously dangerous to make any assumptions about what direct and indirect protagonists in the Gulf war will do now. But the basic terms of the conflict and the stakes remain clear.

The Iraqi people remain united behind Bagdad against what they see as an attempt to conquer their country. Arab nationalist sentiment is overwhelming against the Iranian invasion. The Iranian military operations are no longer a defensive war in any sense, but a political adventure. The fundamental course of the conflict has been to favor imperialist reinsertion in the area and a rightward development in Iran.

The tasks of socialists and anti-imperialists also remain clear. They are to oppose the continuation of this war and to oppose the imperialists' maneuvers to regain a foothold in the region. The opposition in the US congress to Reagan's moves to insinuate American military forces into the conflict, through increased support for the Saudis and escorting tankers in the Gulf, reflect the pressure of antiwar feeling in the United States and at the same time the extent to which the imperialist powers have become discredited as peace keeping forces. ■

Miners' wives are on the march

Something important is happening among miners' wives in Britain today. Never before in Britain has anything like this number of working class women mobilised, as wives, mothers, daughters, friends, to defend jobs for their community.

On May 12, ten thousand people marched in Barnsley, the seat of the national headquarters of the NUM, the miners union, at the call of the 'Women Against Pit Closures' group. Two thirds of the marchers were women, carrying banners from every mining area in Britain.

The arrest of Anne Scargill, whose husband Arthur is the president of the miners union, on the picket lines in Nottinghamshire was a graphic illustration of the extent to which the women are picketing and organising the strike with the men, as well as making sure of the food parcels and other support for the families.

Janine INGLEFIELD

How and why did it all happen? It's the same answer. Kay Sutcliffe and her friends in the Aylesham Ladies Section of the miners' welfare club (an auxiliary section for wives) were angered by a picture of a miner's wife in the *Sun* newspaper that showed her with a toy gun and quoted her as saying she wished she had a real gun to shoot NUM president Arthur Scargill with. While these women down in Kent, the south-east corner of England were getting angry, miners' wives Maureen Douglass and her friends in Barnsley and Doncaster up in the north, had just the same reaction to the picture. They were in fact interviewed on television and expressed their feelings.

Kay Sutcliffe saw the programme and she and her friends called a special meeting of the Ladies Section to discuss what they could do to support the strike. Kay suggested that they should carry the banner of the NUM lodge (branch) for the pit where their husbands worked and march through Nottingham. Nottinghamshire is the only NUM area not to have joined the strike. However, as the Kent NUM were assigned to picket the pits in Leicester that were still working it was decided that the demonstration should be held in Coalville, Leicestershire. Several hundred women came to this first demonstration at the end of March. The original plan had been to organise it 'like a women's peace march' with the women carrying the banners in a women only march. But in the end, as a number of other organisations had turned up and wanted to march, they decided to have the men marching too.

The example of this first demonstration spread like wildfire and other groups got organised and held their own demonstrations. This was not new, the wives and women from the mining communities had organised in the 1972 and 1974 strikes but as Kay Sutcliffe explained to *Socialist Action* 'In 1974 we were mainly concerned with food parcels. They came in from all over the country and we had to decide how they were distributed and who was the most needy. That will probably be needed again, as the strike is hard and creates need very quickly.' (April 6, 1984).

This was a correct prediction. As the strikers gritted their teeth for battle the mining communities had to get organised. It was touch and go at first, until the National Delegate Meeting in Sheffield on April 12, whether or not the strike would be called off because of the right wing's campaign for a national ballot. But after that meeting it was clear that the strike would be a long and bitter one. Food had to be collected, canteens run and money raised. Women's support groups sprang up in every pit village and women organised because of the necessity to keep their families fed and clothed.

But, while these groups were initially formed for practical reasons, many of them soon evolved into democratic women's organisations that mobilised and politicised women.

Many of the wives are in fact themselves workers. Some in the pit canteens or other jobs connected with the mines, but most elsewhere. Like many women in Britain today, rather than be driven out of the workforce by the recession, they have been willing to accept lower pay or shorter hours because their pay is essential to the families' well being. Some of the women in Kent have had to hitchhike to work because they do not have the money for fares, but it is vital that they get to work to earn money while the strike is on. This necessity is giving women a new sense of confidence as the providers for their families, a confidence that is spilling over into their political activity.

The women's committees have been organising women to go and speak at support meetings up and down the country, touring workplaces, organising women's pickets and marches and joining the pickets along with the miners. In most areas they have official representation on the strike committees. Annette, the vice chair of the Aylesham women's committee, is able to attend all the daily strike committee meetings as she does not go out to work, and has been invited to do so from the start. The women's committees are also organised in a democratic way. Although the Aylesham committee has elected officers to 'deal with the business', decisions are taken collectively among all the women who come to the meetings.

The dynamic role of women in this strike is based on two factors: Their place within their communities and the growing visibility of women in the political scene in Britain, particularly in the labour movement. The women pushed themselves forward because they could see that the Greenham women had done so with great effect. And the mining communities, far from simply being a 'brotherhood of men' have always included the women in their traditions of resistance. Today's miners' wives are redefining the terms of that involvement as active participants.

This is why we saw such an exciting event in Barnsley on Saturday May 12. Women were not just organising with men to support the strike, they were organising as women. In Leicester, where a women's support group has only recently been set up, men were invited to the first meeting *if* they were prepared to look after the children!

Of course there are great variations in the level of consciousness and experience of the groups and individuals involved. Maureen Douglass, speaking at the Barnsley rally, took up the questions of sexism head on when she criticised demonstrating miners who had called on women in the streets to 'get their tits out for the boys'. Pointing out that women had to be won to support the miners even if they did not live in mining areas she said, 'Don't insult the women you see here, who support you whole-heartedly, by shouting crude and insulting remarks to other women on the streets.'

Miners' leader Arthur Scargill received rapturous applause at the Barnsley rally when he paid tribute to the determination of the women and recognised their contribution to the struggle. 'This demonstration is making history,' he said, 'No longer are the media able to go to a mining village to get a woman to speak out against the strike....Our women are not just helping the men in the kitchens — they're *with* the men on the picket lines....Every single striking miner — and his wife — must be at Mansfield on Monday. On behalf of the NUM I'd like to offer any of the women's support groups here the use of NUM funds if they want transport on May 14.'

This tribute came from the man who vehemently defended the use of a Page 3 pin-up girl picture in the union paper *The Miner*!

The miners' wives were jubilant, they had won an official approval for their picketing activities, and the arrest of Anne Scargill on the picket lines set the seal on that approval.

Too powerful to ignore

In South Nottingham they say that women are better pickets than men for three important reasons. Firstly, a lot of miners have already been arrested on the picket lines and have been released on bail on condition that they do not picket again. Secondly, the police find it harder to identify the miners' wives when they are going up and down the motorway cafes to stop 'potential pickets', and it is harder for the police to appear to be 'keeping the peace' when they arrest women for simply standing and arguing with scab miners. And finally, the scabs are more embarrassed to walk into work past women whom they know are struggling to feed and care for their families.

The hunger and suffering of the miners' families is deadly serious. Pat, a miner's wife who attended the Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures meeting, reported that she and her family had been receiving £3.50 a week since the beginning of the strike. Although the wives and families of strikers are entitled to social security benefits this is calculated on the basis that the miners are receiving £15 per week strike pay — which they are not. Rented televisions and videos have been sent back, summer holidays cancelled. Labour-run local councils in the mining districts have provided free school meals for the children of strikers, local shops and publicans have pledged not to put up prices during the strike, the Labour Party has asked every member to give at least 50p a week during the course of the strike. Food collections are made and distributed to miners. Some local Labour Parties have 'twinned' with local pits to make a special effort to provide this sort of help. But the burden of organising a fair distribution among the families and within the families falls on the women.

But the hardship the miners and their families are suffering is not going to make them give in. The self-organisation of women in this strike is a key symbol of the resistance to the 'starve them out' policies of the Tory government. 'We'd rather eat grass than give in to Maggie Thatcher' is the spirit that dominates the mining communities, expressed by one of the Nottingham women at the Barnsley demonstration.

The women's energy and enthusiasm is unstoppable. Their groups are learning new ideas all the time. Direct links have been made with the women's peace movement, and the Labour Party women's organisation. A delegation of Kent miners' wives visited the Greenham Common women in their camp. Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures discussed tactics to use on the picket lines with the Sheffield Women for Disarmament group. In every struggle in Britain today women are coming to the fore. As Scargill put it, 'This movement is so powerful they just can't ignore it any longer. The women in our community are on the march.' ■

British miner : Thatcher is trying to batter us and to starve us

British miners have been on strike since March 12, this year. Over 2,000 miners have been arrested and brought to court, some of them on charges which could mean years in prison. At the same time many miners' families are now facing destitution and hunger.

However, many thousands of strikers continue to mount daily picket lines and the British transport unions have decided to mount a blockade of all fuel destined for power stations.

Women are playing an increasingly decisive part in the dispute — collecting food and money, organising distribution in the mining communities and replacing arrested strikers on the picket lines.

Colin and Sandra Lenton appeared on the platform of the recent 'Rally against Austerity' organised by the LCR (French section of the Fourth International). Both are striking members of the National Union of Mineworkers. Colin, an official of the Bold branch of the NUM in north west England, spoke about the lessons of the strike so far.

Question. The miners dispute is now entering its fourth month. What are the main features of the situation for the strikers?

Answer. In terms of what hits miners the most directly it is the government decision to deduct £15 from the social security benefit paid to miners' families. The government is making this deduction on the basis that miners are being paid £15 strike pay. But our union is not paying strike pay. It would wipe out our

Miners' wives at Barnsley rally (DR)

assets in a matter of weeks. So the result of Thatcher's decision is that we are facing real hardship; families are now going hungry.

But the strike is now biting. Coal stocks are rapidly dwindling. We have had reports from trade unionists who work in power stations that the mounds of coal in the power station yards have been hollowed out, so it appears that there is a lot of coal still there, but in fact there is very little left.

There are problems of course, particularly in relation to the steel industry. Steelworkers should have joined us since they have personal experience of MacGregor's policies when he headed the plan to close down the steel industry and was opposed by the steelworkers strike in 1980. We made an alliance then with the steelworkers and railworkers — the Triple Alliance. But this pact was only as good as its leadership. Bill Sirs, the steelworkers leader, is responsible for his members not joining us.

Other unions have come forward however. The transport union, the dockers, the two rail unions have all provided magnificent support in refusing to move coal. The bakers' union has provided mining communities with free bread.

Q. How is the situation with international movement of coal?

A. Small amounts of coal are coming into the country. Certain ships will bring coal stocks to non-union docks. This happens on the east coast and coal has come into Glassen, a port in Lancashire too. But we have had commitments from miners in West Germany, Australia and Poland that they will not produce coal to break our strike. The National Union of Seamen are making sure that no coal comes in from abroad that does that.

Q. Has the Labour Party supported the strike?

A. It was a big step forward for the national executive to decide to levy 50p per week from Labour Party members. The money goes straight to the national office so we don't know yet how successful it is. There are problems in some areas where the local organisations of the party aren't pushing for it. At the level of the leadership there are big problems. Although Neil Kinnock is the son of a miner he certainly hasn't shown it so far, particularly when he was joining the Tories and the media in pressing for us to hold a national ballot. I think that he expected that the miners' strike would have a bad effect on Labour's electoral chances. What rubbish! The local elections in May showed that the reverse was true. Only Tony Benn and Denis Skinner among Labour members of parliament have really come out strongly for the miners, going on picket lines and organising support for us.

Q. What has been the role of the TUC and general secretary Len Murray?

A. The TUC itself has given us no support. This isn't surprising. They sold out the train drivers, they sold out the printworkers, they sold out the GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) workers. They would sell us out if they had a chance. We think that the TUC is just a talking shop. Len Murray has tried his best to stop solidarity action that has occurred.

Q. How have the miners organised themselves in the dispute? How have the flying pickets been organised?

A. The flying pickets have been organised by the local strike committees. I would say the level of participation is higher than the 1974 strike for example. On an average day I would guess that 40,000 to 50,000 miners are out on picket lines.

The Tories response to this is clear: to batter us and starve us back to work. The police have all the rank and file leaders under continuous surveillance. I know my telephone is tapped and that whenever they spot my car registration number they will stop me. They'll know that I'm in France now, and so will the National Coal Board.

Another thing we suspect is that the army is being used to reinforce the police. A number of miners have recognised relatives who are in the army in police uniform. One miner walked up to a relative who was in police uniform and said 'Hey! You're meant to be in Northern Ireland!'

Q. How have the miners been able to answer the Tories' case for closures?

A. We've explained that the idea that the National Coal Board will close 'uneconomic ' pits is a nonsense. The Coal Board fiddles the figures so that they can say that 'this pit is making a loss' or 'this pit is making a profit' as they wish. They could close every pit in the country if they wanted to on this basis. There is a real danger of privatisation. The Board aims to develop the so-called 'super-pits' and sell them off. And it's the government that stands behind the National Coal Board. It's for this reason that the dispute is really about getting rid of Thatcher. I've travelled all over my area in Lancashire and the message is the same; 'Get rid of Thatcher and replace her with a Labour government with proper socialist views.' In the first place that means Labour sticking to its manifesto promises.

At the last general election people didn't want to hear these kinds of arguments. Tony Benn got bumped out of Parliament. Left-wing views were very unpopular. Things have begun to change with the miners' strike. Benn's getting a hearing again.

Q. How has this swing to the left been showing itself?

A. Well, in the first place it's reflected in the large amounts of money and food we're getting from big cities like Liverpool and Manchester. In this the far left organisations have been fantastic. So has the Communist Party in Liverpool.

It showed itself in the miners' wives movement as well. There are support committees formed by the wives in most areas. Of course the main task of the committee is organising to fight the hardship inflicted on the communities, feeding families, collecting food, etc. At the beginning of the strike there was a 'back to work' movement promoted by the media amongst a few wives. We've never heard of them since.

In our area we have an agreement with the St. Helen's Labour council that they would take measures to prevent hardship among miners. So, for example, they've kept the schools open during the holidays to provide free school meals for miners' children.

Q. How do you see the divisions among miners being overcome?

A. It all boils down to the question of leadership. The Nottingham leaders, like Ray Chadburn, vacillated backwards and forwards before finally saying that they supported the strike. Of course the fact that the miners have better pay and securer conditions is relevant, but they needed strong leadership. Now we have to face the fact that we are dealing with scabs who are trying to break the strike. Picketing is the only way you can stop that. ■

Origins of the Indian problem

Two weeks after the bombing of Eden Pastora's press conference at a guerrilla encampment in Nicaragua, the smoke has not yet settled.

Pastora himself has said that the agent who planted the bomb probably represented *either* the Sandinistas or the ex-Somocista guerrillas of the FDN.

The Soviet news agency Tass has raised the hypothesis that the CIA tried to kill Pastora because he was opposed to uniting his own "liberal" counterrevolutionary ARDE with the FDN.

The American Broadcasting Company has tried to put the finger of blame on militant Basque nationalists deported from France to Panama.

The Nicaraguan government has said the bombing was the result of "internal wrangling in the counterrevolutionary groups encouraged by the CIA."

In all of this, one thing seems clear, the attempt to open another counterrevolutionary guerrilla front in the south from bases in Costa Rica has suffered a major, if not decisive setback. This is reflected by the fact that the Costa Rican government has expelled Pastora from its territory.

Clearly, the attempt to build a "liberal" counterrevolutionary operation against the Sandinista government was fraught with contradictions.

There is, moreover, another interesting factor. In its June 2 issue, the Paris daily *Liberation* reported that the ARDE was left "without troops, since the Indians led by Brooklin Rivera, leader of the organization Misurasata, have decided to wage a struggle for the autonomy of the Miskito Indians on their own."

Because of certain errors by the young revolutionary government, the counterrevolutionaries were able to get a significant base among the Indians of the Atlantic coast area of Nicaragua. Up until now this has been a central element in the counterrevolutionary operation.

So, it seems worth reviewing the Nicaraguan Indian problem. The following articles dealing with the question were published recently in the papers of sections of the Fourth International. The first is by the Berlin ethnologist Robin Schneider. It was published in the February 1 issue of *Die Linke*, the journal of the Austrian section of the Fourth International. The second is a report of the impressions of an observer from a national organization of Scandinavian Lapps. It is from the April 16 issue of *Internationalen*, the paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International.

The Lapps are an ancient people related to the Finns who settled in the northern forests of Scandinavia before the invasion of the Germanic peoples and have been pushed back futher and further into the subartic area. The Lapp organizations have tended to take more and more interest in the struggles of the Indian peoples of the Americas in the framework of a sort of international community of threatened native peoples.

IV

Robin SCHNEIDER

At the origin of the conflict between the Indian movement Misurasata, and the left government was the question of how the Indian-inhabited areas would be incorporated into the revolution. The Sandinistas had a special interest in the natural resources of the Atlantic coast — hardwoods, gold and shellfish — as a means of meeting the growing deficit of hard currency.

What the Miskitos were concerned about was preserving the traditional life in their more than 200 village communes. At the end of 1980, a compromise was worked out. The communes were to be given land titles that would assure that Indian land would no longer be occupied by Spanish-speaking small farmers pushing into the Atlantic coastal region. The state was to pass on 80% of the profits from the lumber industry to the villagers.

The literacy campaign, which had been boycotted by the village communes, was finally to be carried out in the Indian languages.

Positions began to harden in February 1981 when the state security force arrested all the major Indian leaders in response to their demand for regional autonomy, which was charcterized as "separatism."

After the raids on their villages carried out by the military, a lot of Indians were disillusioned and turned against the Sandinista government. For the FSLN as a liberation movement and later as the ruling party, the demands of the Indian organization for ethnic self-determination and land were unacceptable.

The revolutionary leadership's anxiety about the unity of the young national state, about a separation of the Atlantic coast from Nicaragua, led to a failure to integrate the native population into the national economy and culture.

The central government no longer saw any solution through working with Misurasata.

After the Indian movement countered by demanding an Indian territory covering a third of Nicaragua, Misurasata was banned outright in August 1981. Then, the counterrevolutionary groups in Honduras and Florida turned the political confrontation into a military one. They managed to organize an armed force of a few hundred Miskitos against the Sandinistas.

Today, the Indian area is a closed military zone. In January 1982, about 8,500 Miskitos were moved against their will further into the interior, and in late November of that year, another 5,000. Twelve thousand Indians took refuge in the UN camps in Honduras.

A rightist guerrilla force made up of former Somoza National Guard, peasants and Indians is waging a bush war against the Sandinista army. The war leaves no room for social and economic construction. The work of building up the fishing industry and mining, as well as the re-forestation projects, and the plans for building a bilingual school system have all been essentially stymied.

The history of the Miskitos explains their fierce opposition to rule by outsiders, even revolutionaries. The result of their long history of rebellions and alliances is that the Miskitos have survived as the largest lowland population in Latin America today. While the forest Indian groups number in the hundreds and few thousands, there are as many Miskitos in Nicaragua and Honduras as all the Indians who live in the gigantic Brazilian Amazon region.

Rebellions against the Spanish conquerors of the Pacific coast region and accompanying alliances with the British colonial power in the Caribbean made it easier for the Miskitos to absorb foreign influences than for other Indian peoples. Since the seventeenth century, they have been a racial mixture, combining the blood of the older Indian people with that of escaped Black slaves.

For 250 years, the Miskitos had their own kings, while the Atlantic coast was a British protectorate. They were able to reduce the smaller Sumu and Rama peoples to tribute-paying status, up until 1894, when Nicaragua, with the help of the US, annexed their country by military force.

Today, the culture of the Miskitos is a hybrid one. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, it has been transformed by the puritanical missionaries of the Moravian church and by plantation work. In particular, it has been turned upside down by the big North American banana and lumber companies that came in early this century and plundered the natural wealth of the region, leaving vast areas between Rio Coco and Puerto Cabezas as barren steppeland.

Up until today, the Miskitos have not determined their own history. If the war in Nicaragua lasts a long time, they risk being torn to pieces as a people between a national revolution and an internationally organized counterrevolution.

So, first the war has to end, and then it should be considered whether talks with the Miskitos and Creoles in exile might not be the only way to avert a long-drawn out guerrilla war. ■

FSLN leader Tomas Borge with Miskito Indians (DR)

A Lapp view of the Miskito question

Dick FORSLUND

Most of the regimes in Central America are carrying out genocide against their Indian populations. But the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is not one of them. The claims about Nicaragua's treatment of the Indians in the mass media are a combination of lying propaganda and half truths.

That was the conclusion that the audience could draw from Ann Katrin Haakansson's low-key report on her trip to Central America at the meeting of the Central America Committee in Nacka [a district of Stockholm]. She was sent by the Scandinavian Lapp Council last year to observe on the spot how the Mexican, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, Guatemalan and Panamanian regimes were treating their Indians. The native peoples in the region number about ten million.

"Mexico enjoys an unearned reputation for democracy in Sweden. The government there has decided to destroy 40,000 hectares of forest on Indian land. The Indians' resistance has been met with military force.

"In Guatemala, where there are millions of Indians, they face a war of extermination.

"The former president Rios Montt said openly in a TV interview that the US had advised him to begin his term of office by killing 1.5 million Indians! That would be the basis for solving the country's problem."

Ann Katrin Haakansson pointed to similar evils in the other countries. But what about Nicaragua?

"Nicaragua's new government is carrying out a policy toward the Indian population in the western part of the country that is unique in Latin America.

"They began badly, but then they changed.

"The Sandinistas first mistake in my opinion was when they first came to power. They said, 'from now on, we are all Nicaraguans.'

"So, during the literacy campaign, they expected the Miskitos, Somos and Rannas to be enthusiastic about learning to read and write in Spanish, a completely different language than their own Indian tongues.

"Today, education is conducted in both Spanish and the Indian languages along the Atlantic coasts. The first four years, instruction is through the Indian language, and Spanish is only a school subject. At higher levels, the relationship is reversed.

"The government has published a grammar of the Miskito language. That is in five years after the fall of the dictatorship. We Lapps got our first grammar of Southern Lappish here in Sweden only two years ago. So, they are ahead of us in Nicaragua!"

But people in the audience asked about genocide and forced migration.

Ann Katrin Haakansson had heard no talk about genocide, although she met Miskito leaders who took refuge in Costa Rica and were hostile to the Sandinistas. But there was in fact forced migration of Miskitos from the Honduran border in the north. That was when the "contras," the counterrevolutionaries, started their raids into the country.

"All the belongings of the people, land, animals and so forth were noted down. Then everything was burnt. The objective was to keep the "contras" from getting a foothold in the north.

"The government has since pledged in writing that the people will get replacements for everything as soon as the state of war ceases.

"Naturally, the Indians reacted against this. When I was on the Atlantic coast, it was evident that there is an underlying suspicion of everything the government does. The people here did not participate in the uprising against Somoza. They are not participants in the revolution now. I felt suspicion.

"They have gotten private and collective plots of land. They get education. The Sandinistas are trying to build up a fishing industry. They have now brought drinking water into every neighborhood in Puerto Cabezas, where there are 10,000 refugees from the north. The next step is to bring potable water into every house."

But what about the line being pushed now by the journalist Fritiof Hagland?

"I was shocked when I heard his radio program. I met the same people he did. He has access to the mass media.

"He was the one who brought Armstrong Wiggens [an anti-Sandinista Miskito figure], and gave him fifteen minutes on the news.

"He had a collection of pictures of murders and acts of violence. The US authorities had to admit afterwards that the pictures were from the Somoza period! Radio Sweden paid for Wiggins' trip here."

Ann Kristin Haaksannson offered an anecdote.

"The traditional life of the Miskito was disturbed fundamentally 150 years ago. A German church was responsible for that. Fritiof Hagland's father was a missionary for that church." ■

The fight of the Sagunto workers against industrial reconversion

In February 1983, two months after the installation of Felipe Gonzalez's cabinet — the first "socialist" government in the history of Spain — the new minister of industry, Carlos Solchaga announced the decision to close part of the installations at the state-owned steel complex in Sagunto, a small port city near Valencia.

This decision provoked shock and indignation in the people of the city. A few days after the announcement, they organized their first march on Madrid. All along this march, you could hear a shout that summed up the feelings of the Sagunto workers "Isidoro, what kind of a change is this?" The pseudonym Felipe Gonzalez used in the underground struggle against Franco was "Isidoro." And the main slogan of the Spanish Socialist Party, the PSOE, in the election campaign had been "change." This watchword managed to concentrate all the illusions of the 10 million workers, women and youth who gave Gonzalez an overwhelming majority on October 28, 1982.

It was during those days in February 1983 that the real meaning of the word "change" began to emerge. The "Isidoro" of the fight against Francoism had become Felipe Gonzalez, head of a government that had been elected by the workers but which was determined to apply a capitalist policy that even the governments of the right had not been able to force through.

The PSOE government's order in February 1983 to extinguish Blast Furnace No. 2 at Sagunto was the first step in closing this section of the complex. But it took a year, until the end of March 1984, before this decision could actually be carried out and the furnace shut off. It was a year of struggle by 4,000 blast-furnace workers and the whole population of this small city, a fight distinguished by a militant spirit, imagination and intelligence.

In this period, the battle at Sagunto was the dominating feature in the Spanish political situation. In particular, it reflected very clearly the present strengths and weaknesses of the workers movement. This exemplary mobilization ended, nonetheless, in the defeat of the workers, with two thirds of them voting to accept an agreement signed by their leadership that confirmed the dismantling of the enterprise and the loss of jobs involved.

It is essential to understand the reasons for the failure of this struggle, both to ensure that the lessons of Sagunto will not be lost, and to counter the cynicism of the majority trade-union leaderships, which have dared to present the agreement they signed with the government as a "victory."

Miguel ROMERO

The crisis that has hit Spanish industry is very deepgoing and still harder to resolve than in most other imperialist countries. The well-known weaknesses of Spanish capitalism — outdated technology, low productivity of labor and inadequate financial structures — have also been aggravated by the wildly exaggerated developmental plans undertaken by the last Francoist governments from 1974 up to the eve of the present international economic crisis.

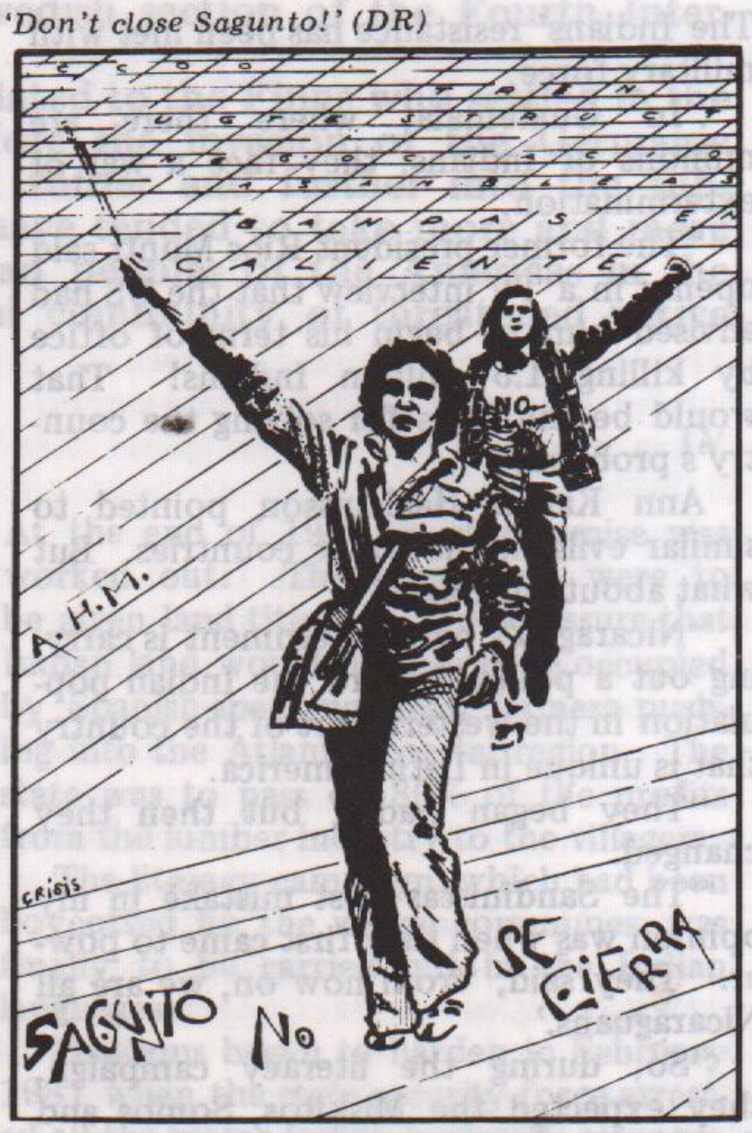
To give just one example, the naval construction plans led to a situation where today 300,000 tons worth of ships, representing about half the shipbuilding potential of the country, cannot be sold. And this is after two years in which half of the 20,000 workers in this industry have been in "job readjustment," that is, not working but getting 80% of their last wage from "wage guarantee funds," with their job contracts remaining formally valid.

To grasp the breadth of the disaster that is hitting the shipbuilding industry, you have to consider that the PSOE government has set an annual production target as low as 250,000 tons for the coming four years.

Up until 1979, the crisis in industry developed in a molecular way, hitting essentially small plants, which closed by the thousands. It was a different story in the big plants, where net employment rose slightly, by a total of about 5,000 workers.

The situation started to change after 1979. First of all, the political context shifted. The following were the main milestones: A constitution was approved. The Democratic Center Union (UCD) won the general elections in March. The PSOE and the General Union of Workers (UGT, the union confederation the PSOE dominates) veered sharply to the right, setting out on the road that has led them to their present positions. The decline of the workers movement accelerated.

'Don't close Sagunto!' (DR)



But most important, the great bastions of the working class started to come under attack, and the traditional industries went into crisis. The masses responded immediately and in a united way. Despite its still fresh victory in the general elections, the right-wing government was unable to take on the workers in steel, shipbuilding and the producers' goods industry, where the forces of the working-class movement remained intact.

The UCD government sought to give its industrial policies a coherent form. In 1980, it got the so-called Bayon Law through parliament. (Bayon was the minister of industry at the time.) This was the first attempt to offer an overall capitalist response to the industrial crisis.

This law also was met with firm resistance by the workers, but already the union leaderships were starting to sign very negative compromise agreements. And they managed to get the workers to accept these deals, although broad sections opposed them. Anyway, these agreements were real "compromise solutions" and seen as such by a lot of workers. Nowadays they are not uncommonly

regarded as belonging to "the good old days."

The reconversion plans adopted at that time were generally based on eliminating jobs by so-called painless methods (in the main through early retirement), as well as on massive financial aid to businesses in crisis. Theoretically, these subsidies were to enable the management to modernize. But in fact they went to pay compensation to the workers laid off and to meet the interest charges on the huge debts owed to the big banks.

The major banks, in fact, have often done very well out of the crisis. It is sufficient to point out that in industries undergoing reconversion, the average financial costs (loans and interest) borne by the enterprises amount to 20% of their sales and have grown at a rate of 30% a year.

The result of this policy was to put off the day of reckoning and make the situation worse. At the same time, not the slightest progress was made in industrial reconversion, except in textiles. Several thousand jobs were eliminated, but the workers affected were mainly nearing retirement age. There were no closures of industrial installations but to the contrary continual promises of new projects for immediate reindustrialization, promises that of course were never kept. The UCD government did not then have the necessary forces to go any further in carrying out an anti-working-class policy.

The PSOE's broken promises

At the end of 1982, at the time of the general elections, it had become clear to everyone that the Bayon Law was dead letter. The question of how to solve the crisis was one of the central issues in the election campaign. There is no doubt that the great majority of the workers thought that the "change" promised by the PSOE was a response to the industrial crisis radically different from the one of the right, that it would mean an end to layoffs and even the creation of new jobs. Did not the PSOE promise to create 800,00 new jobs? Who among the masses of ordinary workers could think then that the PSOE would apply a policy still more brutal than that of the UCD?

During the election campaign, the PSOE fostered the illusion that it had a solution to the industrial crisis favorable to the workers. At the same time, it was careful not to make any concrete commitments. Moreover, it was in crisis-struck regions that the PSOE got its best scores on October 28, 1982.

The first indication of the economic course the Felipe Gonzalez government was going to follow in practice was the choice of the ministers and top officials responsible for the public sector, in particular for the public enterprises hardest hit by the crisis. The minister of the economy, Miguel Boyer; and the new minister of industry, Carlos Solchago, belonged to the right wing of the PSOE. They come from the top levels of public administration, and were viewed with suspicion even by the UGT apparatus. But the appointment of these people as ministers was not a surprise, since they were PSOE members.

The real surprises were that the PSOE put such figures as Enrique Moya and Claudio Boada, who had long and "brilliant" careers behind them as servants of big capital, in charge of the public sector. Boada even held one of the highest economic posts under the Francoist dictatorship.

The PSOE's economic policy was in line with the records of the political personnel it selected. From the beginning, it has been, and remains, a capitalist policy applied with brutality and boundless arrogance. (1)

The PSOE's response to the industrial crisis — axing of jobs and eliminating unprofitable sectors — was quite up to the standards of the policies applied by the most reactionary governments of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The PSOE government counted on the "market economy" and the "dynamism of the Spanish economy," as Felipe Gonzalez says, and the mythical "light at the end of the tunnel" to bring modernization of the Spanish economy and put Spain in the "leading group" of the imperialist countries.

So, no one could be surprised when a few days after May Day this year, Felipe Gonzalez told a meeting of Madrid employers that "capitalism is the least bad system that exists." It should not have come as a surprise to anyone either that in the same period Alfonso Escamez, the main boss of the leading Spanish private bank, the Banco Central, whose role in financing coup d'etat operations remains murky, said: "The government's policy is the best possible." There is a common chord between the PSOE government and the bosses.

The PSOE's concrete plan was first formualted in April 1983 in an appendix to the *White Book* on industrial reconversion. The central objectives have not changed since then, even though the tactics have evolved. The costs of this in jobs and public funds are cited in the box in this article. The main instruments the government is using to accomplish its plan are the classical ones known under other names in other countries in capitalist Europe.

First of all, there are the "Employment Promotion Funds," which the workers rightly call "unemployment offices." (2) Secondly, there are the "Urgent Reindustrialization Zones" (ZURS), in which the establishment of industrial enterprises is to be promoted by subsidies, cheap credit, tax write-offs, and so forth. It should be noted that the PSOE's industrial reconversion has not provided for a single real, serious reindustrialization project. In reality, the government's only project, which is being touted as a bonanza, is setting up a European subsidiary of Disneyland in Almeria.

So, the initial objective in the PSOE's industrial reconversion was shutting down the ore-treatment plant at Sagunto. The technical justification that was given for this measure has to be seen as essentially a coverup for what was a political choice. (3) The government's decision was first of all in line with accepting the production quotas set by the European Steel Commission. Secondly, it selected a weak link in the steel industry to start eliminating production facilities.

Which was the "weak link"? Of the three integrated steel complexes in the Spanish state, the government chose first of all to maintain the one that belongs to the private sector, Altos Hornos de Viscaya. Moreover, this complex is linked to the multinational American Steel Corporation, which will be the big gainer from the operation. Of the two public enterprises, Ensidesa (with 22,500 workers) was the biggest. A direct attack on it would provoke a real trauma throughout the Asturian region. Moreover, Ensidesa, which has already been hard hit by the crisis, is a bastion of the workers movement. The government knew what to expect if it attacked it, and it had every reason to shrink from such a move.

So, finally, Sagunto was chosen as the victim because that is where the government expected the workers' resistance to be the weakest. The shutting down of the blast furnaces was to serve as an example of the government's firmness for the entire workers movement. It was to open up the way for applying harsher industrial reconversion measures rapidly and in all the other industries. But the workers and the whole city of Sagunto quickly showed the government that it had seriously underestimated their strength.

The Sagunto steelworks, the Altos Hornos del Mediterraneo (AHM), employed about 4,000 workers, about 60% of whom were union members. This was much higher than the average rate of unionization today in the Spanish workers movement. The Workers Commissions (CCOO), the union confederation linked to the Communist Party, were strongly predominant. And within the CCOO, the trade-union left linked to the so-called pro-Soviet currents in the CP had the decisive weight.

In addition, although in a minority, the UGT had significant representation.

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1. Cf *Inprecor* (*IV*'s French-language sister publication), No 163, December 19, 1983.
2. The Jobs Promotion Funds are a kind of unemployment benefit that lasts three years. The recent experience of these funds in the special-steel industry, where this system has been operating for two years, has shown the following results. About 5% of the workers concerned have found new jobs or been put in retraining programs. About 50%, completely demoralized, have withdrawn from these funds. And the remaining 45% have found individual solutions.
3. Moreover, the government's decision did not respect the conclusions of the report drawn up for the government by the Kawasaki "advice" company on the reconversion of the steel industry. It proposed not only maintaining the one treatment plant at Sagunto but to install a new rolling mill.

And the anarchist CNT was also present.

The town of Sagunto was built around the steel industry. The shutting down of blast furnaces, the direct elimination of 2,200 jobs that was projected, would mean that it would become a ghost town, as the local people themselves said. So, the entire city became involved in the fight at Sagunto to resist a decision made by the government of a party that held an absolute electoral majority. It is no accident that this struggle came to be known under the name of "Sagunto" rather than that of the enterprise.

A heroic struggle

I cannot go back over all the vicissitudes of the struggle here. Suffice it to say that it involved more than twenty general strikes in the region, six or seven marches on Madrid and innumerable demonstrations. It also involved clashes with the police, which led to tragedy last December, when the cops opened fire with machine guns on one of these demonstrations.

During these 14 months of "trench warfare" between the people of Sagunto and the PSOE government, the working class resistance dug in beyond its defenses, with its own instruments, strengths and weaknesses, under the slogan of "Sagunto will not be shut down!"

In the first weeks, the Sagunto struggle took on some confused features, which had the effect of disorienting the revolutionary vanguard. On the one hand, the right wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to gain a place in the mobilization, using the theme of "defend our steel industry against the PSOE government." A certain populism thus showed up in the initial demonstrations, when the leadership kept out the banners, slogans and songs of the workers movement. At the same time, stress was put on themes that involved competition between Sagunto and the other steel companies in the Spanish state.

For example, a feature of the strikers' propaganda was Sagunto should get the steel rolling mill rather than Ensidesa. This attitude obviously was encouraged by the right. And the government looked favorably on everything that might divide the steelworkers. It should also be said that the majority union leaderships did nothing, either at AHV (in Viscaya) or at Ensidesa, during these 14 months to promote solidarity with the Sagunto struggle. Thus, they fostered the illusion among the workers in these enterprises that they were going to get off unscathed. However, these workers soon realized what a false sense of security this was.

This "populist" stage of the struggle did not last long. But at the start, you had to know how to set your course in accordance with the essentially working-class dynamic of the mobilization and not be distracted by the ephemeral aspects it took on, owing to the demagogy of the right and the inexperience of those involved in the movement.

The crisis in figures

In March 1984, the number of unemployed was 2.8 million, or 21% of the economically active population. Only 30% of the unemployed receive any sort of benefits.

Since the onset of the crisis, more than a million industrial jobs, out of a total of 4 million, have been eliminated. At present, 830,000 workers are still working in the metalworking industry.

According to the figures compiled by the UGT, industrial reconversion will wipe out another 70,000 jobs directly, and indirectly, 250,000 jobs. More than a quarter of wage workers in industry will be hit.

The total cost of industrial reconversion has been estimated at a trillion pesetas, that is, about 7 billion dollars. About 90% of the financing will come from public funds.

The trend in employment in steel is the following: In 1976, there were 47,282 jobs; in 1982, 37,500 and the projection for 1985 is 27,000. In 1982, the distribution of steel jobs was as follows: 11,000 in AHV in Viscaya; 22,500 in the Ensidesa trust in Asturias; 4,000 in AHM in Sagunto.

The employment trend in shipbuilding was as follows: 1976, 50,000 jobs; 1983, 43,000 jobs; projected for 1985, 23,000 jobs.

Unity of the workers at the three steelworks had to be based on defending the legitimate right of those who worked and lived in Sagunto to save the industrial installations that provided them with work. On this basis, and not by invoking some abstract solidarity, you could, from within the struggle, correct the more dubious forms by which the workers and the people expressed their determination to resist, and combat the propaganda designed to foster a spirit of competiton among the three steel complexes.

But, in any case, these problems quickly faded into the background. It was the formidable power of the struggle that came to the fore, and in particular the power of unity in this fight.

In the works, unity was based on a workers assembly that became almost a standing body, embracing both full-time and temporary workers. This unity spread to the city, and gave rise to the organization of coordinating committees of women and youth. These committees played a central role in the mobilization, often more radical and more active than the workers organizations themselves.

Finally, there was unity in the leadership of the struggle. This was assured by the joint action of two bodies. One was the factory committee, which was elected at the time of the 1982 union elections. The other was a trade-union coordinating committee including representatives of the CCOO, the UGT, and the CNT. The second had a decisive weight. There is no question but that this unity was key for organizing the mobilization, but it also created problems that appeared in the final phase of the struggle.

Thus, very diverse forms of struggle could be integrated into the mobilization. These methods, from the most elementary to the most radical, were continually combined. Some 700,000 signatures were collected on a solidarity petition. Pressure was brought to bear on the parliamentary institutions. A government "mediator" was brought in. And at the same time, the works was occupied, and a director of the enterprise "kidnapped," to use the term thrown around by the press, along with the head of the autonomous government of the Valencian country.

One of the methods of struggle deserves special mention. That is, the intelligent use of an "alternative plan" to the government's plan. It was drawn up by the workers. The experience of several years of fighting capitalist industrial reconversion has made revolutionaries very mistrustful, and rightly so, of the tactical value of presenting counterplans to the proposals of the bosses or the government. These have been of two types: (1) "Socialist plans," which have had little usefulness in day-to-day agitation, and at best have been limited to propaganda work. (2) Proposals within the framework of trade-union "realism," and therefore inevitably accepting terms of reference most favorable to the bosses concerned about improving the competitiveness of enterprises and the productivity of labor.

In fact, it is impossible to avoid dissecting the government's projects, even on the technical level, and showing the viability of the workers' proposals. You just have to keep your eye on the workers' proposal. And the decisive and unyieldingly rigorous criterion has to be defending jobs and radical opposition to layoffs. This is what was done in Sagunto.

The workers drew up a plan and managed to present it in a clear way, showing that a relatively modest investment of 16 billion pesetas (a little over 100 million dollars) would make it possible to keep the threatened blast furnaces going on a profitable basis for the medium term.

It is true that it is easier to propose a counterplan in steel, for example, than in the shipbuilding industry. (4) In all cases, however, this poses difficult problems.

4. The shipyard workers drew up an alternative plan based on an intransigent defense of jobs. They demanded that a 750,000 tons production capacity be maintained. At the same time, they called for upholding the objective of winning 5% of the world market, the historical maximum attained by Spanish industry. But in this case, the function of the counterplan was pure propaganda, because how could you assure the sale of the ships built?

Among them are questions of wages and working conditions, which are very often approached from the wrong standpoint of "sharing the sacrifices." Nonetheless, this is a field of battle that the trade-union left cannot avoid.

The need for solidarity with Sagunto was evident from the first, but the results in this area were not enough. You can understand the despairing statement of one of the leaders of the struggle shortly before it came to an end: "What can 4,000 workers do against 10 million votes?"

The strangest thing is that a struggle that aroused an enormous sympathy, which was considered an example by the whole vanguard of the workers movement, got only mediocre solidarity outside the region around Sagunto. Building solidarity was certainly not an easy task, in view of the problems described above. But it was made more difficult by the fact that most of the industrial centers in the Spanish state had their own mobilizations. This was true in Asturias, in Galicia, and in Viscaya in the shipbuilding industry. In Guipuzcoa, there was a mobilization in machine-tool and special steel, and in Navarra and Asturias in the mining industry. And it was hardly easy, on top of waging these struggles, to take on the task of solidarity with another struggle.

The main problem undoutedly was that solidarity with Sagunto should have been one of the components of a general program of mobilizing the working class against industrial reconversion, in which all the crisis-struck industries would have had their place. Obviously, the majority trade-union leaderships in the workers movement have done nothing serious in this regard.

But the trade-union left itself has failed to take initiatives. It is true that the solidarity enjoyed by the Sagunto struggle was organized by the CCOO, and in particular by the trade-union left, but it was less than could have and should have been done.

Finally, the most important lesson of Sagunto was the value of establishing the authority of the factory committee. From the first days, the workers refused to obey any other directives than the ones that come from the committee, which organized the various aspects of production. Not only were the orders to extinguish the famous Blast Furnace No. 2 rejected, but even demands for reducing production and other directives of this sort were ignored by the strikers.

It is because of this that the media talked about a "Sagunto soviet." (5) It is symbolic also that when the struggle ended last March, the chairperson of the factory committee, Manuel Campoy, called on one of the directors to give the order to lower the flame in the blast furnace to the minimum, the last stage before shutting it off.

The political problem

Those 14 months of defying the authority of the government and the management of the enterprise are among the finest and most instructive pages in the history of the Spanish workers movement. Nonethless, this challenge was confined to resisting layoffs. The political consciousness of the workers, their understanding of their enemy's aims and the means that had to be employed to carry the fight through to a finish, remained at a low level.

The main weakness of the struggle at Sagunto thus lay in its relationship to the PSOE government. It is true that this was the most difficult problem, and it remains so today for the Spanish workers movement as a whole.

In the enterprise in question, the UGT was the second biggest trade-union force, and the PSOE was the majority party in the town. But despite this, it was possible to wage a hard and long-drawn-out fight against the government. This was because the common objective more or less consciously held by the workers was to put pressure on the government, and they had the illusion that ultimately they would manage to make it listen to reason.

As the struggle advanced, the popular indignation grew, and the criticism of the government became harsher. In fact, the government's prestige suffered very badly in the country as a whole because of its attitude toward Sagunto. But the lack of an immediate alternative and the fact that the PSOE cabinet seemed to be the sole "left" government possible today in the Spanish state weighed quite heavily. This was especially true when people began to realize that pressure would not be enough.

The notion that there is no other governmental alternative is played on by Felipe Gonzalez every time he talks to workers. The search for a political focus for the struggles was stymied, since there was no solution in the short run. It would demand a considerable effort for a section of the mass workers movement to assume the task of presenting an anti-capitalist alternative to solve the crisis and to emerge as a sufficiently credible political pole of reference to the left of the PSOE.

In the short run, there is no perspective for anything more than struggles and actions. It is necessary to state forcefully, and convince the trade-union left, that it is possible and necessary to work for a general counterattack by the workers movement against the government's economic policy, even in the present conditions. It is possible to defeat this policy, to counter it with the powerful threat of a general strike, even if it is difficult to offer any positive perspective for an alternative government as a focus for the struggle.

In the early days of February 1984, we reached the highest level of working-class mobilization we have seen in recent years. On February 2 and 3, a half million workers were involved in struggle throughout the Spanish state against the government's industrial reconversion policy. At this point, the government was cornered. It was the UGT that gave it a way out. Up to then the government had used the arrogant methods of technocrats. Henceforth it was to use the more subtle ones of trade-union bureaucrats. The movement was too strong to attack frontally. The government had to start by dividing it.

In fact, the new proposal the UGT made to the government as a condition for supporting it was a very simple one and involved minimal changes. First of all, the workers coming under the Employment Promotion Funds (FPE) were to have their work contracts "suspended" rather than annulled. The second part was advice to the government not to push big concrete reconversion operations but rather to seek agreements at the level of the individual concern. This was to pre-

5. We should mention in this regard, the clever response of a Sagunto worker at a solidarity meeting in Barcelona to a question about the "soviet." He said: "We did not create a soviet, because we could not."

vent a convergence of the problems in various industries or various enterprises in the same industry. As one of the UGT leaders said cynically, "You can't step on everybody's corns at once."

The immediate consequence of these changes was that the UGT dropped the criticisms it had been making of the government's policy in this field. It stopped participating in the fightback mobilizations, and adopted a line of total support for the government's plans. Its whole purpose was to divide the movement, to break up the united resistance.

Of course, the UGT had also to play on the fatigue that was developing and the lack of perspectives. These factors encouraged individual solutions, illusions that "suspended" work contracts would go back into force in two or three years, when the economy "came out of the tunnel."

Moreover, the UGT convinced the government to play fully the card of early retirement, knowing that 15% of Spanish workers are 55 years old or older.

The government first tried to shift its tactics in the special-steel industry. Despite the truly heroic resistance of the Orbegozo workers in Hernani, in the province of Guipuzcoa, Felipe Gonzalez's government managed in mid-February to score its first victory in a crisis-struck industry.

A few days later, it succeeded in defeating another of the exemplary struggles of the time, the fight of the workers at Potasas de Navarra. The CCOO had seemed to be leading the movement of resistance to layoffs up to then. But they were totally disoriented. Their stated objective of "negotiating reconversion" had no credibility, because the government discussed important questions only with the UGT.

Was defeat inevitable?

What is more, the UGT's breaking of trade-union unity made it necessary to organize the struggles in a more deep-going way. The mobilization had to be intensified, on the basis of explaining to the workers the reasons for continuing the struggle. It was necessary to reach an agreement on unity in action with the various sections of the trade-union left determined to maintain the mobilization. Finally, the leadership had to have the initiative to make the leap forward required by the government's new tactic. What was required to meet the challenge of the new situation was to prepare for a general strike.

But the CCOO leadership did none of this. At first, it continued as if nothing had changed, calling "days of struggle" without any political or organizational preparation, which were failures. Then, it talked a very radical language but in practice went for the "lesser evil," the "least bad" agreement possible.

In these conditions, at the end of February, the government launched its final offensive against Sagunto. Yet another

One successful struggle by workers in the Spanish state — against the Lemoniz nuclear power station in the Basque country (DR)

time, it issued the order to "shut off Blast Furnace No. 2." The resistance went on for many more weeks, but at the beginning of April an accord was signed between the government and the factory committee. A few days later, it was approved by majority vote in the workers assembly.

The union leaderships, in particular the leaders of the CCOO, presented this agreement as a victory, playing up the only significant concession the government made — a formal commitment to create 500 jobs in Sagunto before the end of the year. But that was hardly a high price for the government to pay after 14 months of struggle, especially when you consider that 2,200 people were laid off, including 900 who were retired early, and the fact that the jobs that are to be created will be precarious. (6)

The vote for the agreement did not reflect any feeling of victory on the part of the workers. First of all, it has to be seen as a negative development that most opposed letting the temporary workers and and people of Sagunto participate in the vote, as some comrades correctly proposed. All those affected by the closing of the Sagunto plant, all those who took part in the fight for 400 days, should have been able to take part together in making the final decision, just as during the struggle, it was the "people's assemblies" that made the fundamental decisions.

As Angel Olmos, regional general secretary of the CCO, explained, most of the 2,157 votes for the compromise came from workers close to 55 years of age, who opted for "individual solutions," and those who were influenced by the UGT and the Eurocommunist section of the CCOO. The minority of 1,033 who opposed the agreement included the vanguard workers in the enterprise, who had taken the lead in the struggle.

Outside Sagunto, for militant workers throughout the workers movement — except those fooled by the manipulative speeches of the CCOO leaders — it was clear that a major battle had been lost, even though the workers are still far from having lost the "war" of the industrial reconversions.

Was this defeat inevitable? Absolutely no! In reality, the question was posed for several weeks of using a means of struggle that could have been the springborad for the leap forward that the mobilization had to make in order to win. That was, a "self-called" meeting, as the Italian workers term it, of representatives of factory councils and unions throughout the country to launch the initiative of building a general strike against the government's reconversion policy. Unfortunately, this project was not realized.

Why is such an initiative so important? The reason is that it answers to a fundamental problem that has arisen in the struggles in crisis-struck industries, in particular because they have run up against a "socialist" government.

In Sagunto, for example, we saw the struggle go through an initial phase led by

6. The CCOO themselves publicly denounced, on October 6, 1983, the two most important projects for building industrial installations in Sagunto. The National Industrial Institute (INI) maintains that these schemes represent compliance with its commitment to create jobs. According to the CCOO report, the Enfersa fertilizer factory threatens an industry that already is suffering from 25% excess production.

The construction of this plant would touch off a reconversion of the entire industry, probably bringing the closure of the Enfersa plant in La Curna. As for the project of the Italian glass multinational SIV, it would create similar or still worse problems in an industry that has a 25% excess installed capacity. The bosses in this industry already raised the threat of reconversion on February 28, 1984, saying that the SIV factory in Sagunto, with its 350 workers "could make all the glass needed by the Spanish automotive industry."

the normal trade-union structures, which was very deepgoing and marked by a high degree of unity. This created favorable conditions for resisting a brutal and naked assault, for mounting pressure on the government.

But as the struggle developed, its own momentum brought it up against the pitfalls created by the enemy's maneuvers and the divisions they sowed in the ranks of the workers. To surmount these pitfalls, you had to be able to break the grip of the union apparatuses on the workers. At the same time, insofar as possible, you had to avoid a head-on confrontation with these apparatuses. The way to do this is to base yourself on the majority (not all) workers in the workers assembly, who could continue the struggles if they were offered militant and realistic perspectives.

In such a situation, the most effective means of struggle is for the most combative sections of workers to take the initiative of promoting a national "self-called" meeting.

This is the main conclusion to be drawn from the struggle in Sagunto, and it is the tactic that has to be applied in other struggles in the coming period. It is, however, not very likely that we will see many new Saguntos, that is, struggles of such dynamism and political and social impact. But there is no doubt that we will find the mark of Sagunto on the mobilizations that will continue to develop, and every victory will owe a debt to the 400 days of struggle waged by the 4,000 workers in Sagunto and by the people of the town as a whole. ■

Gonzalez' new course (DR)

LEBANON

Assad keeps the lid on

"The United States will never suffer in Lebanon a defeat such as was inflicted on the French in Dien Bien Phu, because the French had nothing like our *New Jersey*."

Ralph SCHOENMAN

These words were spoken by Ronald Reagan in February 1983, only one year before the US Marines were driven out of Lebanon. In recalling Dien Bien Phu, the debacle which effectively ended French rule in Vietnam, Reagan brought to mind Nixon's recommendation in 1954 that the United States supply nuclear weapons to prevent a French defeat. Indeed, as the Lebanese army of Amin Gemayel disintegrated, the devastating fire power of the *New Jersey* was brought into play.

On two occasions, a "Dien Bien Phu" at the strategic Shouf mountain town of Suk al Gharb was forestalled by the 16-inch gunnery of the battleship *New Jersey*. The US government considered that the fall of Suk al Gharb, which overlooks the presidential palace in Beirut, would cause the flight of Gemayel and the collapse of his regime.

CBS News reported that the *New Jersey* fired 33,000 tons of explosives on Suk al Gharb and the surrounding area. On February 8, 1984, nine 406-mm cannons saturated the Lebanese mountains for 20 consecutive hours, firing over 400 shells. Each shell weighed 1.3 tons and destroyed an area of 100 square meters.

The Druse villages of Biteibat and Bzebdin, and the Maronite village of Shebanyeh were wiped from the face of the earth. Civilian casualties from the successive bombardments exceeded 5,000. Roads were turned into craters, and pinewoods and fertile fields were transformed into scorched earth.

US Naval artillery and Marine shore batteries did not confine their devastation to the Shouf mountains. For an entire week preceding the bombardment of February 8, artillery flooded the densely populated neighborhoods of South Beirut with phosphorus shells, causing casualties again in the thousands among the Shi'a women, children and disabled.

The Phalangist shelling, as well, turned the Shiite neighborhoods of Chiyah, Ghaberi and Tayuni into vast cemeteries of rubble and debris. According to the March 21, 1984, issue of the journal *Al Fajr*, 500 civilians were killed and 250,000 rendered homeless by this shelling.

Yet, despite all the firepower of the *New Jersey* and its sister ships, the Lebanese army crumbled, bringing the regime to the verge of collapse. The scenes and images in West Beirut after the entry of Druse and Shi'a partisan militia evoked memories not of Dien Bien Phu, but of the liberation of Saigon.

Lydia Rokach depicted this scene in the February 22 issue of *Al Fajr*: "The population descended into the streets to hug the T-shirted boys driving new American tanks willingly ceded by the collapsed army. And on the other hand, hundreds of Americans were hysterically assailing the helicopters sent to evacuate them at their embassy site."

Newsweek magazine described the Lebanese situation in its March 5 issue: "For Amin Gemayel, the political situation seemed simply impossible. His army had collapsed, leaving his government in control of little territory beyond East Beirut. At least forty percent of the army's soldiers had deserted to the Muslim militias, in most cases taking their arms and equipment with them."

Yet the regime, written off by everybody and abandoned as beyond salvaging, managed to survive. How could this happen?

A subordinate partnership

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to the dispersal of the Palestinian fighters under a plan engineered by Bechtel Corporation's Phillip Habib. This greatly debilitated the leadership of the Palestinian movement. At the same time, the Lebanese nationalist movement was in disarray. (See *Socialist Action*, Vol. 1, No. 1, "Crisis of leadership in PLO," by Ralph Schoenman.)

The leadership of the National Salvation Front — made up by the Shi'a, Druse and Sunni bourgeois leaderships — had made clear that it was opposed to any change in class relations or in the *social* composition of the Gemayel government. From the time of the initial installation of Amin Gemayel, these leaderships had informed the United States and the Phalange alike that they sought no more than a subordinate partnership in the Lebanese government.

The inclusion of the Moslem bourgeois political figures, both Sunni and Shi'a, was an important part of ruling class strategy for Lebanon. Sa'ab Salem, the venerable Sunni politician with long-standing ties to Saudi Arabia, led the way in providing support for the regime of Amin Gemayel. Nabih Berri of the Shi'a organization, Amal, sought as well to persuade Gemayel to share power. Walid Jumblatt of the Druse expressed "hopefulness" about the Amin government of "national unity."

It soon became apparent, however, that the Gemayel government intended Moslem participation to be no more than one of appearances. The Lebanese army was dominated by the Phalange and its officers. The "Moslem privileged classes" would have to settle for crumbs. There was to be no power sharing.

Syria brokers ceasefire

After the departure of the US Marines, the bourgeois leaderships of the Lebanese National Salvation Front continued to pursue their policies of class collaboration. The collapse of the army in the face of the sustained mass struggle of the oppressed had opened a door to revolutionary power, but there was no one available to close it. Amal leader Nibih Berri told ABC News after the fall of West Beirut: "We are the natural allies of the United States in Lebanon, the natural and best-placed guarantor of US interest."

On March 5, 1984, as the Marines were fleeing Beirut, *Newsweek* reported that a ceasefire had been agreed to by the Gemayel government and the Shiite and Druse militias who controlled West Beirut. The ceasefire had been brokered by Saudi Arabia and Syria. It took hold just as the militias were on the verge of capturing Suk al Gharb and were threatening Ba'abda, site of the presidential palace.

"The ceasefire gave Gemayel a chance to get his house in order and discuss with the various Maronite leaders the peace plan advanced by Saudi Arabia and Syria," *Newsweek* reported. "The green light flashed in Damascus just in time to save what little was left of the Regan administration's policy in Lebanon."

This was not the first time that the Syrian regime of Hafez al Assad had snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory. During the civil war of 1975-76, Syria sent troops in support of the Phalange when the fascist militia of the Gemayels had no more than 24 hours of ammunition remaining to it.

It was a betrayal worked out between Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam and Israeli Minister of Defense Shimon Peres, culminating in the Israeli-Syrian siege of Tal al Zataar. The troops of Assad protected the militia of Bashir Gemael and the Tiger Brigade of Camille Chamoun as they slaughtered Palestinian civilians in a brutal prelude to Sabra and Shatila.

PLO guerrilla fighters (DR)

American decision makers knew all along that Syrian support for the popular struggle was designed solely to provide leverage with which to exact concessions from the United States. The meager advantage sought by Hafez al Assad was to be included in the alignment of class forces securing Lebanon for the United States. If Assad could make himself necessary to this process, then the United States would be obliged to restrain Israeli ambition.

The Lausanne conference

If Israel, like the United States, could not risk the revival of the antiwar movement and mass opposition at home, the Syrians were the card to play while Israel consolidated its control over Southern Lebanon. This is what actually took place at the cynically framed "Inter-Lebanese Conference of National Reconciliation" held in Lausanne.

The conference was first convened and then prolonged under Syrian Vice President Ab'd al-Halim Khaddam's pressure. Khaddam was the man who, in his capacity as foreign minister, had overseen the alliance between the Israelis, the Phalange and the Syrian regime in 1976.

What unfolded in Lausanne was the effective liquidation of the National Salvation Front and the dismantling of the movement that had overcome the US-backed Lebanese army. Any residual illusions about the leadership of these forces were soon dispelled at this conference. Syria and Saudi Arabia came to the rescue of the Gemayel regime, and their Lebanese allies followed suit.

Damascus signaled to Washington and Israel that the tacit collaboration with the Israeli occupation by the Gemayel regime presented no obstacle to Syrian support. Thus, on the one hand, the Syrians were allowing the Gemayel regime to stabilize without even conceding those nominal reforms which the Sunni bourgeoisie had pressured for. On the other hand, the Israeli connection went unopposed.

Hafez al Assad made this position explicit in a statement quoted in the April 2, 1984, issue of *Time* magazine:

"Lebanese reconciliation is the only way. We emphasized this in 1976. We reemphasize it now. Our attitude recently in Lausanne is quite clear. We cooperated fully with President Gemayel. The Syrian representative made hectic efforts at the bilateral and trilateral level. Our position with regard to a government of national unity is one of full support. More than anyone else, we want to see Lebanon united, stable and strong."

Crisis of leadership

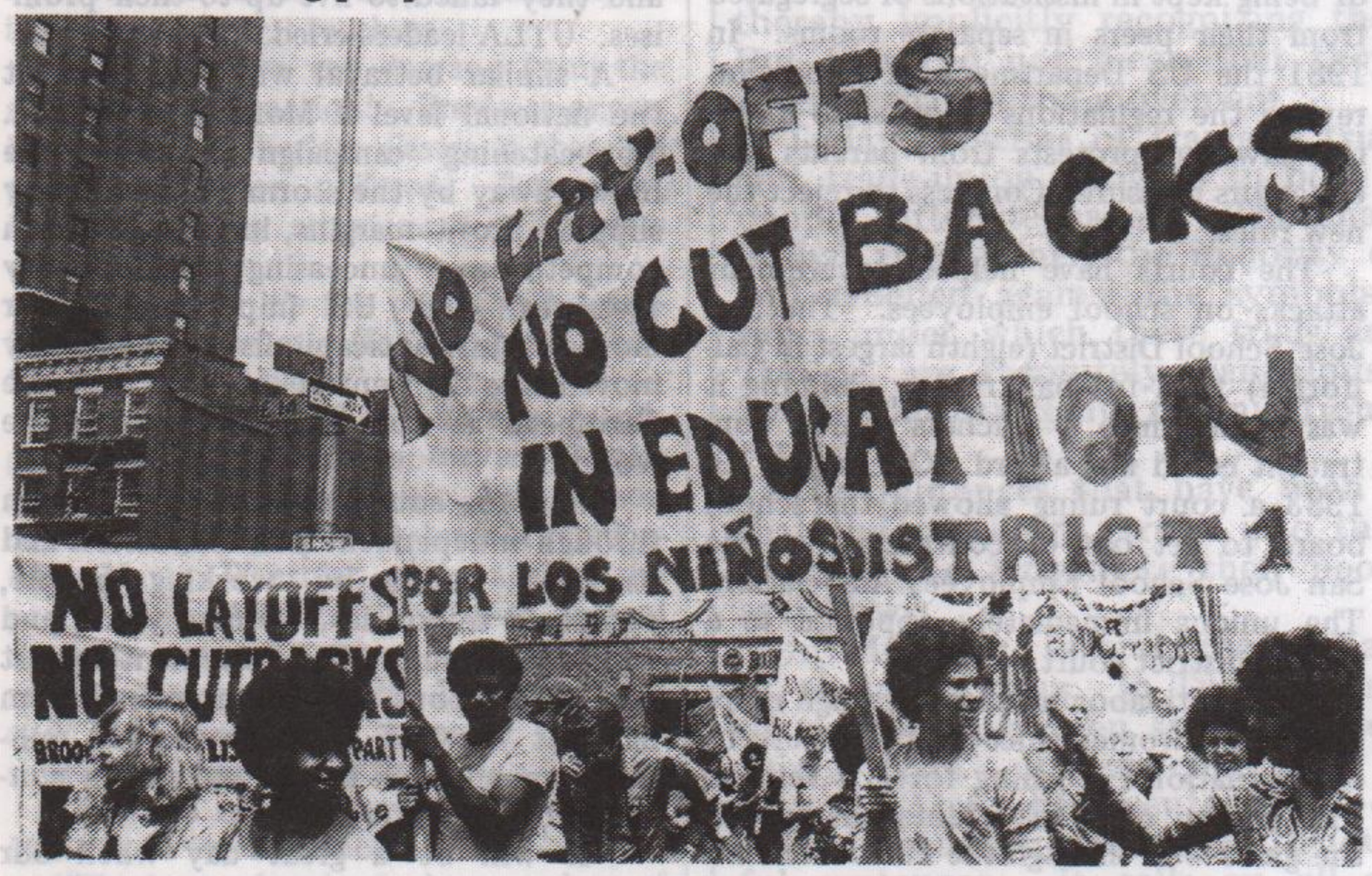
Indeed, at the very moment when the powerful armada of the US Sixth Fleet has been defeated at a great human cost by a popular militia in a national uprising, the bourgeois leaders in the region seem to be in great haste to deliver that struggle once again to the imperialist enemy.

A new generation of Lebanese working poor has fought against huge odds to apparent victory, but at the moment of potential triumph these fighters have once again been betrayed by their leaders. The crisis in Lebanon, as in many parts of the world, is one of revolutionary leadership. In the absence of a genuine revolutionary leadership, the collapse of the imperial leviathan which continues to stalk the planet is needlessly deferred at a cost of untold human suffering. ■

This article is from the May issue of Socialist Action, *an American socialist monthly published in San Francisco.*

The impact of the economic crisis on US education

Schoolchildren in the United States, from five year old students in kindergarten to 17-18 year old graduates of high school, are victims of the mounting economic problems in the richest capitalist nation in the world. The dollar value of education funding has been eaten away by continuing inflation. Large chunks have been bitten out of school programs by the federal government which gives priority to military expenditures and to the drive to bolster profits by attacking the living standards and wage levels of working people.



Evelyn SELL

Schoolchildren pay for capitalist priorities through overcrowded classrooms, loss of supportive services, old or unsafe buildings and restrictions on programs for students with special needs.

Financing for the almost 16,000 separate school districts comes from state governments, local city and county bodies, and the federal budget. The trend is for states and local bodies to contribute almost equal amounts, and for the federal share to drop each year.

Education remains the largest single item in state budgets but, with the recession hitting some areas harder than others, there is great variation from one state to another in per pupil support. The range during the 1982-83 school year was from 1,546 dollars in Alabama and 1,919 dollars in Mississippi to 2,727 dollars in California and 4,303 dollars in New York up to a top of 6,301 dollars in Alaska.

Local areas are also affected differently by losses in tax revenues due to plant shutdowns, unemployment and variations in property values. The only taxes citizens normally have direct control over are local ones for education. This has channeled revolts against rising taxes into votes against issuing school bonds to finance local education needs.

Inequities in local funding exist even in states like California where a court ruling mandated the state to equalize school spending in order to significantly narrow or entirely eliminate the huge gaps between schools in wealthy districts and those in poor ones. In mid-1983 (nine years after the court order) the rich Beverly Hills district was spending 2,772 dollars per pupil while the poor Baldwin Hills district was spending 1,842 dollars.

The federal share of school revenues is the smallest and is shrinking; it accounted for about 7 percent for the 1982-83 school year. At the same time, however, Washington is playing a growing role in determining how local resources are used. The federal government offers "matching funds," for example, to establish or maintain particular programs. Local bodies are thus encouraged or discouraged to adopt or to drop programs based on federal incentives.

Merely looking at figures does not give a true picture of the complicated intermeshing of federal, state and local school financing. Some facts, however, clearly show how national administration policies affect neighborhood schools.

— About two percent of the federal budget goes to education while the portion going to "national defense" keeps rising and is now close to 30 percent.

— The 1981 federal budget dollar allotted 24 cents to "defense" and 15 cents to education. Each year since, "defense" allocations have gone up at the expense of the education share. The proposed 1985 federal budget dollar designates 29 cents for "defense" and 11 cents for education.

— US Congress approved education funds of 13.7 billion dollars in 1980, 15 billion in 1981, 14.2 billion in 1982 and 15.1 billion in 1983. Last year 21 billion dollars was needed merely to offset the 25 percent loss in purchasing power since 1980.

— The federal contribution to total school funding was 9.2 percent for 1979-80 but dropped to 6.4 percent for 1982-83.

To make this situation even worse, there has been a change in the way federal monies are given to the states. Before 1982, laws passed by the US Congress mandated specific aid to programs for handicapped children, women's educational equity, libraries, bilingual programs, asbestos control, etc.

The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act went into effect October 1, 1982 lumping together some 28 different programs and giving "block grants" to the states. No strings were attached to these block grants and the amount of funding was based on a head count of the 5-to-17 year old residents in the state.

At least 80 percent of the funds were supposed to go to local districts according to a weighted formula devised by each state. The new grant approach was touted as a way of cutting down paperwork and increasing local flexibility in meeting changing needs. According to testimony at Congressional hearings, the states used block grants to buy equipment instead of filling needs such as hiring teachers lost through local budget cuts.

The switch to block grants actually resulted in less total funding to the states: from 733 million dollars in 1980 down to 512 million in 1981 and 455 million in 1982. The state-devised distribution formulas gave less than 5,000 dollars to each school district — a drop in the bucket!

The most damage was suffered by urban school districts under court-ordered or voluntary racial desegregation plans. Block grants enriched the 13 most sparsely populated states with fewer nonwhite and high-need students.

The greatest losers were the 25 states and the District of Columbia (seat of the federal government) which have big urban centers with high concentrations of low-income families, large numbers of minority children and many "high cost" students: poor, handicapped, non-English speaking, etc.

The 30 largest school districts lost al-

most half their federal funds; nearly half the nation's minority children are in these hardest hit districts.

One of the 28 programs swallowed up in block grants was a loan plan to pay half the costs of removing hazardous asbestos material from schools. In mid-1983 the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that 8,600 public schools built before 1972 contained cancer-causing asbestos, exposing over 3 million students and teachers to this danger.

According to a different study of only 11 states by the Service Employees International Union, at least 3.24 million students and almost 650,000 school employees may be inhaling cancerous asbestos fibers. The union estimates that one in every ten school buildings contains the hazardous material.

In addition to the harm caused by block grants, the federal administration has slashed funds for programs. In 1981, 1 billion dollars was cut from the school lunch budget. Across the US schools raised meal prices or dropped lunch programs. A Washington lobbying group reported that 3.2 million children were forced to go without lunches during the 1981-82 school year. In 1983 the US Department of Agriculture reported about 3.2 million fewer children bought school lunches due to federal cuts.

Cuts harm children's heath

This year the School Breakfast Program is reaching only one-third of the eligible children. This program lost 20 percent of its federal funding over the last three years resulting in 500,000 fewer children eating breakfast in school compared to 1980.

Schoolchildren went hungry while the government was paying farmers *not* to produce crops and the federal administration was refusing to release surplus food stored in warehouses (such as 1.3 billion pounds of dry milk, 900 million pounds of cheese and 500,000 pounds of butter).

Cutting down farm production, buying up crops and storing foods (or dumping food into the seas) are methods used by the federal government to keep market prices up and increase the profits of agribusiness.

Malnourishment affects students throughout their lifetime. A recent study by Pennsylvania State University's Nutrition Education Center found an alarming rate of dietary-related anemia among school-age children. Anemia decreases motivation, diminishes concentration and decisively impairs learning.

Federal cutbacks have decimated special programs launched by the 1968 Bilingual Education Act. The law mandated school districts with sizable numbers of limited-English-speaking students to provide special aid. Federal funding was authorized for bilingual education, teacher training and classroom materials.

Funding peaked in 1980 at 167 million dollars, then decreased to 157 million for fiscal year 1981 and less than 140 million dollars for the current fiscal year. Federal funds now support only 18 percent of the nation's programs for children with limited English proficiency — at a time when the school population has a rising number of Latino and Asian children. In 1983 about 3.6 million students had limited English proficiency.

Another method used by the federal administration to limit education expenditures is to issue new eligibility restrictions reducing the number of students. In 1975 the US Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act to aid the nation's ten million disabled children by providing free, appropriate public education.

These children were to be "mainstreamed" into regular classrooms instead of being kept in institutions or segregated from their peers in separate rooms. In 1981 the US Department of Education revised the regulations in order to dilute this law but protests from parents and educators pressured Congress to reject the new rules.

The courts have helped government attacks on school employees. The San Jose School District (eighth largest in California) filed for bankruptcy claiming it was locked into a teachers' union contract it could not afford. On August 19, 1983 a court ruling allowed the school board to get out of contracts with the San Jose School Employees Association. The unions immediately appealed to a federal district court.

Such anti-labor maneuvers weigh more heavily on women since about 70 percent of the nation's teaching force is female. The system of block grants has eroded the gains won through the 1974 Women's Educational Equity Act. The loss of school breakfast and lunch programs have a special impact on women who head almost half of the country's families living in poverty.

Although all aspects of education have deteriorated as a result of the capitalist economic crisis, President Reagan has been targeted as the major villain. Both the 1.7 million-member National Educational Association (NEA) and the 600,000-member American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) are pursuing a dump-Reagan campaign and have endorsed the Democratic candidacy of Walter Mondale.

NEA President Mary Futrell expects 700,000 teachers to volunteer as Mondale campaigners. NEA set a goal of 4 million dollars to be collected by its political action committees to support presidential and Congressional candidates in 1984. In announcing NEA's endorsement, Futrell stated, "A Mondale Administration will not pass the buck on educational reform."

Educational reform to help students, teachers and working class parents will not come from either Democratic nor Republican administrations — as past history has amply proven. I recently witnessed the futility of pinning hopes on so-called "friends of labor."

I'm a member of United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the largest NEA local in the US with 18,000 members. Last year UTLA carried out its most intensive political campaign effort ever in order to oust school board members who had tried to balance the district's budget by cutting teachers' health benefits and halting the system of yearly salary increases.

UTLA officers were elated when the "pro-teacher, pro-student" candidates backed by the union won the election. The new board members publicly repeated their commitments to fight for two major points in the union's contract demands.

Four months later, the new "liberal" board members were put to the test during the actual contract negotiations — and they failed to live up to their promises. UTLA leaders cried, "Betrayal!"

A similar betrayal will take place at the national level if Mondale is elected. Vote-catching campaign promises are blown away by the storm whipped up by slipping profit margins, increased foreign competition, unceasing inflationary pressures, and US imperialism's war moves against anticapitalist revolutionary movements in Central America and the Caribbean as well as other parts of the world.

Gains for education can only be won through independent political action and struggles waged by working people, oppressed minorities, women, youth and working farmers. The movement against nuclear weapons and US interventionism has put forward a slogan linking military expenditures to the worsening condition of US schools:

"It will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the Pentagon has to hold bake sales to buy weapons!" As it stands now: parents hold bake sales to raise money needed by local schools while their tax monies are used to support the growing US military machine. ■

SWEDEN

Highschool students strike against cutbacks

"This was only a first step. We are ready for a real fight to stop the cutbacks in the high schools."

That was what Bjoern Mellstrand, district liaison officer for the Stockholm area High School Students Organization told me after the high school strike last Thursday.

Goeran EKLOEF

From 20,000 to 25,000 at fifty schools boycotted their afternoon classes

in protest against the school authorities plans to cut spending by 41 million kroner (about 5 million dollars).

The cuts will mean, among other things, that substitute teachers will not be brought in until after the regular teacher has been out for some time, that the pupils will have to pay for their own school lunches and that a lot of schools will be closed. Summer school will be abolished.

"The most important thing is the attack on school lunches," Bjoern Mellstrand said.

"Of course, they are only asking that all families pay 125 kroner a term. But it is very likely that the cost will go up, and then finally we might even have to pay for going to school."

Cutting back on substitute teachers, in school student Bjoern Mellstrand's opinion, was another step toward imposing classes without teachers.

"The least we can demand from the schools is instruction! Previous experience with teacherless classes is that the pupils' education suffered. Personally, I don't pay any attention in teacherless classes anymore.

"Obviously, it's the pupils with learning problems who suffer the most when teachers are cut back."

About 15,000 of the striking pupils gathered in the afternoon at Humlegaarden, where the district chairperson of the High School Students Organization, Martin Waestfelt spoke against the proposed cutbacks. The high school students also got a chance to listen to the music of Commando M. Pigg, Mr. Soul and Tant Strul, who appeared there to show their support for the action.

"Protests can have an effect," Bjoern Mellstrand was convinced.

"We have already had a number of city council members call up our offices and say that they are not going to vote for the cuts proposal."

Radio Stockholm reported later that the decision was postponed for a week. But it's clear that there was not going to be any appropriation for school lunches.

About 10 percent of high school students belong to the Eleveorganisation (the High School Students Organization), but this percentage could be a lot higher.

"A lot of schools have banned us," Bjoern Mellstrand said. "We cannot go into those schools with our informational material. But we are getting a real groundswell now, with a lot of new members joining."

Bjoern Mellstrand thought that the Thursday action was a good basis for strengthening the organization. The leadership is now going to discuss how to follow up on this first mobilization in the high schools. ■

This article is from the May 17 issue of Internationalen, *the paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International.*

NORTH AFRICA

Stop the victimization of participants in the hunger rebellion !

In January 1984, tumultuous mass rebellions, first in Tunisia and then in Morocco, blocked the attempts of the governments of these two countries to apply the policy dictated by the IMF. The international banking institution had demanded measures whose main effect would be to produce a rapid rise in the price of necessities, that is to starve the already poverty-stricken masses, in order to "reduce the budget deficit."

Although both regimes had the support of the imperialist countries, they were forced to retreat. They withdrew the hated measures, thereby implicitly recognizing the legitimacy of the mass rebellion. But that did not mean that they were not preparing to take their revenge against the movement.

Today, a series of frameup trials are being staged against political and trade-union activists in both countries, as well as against young people, often teenagers. The charge against these activists and youth is that they joined the majority of their fellow citizens in the streets and rebelled against the symbols of power and wealth. The conditions under which these trials are being held, both in Morocco and Tunisia, are absolutely scandalous, and have been denounced as such by the human-rights organizations and lawyers in the countries concerned.

The sentences that have been handed down reflect the great fear that the rebellions struck into these governments and to their determination to intimidate their peoples. The first verdicts have been as follows:

In Morocco, several dozens have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 15 years. In Tunisia, a so-called democratic country, dozens of people have been sentenced to terms at forced labor from six to thirty years. In particular, ten young people between the ages of 19 and 22 have been sentenced to death in order to "set an example."

The Fourth International denounces these judicial farces and vengeful sentences. It calls on all democratic and working-class forces to mobilize in all countries to force the governments of Morocco and Tunisia to retreat once again and release all those who took part in the hunger rebellions. ■

United Secretariat
of the Fourth International
June 7, 1984

January 1984 hunger riots in Morocco (DR)

The trade unions facing up to Mitterrand's austerity policies

Since the installation of the government headed by Socialist president Mitterrand and prime minister Mauroy in May 1981 new contradictions have affected the French workers confederations. These are the product of their direct confrontation with the major social problems engendered by the government's austerity policy and the employers' offensive. Massive redundancies in shipbuilding, steel, cars and coal mines — that is, the traditional bastions of the French working class — have forced the union movement to come up with a clear response to this policy of cutting jobs. The concurrent attacks by the government and employers on the mechanisms for price indexation of wages also call for a clear response by the trade unions to defend workers' buying power.

Defending wages and jobs is surely the primary vocation of trade unions. But the three major union confederations in France do not even fulfil this function — neither the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT) of Henri Krasucki, led by the French Communist Party, nor the Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail, formed in 1964 from a process of secularisation of the Confederation Francaise des Travailleurs Chretiens (CFTC), nor Force Ouvriere (FO), which originated in a right-wing split from the CGT in 1947.

This becomes more and more obvious as the economic crisis deepens. The battle to defend wages and jobs would entail opposition to the austerity policies of the Socialist Party/Communist Party government. None of these union federations, the CGT, CFDT or FO, want to oppose this government head on. This attitude has led to a loss of credibility for trade unionism in general. It could hardly be otherwise, inasmuch as the unions are giving up the defence of the workers' immediate demands and coming to be seen by the masses as linked to the government and dependent on its policies, or ready to line up behind it to the detriment of their own traditional programme of demands.

The division between the CGT and the CFDT since 1977 — the year of the rupture in the Union of the Left based on the Common Programme of the Left, between the SP and CP and also including the small bourgeois group the Left Radical Movement (MRG) — has continued, grown and hardened in the workplaces. This trade union division does not reflect any difference in debate or practice between a reformist orientation and an anticapitalist one. The CGT, CFDT and FO vie only to get into a better position to avoid defending the workers' interests and breaking with capitalism.

Jean LANTIER

A growing number of workers began to get a more or less clear idea of the various factors in the crisis in the trade union movement at the point where the situation underwent a basic change. For the first time since the war, in 1983 the overall buying power of wage earners began to drop. This was the year when the government made harsh choices on the questions of closures, which were firmly applied in the following year. However, the workers' unions were not there, ready to answer these anti-worker policies.

Since that point, the opposition currents that had developed within the workers federations have found themselves confronted with some decisive events. A huge responsibility now rests on their frail shoulders. These oppositions have to be able to stimulate a fighting mass trade-unionism among the rank and file in intransigent defence of the workers demands, act as an alternative leadership in struggles, oppose the bureaucratic practice of the union apparatuses and provide anti-capitalist answers for all those breaking with reformist politics.

In December 1983 and January 1984 unskilled workers at the Talbot-Poissy car factory, belonging to the Peugeot group, went on strike. This strike was in response to the management's demand for 3,000 redundancies. This was a significant dispute. It was the first strike of national importance against the plans for restructuring industry and the elimination of jobs they involved. Support for this struggle determined the line of divide in the unions around the simple question that it posed: should or should not threatened redundancies be fought?

The CGT, which had recently become the majority union in the factory of 17,000 workers, started the dispute in order to win a negotiated solution. (1) To put an end to the action it approved an agreement between the employers and the government, countersigned by the Communist ministers. This accord authorised the management to proceed with 1,905 redundancies of the 3,000 originally requested. (2)

In the name of a chauvinist campaign (save the French trademark Talbot) and the so-called defence of general interests (accept 1,905 redundancies to save the remaining 15,000 jobs), the CGT turned against the strike movement. The union chiefs thought that it would be possible to get the workers to return to work on the basis of this agreement. However, at this point the movement got out of their control, thanks to the combativity of several hundred of the immigrant workers on strike, whom the CGT leadership could not bring to heel.

For the first time, a feeling began to take form throughout the CGT that the confederation was not supporting striking workers because of its commitment to support the government's policy. Rank and file members and even local representatives and organisers, particularly members of the CP, began to get worked up. Every evening for a week the television showed CGT leaders being shouted down in the mass meetings of Talbot workers that rejected the proposal to return to work.

Workers struggles and divisions in the trade unions

The CGT national leadership had no hesitation in adding its voice to those of members of the government in denouncing the strike movement as irresponsible and extremist. While the CGT leadership protested half-heartedly against police action against strikers on New Year's Eve, it took a course designed to assure that the dispute would remain isolated. Not a single solidarity leaflet was distributed, nor was there a single collection for the strikers support fund.

The CGT's public desertion of the strikers, in front of millions of television viewers, gave the bosses union, the so-called Confederation of Free Trade Unions (Confederation des Syndicats Libres, CSL), the opportunity to organise an attack on the strike. This union had had overwhelming support in the factory until 1982. On January 3, 1,500 men equipped with meat hooks, slingshots and ball bearings, as well as fire arms, attacked the B3 building in the factory, the bastion of the strike.

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1. In 1982 there was a wave of activity among carworkers, particularly immigrants, against the bosses' unions and for their dignity as workers. The CGT won support in Talbot Poissy because of its role in this strike. For the Talbot strike of December/January 1983/84 see *International Viewpoint*, No 45, January 30, 1984.
2. Under French labour law collective redundancies, or the sackings of elected workers representatives, have to be approved by the minister of labour for the government, whether in public or private enterprises.

Several strikers were wounded and one striker's eye was damaged. Although the strikers that day managed to repel the fascists in the factory who attacked them, along with some elements from the New Force Party (Parti des Forces Nouvelles, PFN), this was no thanks to the CGT.

Some of the Paris CGT leaders were in the factory at that time, but they did not take charge of organising either for the physical response to the attackers or for getting effective solidarity from other workplaces. In the days that followed the CGT nationally tried to distribute to its members 7 million copies of a leaflet putting the responsibility for the confrontations at Talbot on 'left infiltrators' from the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR, Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International, the CFDT and the CSL.

However, most of these leaflets stayed piled up in local union headquarters, the members not feeling very inclined to distribute them.

In the face of this attitude on the part of the CGT leadership in the Talbot strike, members of the union drew up an appeal, which was launched publicly on the initiative of the CGT section in Renault-Sandouville, near the Channel port of Le Havre. It called for solidarity with the Talbot strikers, support for their demand for 'zero redundancies' at Talbot, and for the national CGT leadership to organise a nationwide response adequate to meet the bosses attacks on jobs. The appeal also specified that this should be done in such a way as to unite the workers and various trade unions.

Support for the appeal spread rapidly in car and metalworking plants (Chausson, Gennevilliers, Renault-Cleon) and in the CGT in general. On the basis of support for the slogan 'zero redundancies', a new union opposition appeared within the CGT. This opposition had an impact on various layers, CP activists in the workplaces, as well as combative CGT militants, even though most of these were not yet ready for a public or spectacular opposition to the orientation of their national leadership.

It was quite simply a rapid shift by the CGT leadership that headed off the growth of this embryonic opposition movement. The confederation leadership saw in the Talbot struggle an indication that there was a possibility that it could fail to hold workers behind its directives at the national level as well. In fact, the mobilisation that had got out of its control in this particular workplace had to an extent crystallised all the vital forces at work in the union movement, including the young immigrants of the second generation, those born in France of immigrant parents.

Once the strike mobilization in Talbot was broken, the CGT changed its tune. It began to criticise the government, and put forward a calendar of trade-union days of action, so as to avoid any risk of finding itself outflanked by sectoral strike movements that it could not control.

In other words, the CGT's aim was to make sure that it would not again find itself outdistanced by a militant rank and file, as it had been at Talbot, and to carefully siphon off the workers' real discontent with the government's austerity policies through symbolic protest actions.

CGT support for Talbot strike before agreement with government (DR)

Drawing the lessons of the Talbot dispute, the CGT organised successive demonstrations in Paris for workers on strike against redundancies in shipbuilding, the coal mines and the Lorraine steel industry. These protest actions provided an outlet for the workers' fighting spirit being given a militant facade by speeches containing sharp criticisms of the austerity policy.

But as the conflicts in question have become hardened and sharper, local CGT leaderships have emerged that want to continue the struggle against redundancies to the bitter end, conscious that they have their back to the wall facing the government's and employers' offensive. This has been the case in the Seyne shipyards near Toulon on the Mediterranean coast, at Pechiney-Gardannes, at Ugine Aciers, and in the steel industry of Lorraine in north east France.

An oppositional current appeared in the CGT several years ago in the form of an upsurge of feeling against division between the CP and SP and for kicking out the right-wing president Giscard d'Estaing in the 1981 presidential elections. This current had a moment of glory in the broad solidarity actions it organised for Solidarnosc and the Polish workers, particularly at the time of the December 13, 1981 military crackdown.

However, today's opposition currents are different. This time they have arisen out of the workers struggles themselves, and are concentrated on the fundamental tasks of class struggle trade unionism. These militants who want a fighting union do not yet have a national structure but, from the Mediterranean to Lorraine, they know each other. In the central struggles to come they will, inevitably, grow.

The Talbot strike also had important effects within the CFDT. In fact, it was the small CFDT section in Talbot — with dedicated militants but very limited rank and file support — that issued the challenge in the struggle. When, on December 17, 1983, the CGT rallied to the side of the government and accepted the government's proposals on redundancies, the CFDT section in the factory took the leadership of the strike movement.

The national CFDT leadership approved the activity of its section, without actually supporting it, in order to make tactical gains at the expense of the CGT. It did not organise solidarity with the struggle.

The CFDT section at Talbot organised the occupation of the factory and the response to the action of the CSL thugs. It strained every nerve to keep the strike going, under the slogan of 'zero redundancies'.

The CFDT opposition

A national opposition has existed in the CFDT now for several years. It has been seen particularly in battles over policy during national congresses. It now organises some 200 union structures at local, regional or sectoral level. This national grouping sells 3,000 copies of its monthly journal *Alternative Syndicale* (Union Alternative). The CFDT opposition played a decisive role in the organisation of active solidarity with the Talbot strike. It succeeded in organising several solidarity demonstrations at the high points of the dispute.

Despite its numerical weakness and its youth, the CFDT section in Talbot-Poissy was thrust onto the national scene by the activity of its militants, who became the leaders of the dispute. They, with the agreement of the rank and file representatives of the CGT who had broken with the line of their leadership, promoted the formation of a short-lived strike committee.

The creation of this strike committee at least had the benefit of marking the passage of the rank and file representatives of the CGT into the camp of the workers threatened with redundancy, who constituted the nucleus of the strikers.

The activity of the CFDT section, the intransigent position that it adopted, posed for the whole confederation the central question of what attitude to adopt towards the redundancies accepted by the government. As soon as the dispute ended in a defeat, the CFDT national leadership turned against the demand 'No redundancies'.

Even within the CFDT opposition the debate on this question is still not closed. It is even an open question among those who were involved in the Talbot dispute. In this sort of strike should the slogan of 'zero redundancies' be held to right to the end? Or should one rather put forward a perspective of the 35-hour working week, arguing that this would mean no redundancies?

Behind this debate is a different appreciation of the evolution of the masses' level of consciousness. Some think that a level of awareness expressed in anti-capitalist demands has to be a precondition to action against redundancies. Others, like the members of the LCR, think that such anticapitalist consciousness will be forged in the course of struggles for immediate objectives.

While there is a democratic discussion in the union opposition, a veritable paralysis is taking hold in the structures led by the union majority.

Contradictory union leaflets and tactical subtleties by the general secretary Edmond Maire, who supported the Talbot strike in contradiction to his own general orientation of getting the union to adjust to the sacrifices demanded by the austerity policies, created confusion in the minds of many activists, and this is still far from cleared up.

In the present situation then, it has to be kept in mind that the development of the elements of a class-struggle tendency in the two major workers confederations is linked to the evolution of the class struggle, and to the capacity of union opposition groupings that have taken form over the past few years to act as an alternative in struggle.

The advent of the Mitterrand government was a political event that created new contradictions in each of the workers confederations, and stimulated the activity of the opposition currents.

The ambition of the CFDT national leadership was to reproduce within the union movement what the SP had achieved on May 10, 1981. That is, it wanted to put the CGT in a minority as the CP had been. The project of the CFDT leaders was thus to make their confederation the centre of a broad recomposition of the union movement. They saw this as taking place around the political axis of adapting the orientation, practice and even the structure of the trade unions to the present situation marked by economic crisis and the technological changes introduced by the employers and the government to rationalise the productive plant.

The CFDT continued to fight alongside the immigrant workers (DR)

The declared objective thus was to put the CGT, led by the CP, into a minority vis-a-vis a reformist trade union movement that would also intervene directly in the political arena. But for the Maire leadership this also implied that the CFDT would become a modern, dynamic confederation, supporting a new class collaborationism embroidered by talk about the necessity to change the work processes. The CFDT leader also hoped to see his confederation become a favoured adviser to the new political regime.

The CFDT and the Mitterrand government

Since 1968 the CFDT had benefitted from a rise in the antibureaucratic and fighting spirit among broad sections of young workers and in the white-collar sector. This time around, the CFDT was hoping to profit not from the mobilisation of workers but from the crisis of the union movement.

The general logic of its orientation meant that the CFDT would have to make major gains in increasing its support in the working class and at the same time seize the position of recognised trade-union adviser to the government. However, the CFDT was to lose its credibility during the union elections, even dropping to third place behind FO during the national social security elections in October 1983. (3)

In these elections 28 million French workers, unemployed and pensioners, all those who contribute to the social security funds, voted for trade-union representation in the local councils that administer these funds.

During 1983 the CFDT lost 10 to 20 per cent of its members, a drain that indicated the same phenomenon of discontent as could be noted in the CGT. Furthermore the national leadership of the CFDT was never really able to convince a network of union activists and local leaders of its project.

The right wing in the CFDT then emphasised a little more its class-collaborationist policy, trying to push for a process that it could not carry through. A number of union bodies confronted the leadership centrally on the question of democracy, while they were unable to oppose it politically. Local union structures, such as the Paris regional organisation, have suffered complete demobilisation, because of the inertia of their leaderships.

For the first time in the CFDT the crisis has engendered a partial demoralisation. For the national union opposition, this situation offers an opportunity for growth on the basis of campaigns around specific aspects of the central questions. The activity of the opposition has helped to slow down the drain of members out of the confederation by offering an alternative perspective.

The best example of the process of divisions going on within the CFDT is

3. The rate of unionisation in France is around 25 per cent. However, in elections for staff representatives (delegues de personnel) and the enterprise committees (comites d'entreprise) candidates are presented on the lists of trade unions recognised as 'representative'. This includes the CGT, CFDT and FO. Everybody votes in these elections, union member or not, and thus the support for a particular union in a particular workplace can be measured. Those who are union members usually comprise the core of union activists. Union representatives on the enterprise committee and for negotiations with management are chosen by the union members only, this is sometimes in a vote of union members but often is simply a nomination of the union committee.

the wage question for government employees and workers in the public sector (transport, electricity and gas, post and telecommunications). For 1984, the government forced a wage cut on its 2.5 million employees. This served as precedent for the employers, who rushed in after the government and imposed similar cuts on private sector employees.

Despite the discontent among the government employees the CFDT agreed to capitulate. It knows that this will cost dearly in terms of membership, influence in union elections and capacity to lead struggles. But the CFDT leadership is sticking to its stance, and thus promoting a division with the CGT and FO, which are tactically taking their distance from this aspect of the government's wages policy.

The CFDT's originality in this situation is to sacrifice the defence of wages to the 'defence of jobs'. It systematically refused to associate with the days of action organised by the CGT or FO. In February and March 1984 the confederal leadership issued threats against local CFDT sections that took a position in defence of wages and supported the action initiatives of the CGT or FO.

The systematic search for a compromise has led the CFDT leadership to sign a series of wage agreements that the workers have rejected, and it has come to be seen as a pro-government union, as much as, if not more than, the CGT.

The CGT before and after Talbot

The CGT did not want a union of the left before May 10, 1981, any more than the CP did. Moreover, the CGT had well done its share to ensure division in the trade-union movement before the election of Francois Mitterrand.

An opposition was born within it, around a campaign to throw out Giscard and for an SP-CP government. This opposition brought together the SP spokespersons in the CGT, unionists for a class struggle and unity policy, and elements breaking with the Communist Party. This was the same network, associating unions, members and national leaders of the CGT, that responded to the leadership's policy of support to General Jaruzelski, against the Polish working class.

But this public oppositional current did not long survive the change of government. Created to throw out Giscard, it divided on what attitude to take to the new government and its policies. The SP spokespersons in the CGT backed off from all internal battles. The CGT became one of the essential elements in the relationship between the SP and CP in government. It became the agent of social peace, because it kept its grip on the workers.

In exchange for an armistice with the SP members within the CGT, the CGT leadership agreed to accept the role of keeper of the social peace. The other elements of the union opposition divided between two positions. The majority one was to go through 'the experience of the left', giving more or less critical support to the left government. The minority stayed faithful to the Appeal for kicking out Giscard, which had stated that before and after May 10, and regardless of the government in power, all the workers demands must be defended.

In fact, the current based on opposition to the Giscard right and for support to Solidarnosc was the end of a cycle. It was the product within the trade unions of the 'Unity in Struggles' movement that, before the split in the Union of the Left in 1977, had brought together members of the CP, SP, CGT, CFDT and far left in united support for struggles, and against political division in the trade unions.

The CGT immediately gave wholehearted support to the Mitterrand-Mauroy government and its policies. Its orientation was to not 'give expression to the discontent' that was beginning to come to light among the workers, but rather to rally them behind the governmental union of the SP and CP.

This orientation brought catastrophic results for the confederation. For example, Jack Ralite, CP member and minister of health, issued ministerial circulars that were reproduced almost exactly by the circulars of the CGT federation in the health service or the CGT leaflets distributed in the hospitals. Overall, the demands of the CGT were put away. The workers demands had to be frozen to give time to the government.

This policy worsened the decline in trade union membership, which had been dropping constantly since 1968. Strong federations, such as those in printing and metalworking, saw their membership cut to half or a third. At the height of the crisis the CGT laid off union full-timers at sectoral and regional level.

In October 1983, the CGT got 28 per cent of the votes cast in the social security elections and FO 25 per cent. The CGT was within a hair's breadth of finding itself in second place in the trade-union movement. Trade-union life was reduced to leadership meetings. The price paid for being the social buffer for the government was terrible, but the CGT stuck to its course. (4)

More and more union members and activists grew to dislike and distrust this course. The CGT's failure to take up struggles on jobs and wages has gone hand in hand with its adherence to a policy that more and more workers were actively opposing. But, up until January 1984, the CGT succeeded in sticking to its line that 'things were going in a good direction' and that the 'positive was prevailing over the negative' in governmental policy. More and more trade union activist members of the CP began to voice the demand in union congresses, in struggles and in daily debates in the workplaces, that their party leave the government.

At the end of January 1984, after Talbot, the tone changed. But the contradictions will continue to sharpen. The CGT can no longer continue to state that things are going in the right direction, given the number of redundancies that have been announced and the wage ceilings imposed.

The new speeches say that the workers did not vote on May 10 for such policies. But now there are new problems, because critical talk is not enough to organise real struggles to make the employers or the government yield on the question of jobs and wages.

Combined with the new tough talk are the sectoral days of action, designed to wear out the workers combativity by dispersing activity and to avoid a movement of the class as a whole. For example, the CGT organised two successful days of action on government employees' wages in February and March 1984. But they did not bring victory, and the CGT went no further. The CGT organised sectoral days of action against the redundancies in the car industry but without any follow up. (5)

The pole around which a class struggle in the CGT could organise centrally and nationally is becoming clear today. The demand for effective action to stop job loss is emerging from the combative union leaderships of sections in struggle such as the shipyards or steel industry where closures are threatened. This would require the democratic organisation of struggles but also their co-ordination and convergence towards a general, national, unified and cross-sectoral movement.

Appeals for this sort of orientation have been made notably by the CGT-CFDT-FO joint union in the Seyne shipyards near Toulon. There is also a growing demand that the CGT leadership explicitly reject the government's austerity plans and warn the Mitterrand government to withdraw them, under threat of a national cross-sectoral mobilisation.

Force Ouvriere's progress in union elections has been spectacular. This confederation, mainly based in the tertiary sectors (government employees and the post service), has made a breakthrough in most workplace elections. It took second place in the social security elections in October 1983, even though the general secretary of FO is the president of the national fund for unemployment benefits, in co-management with the employers.

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4. Having broken the Talbot strike in January 1984, the CGT then betrayed the steelworkers march in Paris on April 13, 1984, by organising different contingents for the different unions, carefully avoiding the possibility of workers from the Paris region joining the march, and planning a route 12 kilometres long to prevent the steelworkers going to demand a direct answer from the government at either the presidential palace or at the National Assembly.

5. Faced with the new threats of redundancies at Citroen, the CGT, whose militant base among carworkers is mainly immigrant, launched a strike and occupation at the Aulnay-sous-Bois factory near Paris, which spread to the Levallois and Nanterre plants in the same region. The CGT leadership's objective was to avoid a new 'Talbot effect' by controlling the workers reactions to redundancy threats. At the same time Krasucki's team intends to use this struggle to ensure that the CGT will be taken into account by the employers and the government during negotiations on industrial restructuring.

In the social security administration committees, FO has always followed a practice of collaborating directly and openly with the employers representatives against the trade unions. The FO score (three points behind the CGT) is all the more remarkable as this confederation was opposed to universal suffrage in these elections for the social security administrators.

Little change in FO

What explains such electoral gains for a union confederation where Gaullists of the Rally for the Republic (RPR) led by Jacques Chirac and activists of the Trotskyist Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI) of Pierre Lambert coexist more or less harmoniously under the leadership of SP members? The main reason is precisely that today FO presents itself as independent of the Mitterrand government, and appears in fact to be so in the eyes of a section of the workers. And, although it has never organised any significant actions, it has promoted its trademark of independence, which looks positive compared to the CGT and CFDT.

There is no union opposition as such in FO, the PCI having dissolved its 'revolutionary tendency' long ago. On the contrary, while FO pulls the wool over the workers eyes, the PCI is involved up to its neck in the central apparatus, giving wholehearted political support against the CGT, and the CFDT which it denies is a workers organisation. (6)

The division between the CFDT and CGT has become well established since 1977. The 1974 agreement between the confederation leaderships in which they united to denounce the strike committees that had appeared in struggles such as the one at Lip (7), and which was also based on the project of the Common Programme of the Left, survived for a while after the break between the SP and CP. The division in the union movement, disliked by the mass of workers, did not stop with the installation of the Mitterand government. In fact, it grew in the form of inter-union competition, in which the aim was to change the relationship of forces between the unions as it had been between the SP and CP.

However, this division is not inevitable. A rise in workers struggles would probably force the trade-union apparatuses once again to make a deal at the top for co-operating against the mass movement so as to be able to better channel it and then bring it under control. This has already happened locally, in the coal mines for example.

However, the division into four main trade-union confederations (the CGT, CFDT, FO and FEN — Federation de l'Education Nationale, unitary teachers union) is long-standing and makes any idea of a real fusion in the short term unrealistic. The division between the CGT and FO goes back to 1947. The FEN has existed since 1948 as a unitary federation independent of the CGT, it recognises the right of tendencies. The CFDT is a more recent creation.

A spirit of narrow loyalty to the individual unions is carefully nurtured. The general secretary of FO has upheld the trade union division by refusing to join in demonstrations with confederations not in agreement with his own. The CFDT has a similar spirit, and the CGT applies it with finesse. There is also a movement towards bureaucratic centralisation within the federations. Less and less autonomy on financial or union questions is left to the rank and file bodies based on a workplace or locality. (8)

This division remains one of the best methods for the union bureaucracies to control workers struggles and mobilisations. Proposing unity in action on the basis of demands put forward by the workers immediately brings you into conflict with the bureaucracies in all of the confederation.

The present union oppositions have made the least progress on the field of united trade-union action in struggles, and trade-union unity based on workers democracy. They are still fundamentally the result of the internal contradictions within each confederation, rather than the product of a social movement that would impel them inexorably towards unity.

Certainly, the fact that the CFDT opposition demonstrated on the national day of action for government employees on March 8, called by the CGT and the FEN, was a step forward towards united action. But the small number of unitary banners in the recent workers demonstrations indicates how long a way the union opposition currents still have to go before they can become a real opposition force on the level of the trade-union movement as a whole that could stimulate a dynamic toward trade-union unity.

Within the CFDT there is today a broad opposition with a journal, and the experience of battles over policy and direction at the last two confederation congresses, which is preparing actively for the next congress in 1985.

There is not at the moment a national centralised opposition within the CGT. Because of the bureaucratic control exercised by the CP over the CGT, the opposition can hardly take the same public and legal forms as that in the CFDT.

It would be difficult to build a left opposition within the FO in the short term. And in the FEN, the Ecole Emancipee (Free School) tendency which has a recognised status is now running up against some barriers to the extension of its influence.

Above and beyond the specific characteristics of the opposition groupings in each confederation, there are two factors operating that tend to make the union oppositions turn around the same major axes. The first is the evolution of the government's austerity policies. This forces hundreds of workplace unions to fight together with the workers to defend jobs, or to disappear with the closure of their workplace. The increase in central attacks on jobs is forcing the trade unions into a defensive position.

The second factor is the politicisation of debates in the trade unions. This is the result of having a government that was brought into office by an upsurge of workers' determination to put an end to the crisis, unemployment and inflation. When this government, following Mitterrand's orders, makes 20,000 steelworkers redundant and when the SP and CP representatives in parliament ratify such austerity measures. The problem of a central political focus for struggles and mobilizations remains constantly on the agenda.

In the same way, anti-capitalist answers are needed in every confederation to respond to the way union bureaucracies are directing workers towards making sacrifices, regardless of how the various bureaucracies express their particular conceptions of class collaboration.

Two thirds of the members of the LCR are active in the CGT or CFDT. Thus trade-union activity is a decisive question for the French section of the Fourth International. Despite this, and even though the trade union is the only permanent form of workers organisation in the workplace, the members of the LCR also fight consistently for the unions to take responsibility for organising unitary, democratic and sovereign mass meetings during struggles and strikes.

The LCR activists also argue that the unions should actively work to bring together all workers during struggles in democratically elected strike committees. Moreover, building a class struggle tendency in each confederation is closely linked to the LCR's ability to get its members to become worker militants in the key sectors of production so that their trade-union and political activity will be anchored in the key sectors of the working class. ■

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6. The PCI members who were active in the FEN have recently left to join FO and build a teachers federation within it.

7. The Lip strike broke out in a watch factory threatened with closure in early 1973. The workers occupied the factory and conducted an active and democratic struggle. There was a unitary, democratically elected action committee and important involvement of the women workers. The striking workers first took the stock of the factory to sell to pay themselves, and then decided to produce to sell to raise money to pay themselves. Having first kept to the traditional wage differentials they then decided to pay a flat wage. They were evicted from the factory and abandoned by the union leaderships although the struggle continued at a lower level until 1977.

8. The French trade union movement is based on the trade union (syndicat) composed of several workplace based union sections (section syndicale) in the same industry in one city or locality. All the unions of the same industry are in the industrial federation eg Metalworkers, Print, Dockers, or Bank workers etc. The federations affiliate to one central national confederation, the CGT, CFDT or FO. The decision as to which federation the workplace union will belong to is based on the main line of business of the workplace as a whole. Office workers are in the same union. Technicians, supervisors and management staff may be in the same union. Structures based on where members live exist but have little weight.

The Dutch Fourth Internationalists campaign for the Euroelections

The Belgian and Luxembourg sections of the Fourth International are running candidates in the June 17 elections for the European parliament. The Dutch section, the Socialistiese Arbeiderspartij (SAP — Socialist Workers Party), is not standing candidates, but it is running a campaign focused on the elections.

The activity and objectives of the SAP were described by the campaign manager, Rene Visser, in the May 16 issue of *Klassenstrijd*, the SAP's paper. The following is an abridged translation.

Q. The SAP is campaigning around the European elections, and calling on people to vote for the Groen Progressief Akkoord [the Dutch analogue of the West German Greens] or the PvdA [the Labor Party].

A. Yes. But the objective of this campaign is to strengthen the struggle that is being waged in the various countries against austerity and militarization. So, it's a campaign against the Common Market and Nato. We are using the election campaign to promote as widely as possible the idea of international solidarity and international actions.

At the moment, the most important thing for the union movement in Europe is the struggle being waged by some West German unions — IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier — for a 35-hour week with no cut in pay. It is a fantastic thing that in a period of economic crisis the West German workers have gone on the offensive like this.

It's not just the German bosses that understand what is at stake in this fight. In every European country, the bosses are keeping a close eye on how this struggle turns out. Wim Kok [head of the biggest Dutch labor confederation] has finally seen correctly that if the trade-union movement loses in Germany, then we in the Netherlands will also be thrown back for years as regards shortening the workweek.

But when you see that, obviously you can't just stand by and watch.

The union movement has to build solidarity with the German workers. The best way to do this, of course, is to take up the fight for the 35-hour week here.

The second focus of the SAP's campaign is the fight against the installation of the Cruise and Pershing missiles in the various countries. In recent years, a massive peace movement has developed in Europe. We think that it is very important to move ahead to internationally coordinated actions.

The Danish teachers' union has launched a plan for a European people's strike against the missiles, a people's strike that could include students, self-employed and so forth. We want to use our campaign to propagate the idea for such an initiative as broadly as possible.

A third issue we want to take up is the growing racism in Western Europe and the situation of the immigrants. In all, there are about 15 million immigrant workers in the region. They are being deprived of the most elementary democratic rights. Most of them for example will not be able to vote in the European elections.

Q. What sort of vote exactly is the SAP calling for?

A. These elections are a very important test for the [right-wing] Lubbers' government. The CDA and VVD [the government parties] face growing resistance to the austerity policy. In particular, the peace movement has pushed the government into a corner. As of now it could not survive a definite decision to install the missiles. So, the CDA and the VVD want to come out of these elections looking as strong as possible. So, we are calling for a vote against the government.

We call on people to use these elections to demonstrate their opposition to the July Package [new austerity measures] by voting against the parties that support it.

Our poster says "Left vote, vote PvdA or Groen Progressief Akkoord."

That doesn't mean that we support the programs of the PvdA or the Groen Progressief Akkoord. We have a number of strong criticisms. The PvdA has a position for the 35-hour week but with a cut in wages. It claims that unless the workers accept this, it will weaken Europe's competitive position relative to Japan and the US.

The program of the Groen Progressief Akkoord on social and economic questions is not much different from that of the PvdA.

On the question of the missiles, the PvdA is against deployment of the new missiles but for maintaining the Nato nuclear deterrent. In the Groen Progressief Akkoord program, there is a vague story about the need to break from both blocs, Nato and the Warsaw Pact. But there is no direct demand for the Netherlands to get out of Nato.

Even the word "socialism" does not appear. Therefore, we do not call for giving preference to either the PvdA or the Groen Progressief Akkoord.

Q. The SAP did negotiate with the Pacifist Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Radical Party over running a common slate however.

A. There were no real negotiations. Naturally, we would have been very happy to have a common slate with these parties. We knew that that would not be easy, in view of the many differences of opinion that there are. So, we thought about a common election program of a few points, a sort of minimum program on points such as a consistent struggle against the austerity policy, the fight for the 35-hour week, opposition to deployment of the new nuclear missiles, and the fight against racism. Beyond this, every party would have the room to promote its own views.

The CPN, PSP and the Radicals did not want to bring us into the negotiations. They said that would only make the operation more difficult. We had a discussion about it with Fráns Jansen, the vice-chairperson of the PSP. The PSP was willing to give us a place on their slate. But we found it wrong that we were not allowed into the negotiations. We said, "OK, we're not turning that down outright. But our final decision will depend on what your program looks like." To be honest, we were shocked with the final result. We had not expected the PSP and CP to make such concessions to the program of the Green platform. As I said, it doesn't even mention the word "socialism."

Q. But what sort of campaign is the SAP going to run now?

A. For a party such as ours, the financial barrier to running our own slate is terribly high. Just the registration fee would have cost us 18,000 guilders [about 9,000 dollars]. We just don't have the money to run our own slate.

About 2,500 copies of the special issue of *Klassenstrijd* in which this interview is to appear will be printed. In addition, we are putting out a poster with the slogan "For a Socialist Europe" with our call to vote for the PvdA or the Greens. In various places, we are organizing forums to which we are inviting other left parties. We think that discussion is very important, precisely because we have to fight

together against this government's austerity policy.

Throughout our campaign we want to show the sort of role a party such as the SAP can play in the day-to-day struggle, in the fight for socialism.

A lot of people agree with our ideas, but hesitate to join us because we are still so small. But even though the SAP is small, it can be seen to be playing an important role in the mass movement.

Take the Cruise missiles. Since we are active as a party both in the peace movement and in the trade-union movement, we stand at a key junction point. Our people in the trade-union movement have worked very hard in the past period to get the unions to actively oppose the missiles. Our people in the peace movement had direct access to the union movement through the work of our party.

On October 29, our slogan was "After the demonstration, organize a strike." A lot of people thought that we were crazy. The trade-union movement in the Netherlands would never do anything like that. Fortunately, practice proved otherwise. Obviously, it is not just because we worked hard that the May 10 strike was a success. But in various places we made an important contribution to the success of the action.

Moreover, in the successful high school strike at the same time, Rebel, the revolutionary youth organization linked politically with us, played a crucial role.

Rebel is one of the driving forces in building the Youth Against Nuclear Weapons.

In the coming period, we will throw all we can into helping to assure that the actions against the July package are as massive as possible. In the FNV rallies throughout the country, we are pushing forward our proposals strongly. That is, we are calling for a strong campaign to inform people of the effects of this government's policy, rallies in factory canteens on May 29, and a one-hour warning strike against these measures when they come up for debate in parliament. ■

People's Democracy declaration on European elections

Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein candidate in the European elections in the Six Counties in the North of Ireland still occupied by Britain, explained to *International Viewpoint* (No 51, April 23, 1984) that the election would be 'a referendum on the national question'. This is particularly true in the North, and the aim of the Sinn Fein campaign will be to highlight the national struggle in the South as well. This is particularly relevant after the recent publication of the much-heralded New Ireland Forum report by the Southern political parties and the bourgeois nationalist SDLP from the North, which offered no new solution but more repression of the nationalists in the North.

People's Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International, played a central role in the 1979 European elections in organising Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's campaign in the North centred on support for the political prisoners in the North of Ireland. On this occasion, the decision of Sinn Fein to stand nine candidates in all, one each in the three constituencies of Dublin, Munster and the North, and three each in the constituencies of Connaight/Ulster and Leinster, offers the opportunity for anti-imperialists throughout the country to cast their vote. Aside from Danny Morrison, a national vice president and already an elected representative, the Sinn Fein candidates are local activists in the anti-imperialist and workers movements.

The declaration below by the National Committee of People's Democracy, outlining their support for Sinn Fein, was published in the April issue of their newspaper *Socialist Republic*.

The upcoming June EEC elections will have an important significance for the struggle against Britain and for their Irish puppets throughout the 32 Counties. The elections will be used by all the capitalist politicians to bolster their declining credibility among working people already impoverished by unemployment and cuts.

Thatcher's Tory programme offers only increased unemployment and repression for workers in the 6 Counties. The Coalition [government in the South, Fine Gael and the Labour Party] offers exactly the same. A further feature of the contest will be the flagging attempt of the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] to mislead the anti-unionist population in the 6 Counties into supporting a restructuring and strengthening of imperialism through the Dublin New Ireland Forum.

Twelve years ago Fianna Fail and Fine Gael would have us believe that EEC membership would lead to Irish unity. We know now that other capitalist states would only become involved if they felt Britain was falling down on the job of preserving capitalism in Ireland.

In the same way the US intervened in Vietnam and Grenada when lesser capitalist powers were unable to maintain imperialist rule in those regions, so Nato is already looking on anxiously at the political instability throughout the 32 Counties. Reagan's upcoming Irish tour coupled with the Coalition's undermining of Irish neutrality is already opening up that door. It would not be surprising if Nato military aircraft were the first to inaugurate Knock Airport runway.

We were also told 12 years ago that EEC membership would foster prosperity among the Irish people and break our economic dependence on British markets. Instead joining the EEC has led to chaos. Industrial development has ground to a halt and almost total reliance on multinationals has meant massive unemployment, deskilling of workers and destruction of indigenous Irish industry.

Agriculture is also in a mess and EEC membership is responsible. It was supposed to bring a bonanza. Instead it has created financial ruin among small farmers, indebtedness and bankruptcy. The crisis of the milk super-levy indicates that the major EEC powers don't give a damn about Ireland's national economic interests. They have no qualms about shoving more Irish workers onto the dole and more small farmers into bankruptcy.

Only a national economic plan based on the actual needs of Irish workers and small farmers will get us out of this mess. This means a socialist transformation of society. This is the practical necessity facing the Irish working class today.

This is the kind of programme which the anti-imperialist movement has to formulate and fight for in the EEC elections. As the major anti-imperialist organisation, Sinn Fein standing in all constituencies in the 32 Counties has both an excellent opportunity and major responsibility to build all-Ireland workers unity against the twin evils of repression and austerity. None of the other parties offer any reason why Irish workers should put their trust in them. This includes those parties who are socialist in words and collaborators in action. Therefore Sinn Fein offers the only real alternative. In building support for their candidates it will be important for Sinn Fein to turn their campaign outwards along the lines of the H-Block movement to gain the attention of the mass of organised workers. It will be necessary to involve the best activists in the campaign.

Fundamentally it will be vital to build an all-Ireland political fightback against partition and all its evils. In particular fighting the SDLP in the 6 Counties means not only ousting them as the chief representatives of the nationalist people, it means counterposing to the sham Forum a concrete political alternative. This means an all-Ireland Constituent Assembly. This can provide the means by which all the workers, small farmers and oppressed people of Ireland can determine their future and the future of this island. ■

The debates of the 3rd congress of the Peruvian PRT

The Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers Party) Peruvian section of the Fourth International held its third congress since its foundation in 1978 on March 3-4. A delegation of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International was present. The agenda included a balance sheet of the orientation and activity of the party, an analysis of the national political situation, the political/organisational project for building the party at this stage, and election of a central committee of 15 with 3 alternates.

The discussion on political reorientation decided by a large majority of the central committee last December, was the central point of the congress. This reorientation led to a self-criticism of the past orientation of the PRT and to the decision to ask to join the Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left), a structure which groups almost all the trade-union and political organisations identifying with the workers movement. (1) The documents proposed by the outgoing leadership were all approved, either unanimously or by a big majority.

On the eve of the congress, four minority members of the outgoing central committee of the PRT organised a split. These comrades were opposed to the political reorientation decided last December, and thus organised a tendency for the congress. From the point at which it was clear that they had not succeeded in winning a majority of party members to their point of view, they disputed the legitimacy of certain norms of representation for the congress, and the congress itself. These norms of representation had, however, been settled on the basis of a unanimous agreement in December, and thus before the formation of this minority tendency. In any event, the right of the minority to present its positions at the congress and to challenge the delegates elected if it thought necessary, was perfectly respected. The minority did not do this because it knew full well that its orientation was supported by only a minority of the delegates at the congress, as well as among the organisation as a whole.

Moreover, the minority members, as they themselves stated, were not in the least prepared to accept the discipline of the congress insofar as, according to them, the new orientation of the PRT represented a political break with past principles. In a text that they circulated after the congress, these militants in fact characterised the IU as 'a political front under reformist hegemony, which preaches conciliation and adapts to the level of consciousness of the most backward masses by subjecting the workers movement to the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie to achieve power through electoral means and a policy of reforms. Its programmatic axis is an alliance between the popular and workers movement and the middle and national bourgeoisie.'

As for the initiative of the minority group around Raul Castro Vera in calling — and announcing in the press before it even happened — a parallel congress with derisory participation, this fooled no one in Peru. In the end it only 'misled' the editors of *Tribune Internationale*, the monthly journal for international regroupment of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste in France, who were particularly interested in making public a version that had no basis in real fact in their April 1984 issue.

After the congress, the PRT launched a new formula for its monthly journal, *Combate Socialista*, and opened a new central headquarters, demonstrating a real organisational progress. In the editorial of *Combate Socialista*, No 44 of April 1984, the PRT defined its position on the IU grouping:

'Our objectives in Izquierda Unida are in two fields: the electoral terrain and that of workers struggles. In relation to the first, and as far as the shameful attitude of a section of the left is concerned, we have to say that the revolution is not a straight line, revolutionaries cannot choose their path by ignoring reality. There are only two possible attitudes for elections, either we use them or we boycott them. Using the elections should help to educate the masses and develop their struggles. We must transform Izaquierda Unida into a motor force for the workers struggles. Politically, there is a dialectical relationship between Izquierda Unida and the mass organisations. The integration of this front in the mass organisations will make it possible to build a powerful workers and popular movement which can resist the bourgeois offensive and, starting from that point, begin to undertake revolutionary tasks.' ■

1. See *International Viewpoint*, No 44, January 16, 1984, for the self-criticism of the PRT.

French LCR 'Rally against Austerity'

The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) held a 'Rally against Austerity and Capitalist Europe' at the Le Bourget airport near Paris on the weekend of May 26/27.

The event brought together some 3,000 members and sympathisers of the LCR to discuss and debate in forums on many different aspects of the present attacks on workers standards of living. The forums ranged from those on different sectors of industry such as cars, the post office, etc., through those discussing the attacks on particular sectors of workers such as women, young people and immigrants, to those on particular issues such as combatting the government's and employers' plans for industrial restructuring, or the peace movement and opposition to the imperialist wardrive.

Colourful displays of photographs and text explained the Central American revolutions, the activity of the peace movement throughout Europe, the present attacks on women, young people and immigrants and many other different aspects of LCR activity.

A number of other French left groups were also invited to provide stalls and participate in the weekend of debates. Many anti-imperialist groups were also present with stands: the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Central American solidarity committees, Irish solidarity organisations the Chile solidarity committees, etc.

The weekend was projected in the context of the European elections campaign. Thus, a central feature was the Saturday afternoon rally of workers from all over Europe speaking about the struggles they are presently involved in. On the platform were comrades from the Italian and Spanish LCRs who spoke respectively of the recent battle to defend the price-indexing of wages in Italy organised at rank and file level through the factory councils, and the struggle against the Spanish government's plans to restructure the steel industry. Colin Lenton, of the British miners' union, spoke of the present bitter struggle of the British miners' union, against threatened pit closures. Jakob Moneta, a member of the German section and former editor of the IG Metall newspaper, explained the present struggle in West Germany for the 35-hour week.

Particularly warm and vigorous applause greeted Lautaro Sandino, a member of the Sandinista youth organisation, who has recently completed a tour of Europe organised by the youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International, and Eloi Machorro of the Independence Front of New Caledonia. LCR leader Alain Krivine recently visited this French colony in the Pacific Ocean where he was enthusiastically received by the Independence Front.

The rally closed with the contribution of Fourth International leader Ernest Mandel.

The weekend as a whole closed with the Sunday afternoon meeting addressed by Alain Krivine and Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvriere. ■

World labor support against US intervention

An international trade-union meeting for peace in Central America was held in Nicaragua April 24-27. It was called by the main Nicaraguan union, the CSN, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Augusto Cesar Sandino, the historic leader of the Nicaraguan liberation struggle.

Some 240 delegates representing 133 national unions from 68 countries and belonging to all the main international trade-union organizations attended. Although representatives of the French CGT and the Italian CGIL were present, the West European trade-union movement was less broadly represented than those from North and Latin America.

Nonetheless, this conference was genuinely broad. It issued an appeal for "world workers' unity." It unanimously approved a special motion on Nicaragua and two declarations, entitled respectively, "Statement on Central America," and "Statement from Managua, Free Nicaragua."

The Central America statement contained a concrete plan of action for building solidarity, including the following points:

"To highlight solidarity with the peoples of Central America on May Day throughout the world.

"To organize trade-union solidarity committees with Nicaragua and El Salvador and build broad solidarity mobilizations in our countries. Our aim is to halt the war of aggression: our slogan is "No to intervention in Central America!"

"To inform workers throughout the world of the aggressions against the Central American peoples, especially the peoples of Nicaragua and El Salvador, and explain the reasons for the worsening social and economic situation in these countries.

"To denounce the aggression directed against the Central American peoples, especially in Nicaragua and El Salvador; to the meeting of the International Labor Organization to be held in June in order to get a resolution condemning this aggression adopted there.

"To urge the governments of Honduras and Costa Rica to respect the international treaties and conventions governing the relations between states and the right of asylum and not to let their territory be used as a base for attacking Nicaragua.

"In the case of Costa Rica, to demand that its government follow its declared policy of neutrality, expel the counterrevolutionary gangs, and dismantle the structures that can serve as operational bases for criminal attacks on the people of Nicaragua. To demand the immediate rescinding of the authorization given for US military advisors to enter Costa Rica next November.

"To demand that our respective governments condemn the US intervention in Central America and that they provide Nicaragua with means for clearing away the mines from its ports and for assuring the freedom of international civilian maritime traffic. To demand that they strengthen their diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with the government of Nicaragua.

"To send protest messages to the U[illegible] Congress, to the United Nations, and to other international organizations signed by the workers in all countries.

"To foster solidarity, especially among longshoremen, with the peoples of Central America in general, and with the peoples of Nicaragua, who are facing a blockade and mining of their ports that is an integral part of CIA-financed plans for building up to an invasion.

"To organize discussions, round tables and conferences in the international, regional and local organizations to expose the policy of mining the Nicaraguan ports being carried out by the Reagan administration in violation of international law.

FSLN support 35-hour week struggle

From the speech of the FSLN representative at the recent congress of the German Social Democratic Party, SPD:

"We Sandinistas are blamed for everything. We are supposed to be responsible for the guerrilla war in Guatemala. We are supposed to be responsible for the guerrilla war in El Salvador, for strikes in Costa Rica, for social unrest in Honduras.

"Since there are some of us in West Germany, I hope that you won't think we're responsible for the IG Metall strike. [Laughter.] We have nothing to do with it. But we do have a deep feeling of fraternal and total solidarity with the IG Metall workers. [Applause.] We wish them luck. We hope they will be victorious."

"To pledge to build a week of solidarity with Central America and with Nicaragua in particular from July 15 to 21, 1984. As a gesture of material solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, during that week, the workers of the world will give part of their July 19 day's pay.

"To build campaigns for the release of trade-unionists imprisoned and kidnapped in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

"To organize protest demonstrations ouside US embassies in our respective countries and outside the embassies of governments that support the Reagan administration's interventionist policy in Central America.

"To organize brigades of technicians and workers to go to Nicaragua as volunteers and to carry out campaigns of material aid to the people of Nicaragua, collecting funds, food and medicine to support the heroic defenders of the Sandinista revolution.

"In order to keep the union movement informed and assure the continuity of solidarity actions, the Nicaraguan CNS will remain in continuous contact with the trade-union organizations in the various regions of the world."

This resolution is all the more significant because it came from a conference including workers representatives "from all continents and from various ideological and trade-union currents," as the documents adopted in Managua said explicitly. ■

Special motion on Nicaragua

1. We, the delegates to the International Trade-Union Conference for Peace, support the popular process in Nicaragua, which aims to achieve the free and sovereign development of the country, justice and well-being. The sovereignty of Nicaragua is not negotiable.

2. We demand noninterference in the internal affairs of Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan people must be the ones to determine what social and political courses are best suited to their country, free from pressure and attacks, whether diplomatic, economic or military.

3. We condemn the mining of the Nicaraguan ports, aggression from whatever territory it comes, economic embargos or any other kind of aggressive action.

4. Therefore, representing workers on all continents and belonging to different ideological and trade-union currents, we appeal to all the peoples of the world to aid directly in the economic reconstruction of Nicaragua.

5. We send a message of peace, friendship and solidarity to all Nicaraguans to encourage them to continue their work of building a free country, for the greater happiness of its men, women and children.

Adopted in Managua (Free Nicaragua), April 27, 1984.