

International VIEWPOINT

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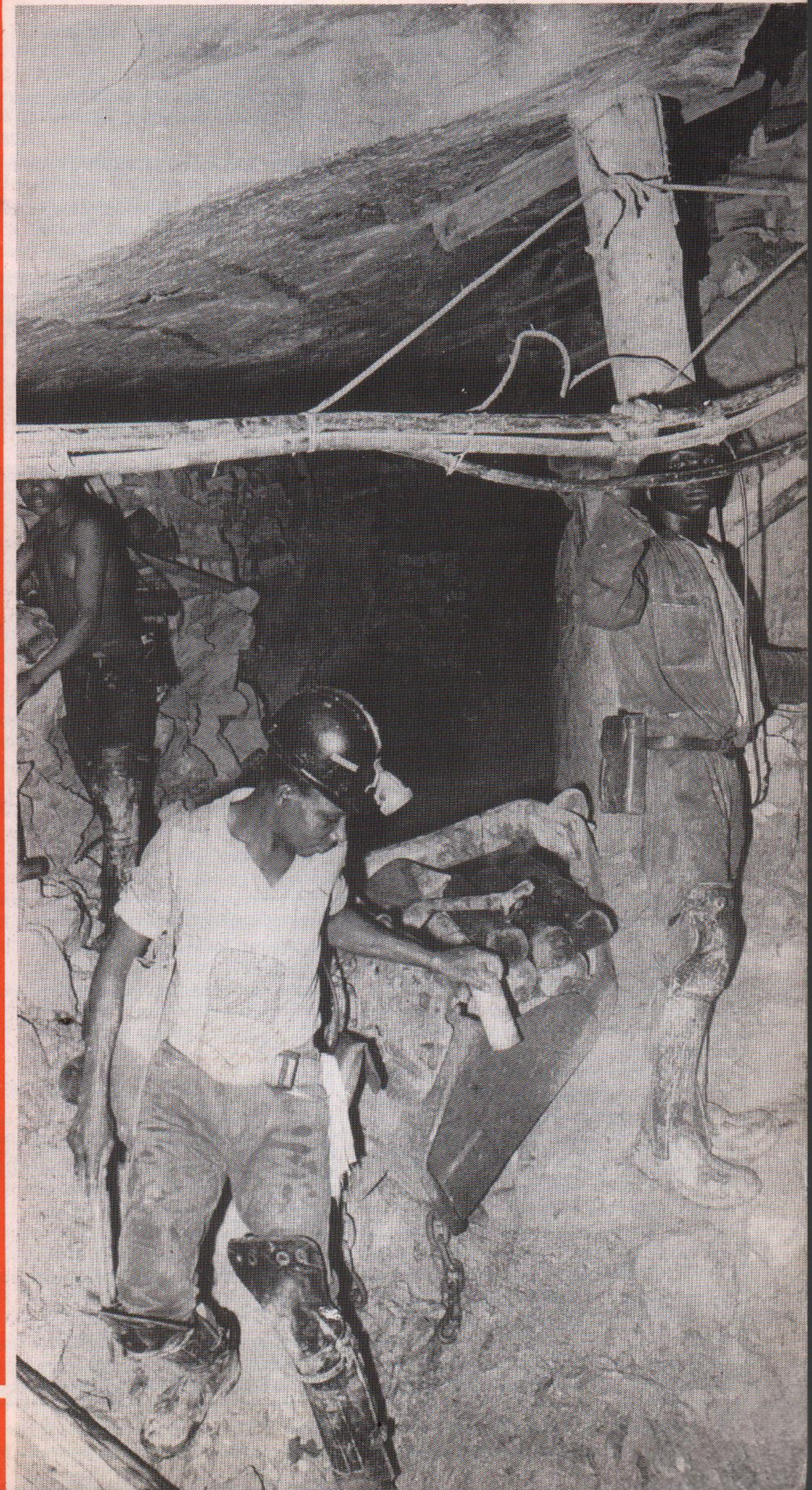
1 October 1984

Black revolt in South Africa

Britain's miners
dig in
for long war

The communal
conflicts in India

Growing crisis
in Sri Lanka



International Viewpoint

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Labour Party leaders refuse full support for miners

British miners have now been on strike against pit closures for nearly seven months. The end of the second national docks strike has eased the pressure on the government to settle the dispute. Arthur Scargill, the miners' union president, charged that the government effectively sabotaged recent negotiations between the National Coal Board and the union. Now the strike seems set to extend into the winter.

The next battles will take place as the government tries to move coal reserves to the power stations. The Trades Union Congress, the general confederation of British unions, which met at the beginning of September, pledged 'full support' to the miners. But a recent meeting of the unions representing power station workers produced nothing more concrete than proposals for 'discussions' with the miners.

Instead of promoting solidarity actions, the TUC leaders have instead devoted themselves to setting up new negotiations through the government sponsored arbitration service.

The next important labour movement gathering at which solidarity with the miners will be high on the agenda is the annual conference of the Labour Party in Blackpool on October 1. Left-wing critics of the party leadership will make the charge that the actions of the party leadership and of Neil Kinnock, the new leader of the Labour Party, have been at best equivocal and at worst counter-productive for the miners' cause. All-out solidarity will be urged on the delegates present both from the unions and the party's rank and file.

Steve ROBERTS

For many labour movement activists the election of Neil Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party at the 1983 conference represented a new dawn. Kinnock, the son of a Welsh miner, had been traditionally associated with the left of the party. Under his leadership many hoped that the bulk of the gains won by the left in terms of democratic reforms of the party constitution would remain intact and policy positions, like that of unilateral nuclear disarmament, would be defended.

There was mixed reaction to the simultaneous election of Roy Hattersley, a right winger, to the post of deputy leader, but the majority of the rank and file of the party and the overwhelming majority of the unions affiliated to the party regarded the new leadership as a 'dream ticket' — a team which would unite the party on the basis of its radical policies.

The miners' strike has been the most sustained test of the new leadership and the spirit of optimism generated by its election. The Labour Party National Executive Committee has adopted a position of full support for the strike reflecting the solidarity work being carried out at the rank and file level. But the parliamentary leadership of the party has refused to adopt a position of support for the miners' union actions, instead confining itself to 'agreeing' with the miners' case against pit closures, but joining with the government in condemning miners' actions at the most critical turning points in the strike.

The first issue posed in the strike was that of whether the miners' union should call a ballot of its members on the question of national all-out action. Three previous attempts by the miners' union to mobilise its membership for action failed when ballots failed to produce the required 55 per cent for action.

So, when in March of this year the government proposed the closure of a pit in the powerful Yorkshire area of the union, the miners' leadership decided to mobilise area-by-area, calling on local leaderships to take action in solidarity with the Yorkshire strikers, who sent out pickets to explain the case to the rank and file.

The big majority of the unions' 180,000 members responded to the appeal. But sections of the membership, especially in the important and profitable Nottingham area, demanded a national ballot before taking action.

Public attacks on NUM

The Thatcher government then swung the entire resources of the media into action condemning the 'dictatorial' methods of the miners' leadership and demanding a ballot — a call that was supported by the National Coal Board, the miners' employers, and government ministers.

At first, Kinnock and the parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party remained silent. But as the press campaign reached a crescendo, Kinnock added his voice to the campaign for a ballot.

The miners' leaders responded sharply. In an interview with *Socialist Action*, a revolutionary Marxist weekly, Peter Heathfield, the National Union of Mine-workers general secretary, said:

'We are disappointed we haven't received the out-and-out support of the Labour Party leadership. I'm bewildered that they speak of a ballot as if they believed it would resolve the problem. It won't. Yorkshire men, Welsh men, Scotsmen and miners from the North East will not allow people working in profitable pits to deny them the right to defend their jobs.'

'Neil Kinnock's statement was pretty miserable — it amounted to a call for a ballot. The Labour leadership should be calling on the government to intervene to redirect MacGregor to enable us to return to work and continue producing the coal this nation requires.'

Kinnock's statement also dismayed the thousands of Labour Party activists who were already building support for the strike. Within weeks of the strike being called, over 400 solidarity committees were being initiated at a local level all over the country, in the vast majority of cases the initiative coming from the left of the Labour Party.

That pressure from the base was reflected in the unprecedented action of the Labour National Executive which at its April meeting decided to levy all of its 270,000 members of the Labour Party at least 50 pence a week for the miners' cause.

Jack Collins, the general secretary of the Kent miners, commenting on the contrast between the actions of the rank and file and the leadership says:

'With regard to the Labour Party, I have to differentiate between the thousands of Labour Party members who have rallied behind us and leaders like Roy Hattersley and Neil Kinnock.'

'I would say that they're taking out insurance. They're saying these things now so that in the future, when they really want to come down hard on the miners, they can say they've been consistent.'

'And to those Labour Party leaders who attack Arthur Scargill, I say that I wish those same people were as determined to implement Labour Party policy as Scargill is to implement NUM policy.'

The private attacks being made on Scargill by the Labour Party leadership were widely reported in the press. Kinnock was credited with comparing the miners' leader to the First World War generals who squandered soldiers lives by sending them into senseless battles.

But such attacks were of little consequence compared with the increasing public attacks on the actions of the miners' union. As the campaign for a national ballot petered out with the decision of the miners' union April conference to reduce the required majority to 50 per cent, the media turned their exclusive preoccupation to the question of picketing.

Increasing amounts of scab coal were being used in steelworks all around the

country. In May, events reached a climax around the Ravenscraig steelplant in the West of Scotland. Miners and railway workers reached an agreement to allow only the basic minimum of coal necessary into the plant. The reaction of press and government was frenzied, accusing the unions of hastening the closure of the plant, already under threat.

Grass roots support

Again, in marked contrast with their reluctance to give support to the strike, the Labour leadership sprang into action. Kinnock immediately sanctioned a statement by a shadow cabinet spokesperson calling on the unions to reconsider their decision. The statement was welcomed by the government and used extensively against the miners' union in the press.

The use of parliament by the Labour leaders to condemn the miners was in marked contrast to the reluctance to use parliament as a forum to put the miners' case.

Harry Cohen, a member of the 30-strong 'Campaign Group' of left-wing Labour MPs, said at this time to *Socialist Action*:

'At grass roots level the constituencies are helping out in a big way. But there hasn't been enough support in parliament. The Labour front bench have shirked getting a proper debate on the dispute. There hasn't been one in the first 10 weeks of the strike.

'In desperation the Campaign Group tabled a resolution giving full support to the NUM in its justified dispute saying we have no confidence in the government's handling of it....This has been supported by over 60 Labour MPs.

'The Campaign Group has made all the running in parliament. We discuss the dispute at our weekly meetings, and regularly have miners' leaders along. We have imposed a £5 a week levy on our members, and have successfully fought for the whole parliamentary Labour Party to do likewise.'

However, despite the activity of the left wing and increasingly violent attacks on the miners by the government, the Labour leadership continued with their even-handed approach to the dispute.

In private, Kinnock argued that the miners' strike was doing the Labour Party great electoral damage. It was no accident that the Labour leaders' intervention against the blacking of coal at Ravenscraig came a few days before the local government elections.

But rank-and-file activists among the miners saw the question differently. As Colin Lenton of Bold NUM put it:

'Neil Kinnock should remember that he was elected with the full backing of the NUM, and without that support he wouldn't have got the job. He's sat on the fence worrying that to give us support would lose him popularity and votes to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the Euro-elections.

'I say this to Kinnock: the only way

to move Labour forward is to come out on the side of the miners, 100 per cent. And that means to join us on the picket lines and speak at our rallies.'

Kinnock's fears were proved in practice to be false. Labour made sweeping gains in both the local elections and the EEC elections in June. In both cases the most marked gains were made in those areas where the Labour Party was led by the left wing, who had led and supported the solidarity campaign with the miners. In Liverpool, for example, where the local Labour leadership had tied their fight to defend local services from government attack to the solidarity with the miners, Labour won a landslide victory against their Tory and Liberal opponents.

The EEC elections provided an even clearer test since it took place after the pitched battles between police and miners at the Orgreave coke depot near Sheffield. The battles at Orgreave, which resulted in hundreds of injuries for picketing miners as a result of North of Ireland-style riot tactics by police, appeared night after night on British and international television screens.

However, the response of Kinnock was not to denounce these alarming innovations by the police, but to present the violence as being generated by both sides.

In an extensive interview on the subject in the *Financial Times* Kinnock said:

'The miners may be wrong, but they are not unreasonable. They are simply reacting to a situation created and fostered by the government; and their tactics are a mirror image of those of Mrs Thatcher and her supporters in their insistence that they are "fighting to win"....'

Kinnock went on to say that the British trade union movement differed from many of its European counterparts in that it had never resorted to systematic violence.

June 7 NUM rally in London (DR)



'They know that public support is alienated by violence. They know that that's what being British means.'

In the interests of 'being British', Kinnock has pursued his condemnation of the miners 'fighting to win'.

In his first speech as Labour leader to the September TUC Congress, Kinnock was heckled by left-wing delegates as he denounced violence in the dispute.

He said, 'Violence distracts attention from the central issues in the dispute. It obscures the justice and the validity of the miners' case.'

At no stage has Kinnock explained that the violence in the dispute arises directly from the massive police operation which, in an effort to prevent the miners' picketing to defend their 'just and valid' case, spends £2 million per day in swamping the coal fields with up to 20,000 men equipped with riot shields, batons, police horses and dogs.

Miners' leaders in their speeches call for replacing Thatcher with a government as loyal to the working class as Thatcher is to hers.

However, Kinnock's line on the miners' strike is now attracting criticism from those who had been counted as his most ardent supporters.

Fighting to win

In the Labour Party magazine, *New Socialist*, Peter Hain and Jean McCrindle, both members of the Labour Coordinating Committee which organised Kinnock's campaign for the leadership election, criticise Kinnock for having 'allowed [his] obsession with violence to muffle [his] support for the miners' cause.'

The very week after Kinnock's speech at the TUC the Tories seized on the opening provided to promise that miners convicted of violent offenses could face 'life sentences' in prison. So far, nearly 5,000 miners have been arrested on the picket lines and many are still facing trial.

There is no doubt what is meant by this. Increasingly, the record of the Kinnock leadership is pointing to the necessity of the left wing, led by Tony Benn in the Labour Party and Arthur Scargill in the unions, organising and presenting an alternative to the vacillations and cowardice of the Kinnock/Hattersley team.

Such an alternative will take time and further experiences to build. At this Labour Party conference, Kinnock will still have sufficient support to reverse some of the most important gains made by the left over previous years, both in terms of the constitution and the radical policies of the party.

It is unlikely that in the period before the next general election there will be a central challenge to Kinnock's leadership.

Nevertheless, alliances are being forged at the rank-and-file level, between trade union and Labour activists, that can be the foundation for an organised left wing that will see 'fighting to win' as a positive virtue rather than a foreign vice. ■

Miners wives – then and now

'What we are doing as women in this 1984, and possibly 1985, miners' strike is making history. We are setting a pattern for the future for the involvement of women in political struggle which will show what a formidable force we can be....'

These were the closing words of Maureen Douglass of Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures to the mass rally of 10,000 women from the mining communities which took place last May. These women are indeed making history in the power and dynamic of their actions. Mick McGahey, the miners' union vice president, has even gone so far as to say that if the women had supported the miners in this way during the 1926 general strike, there might have been a different outcome.

In fact, miners' wives were organised in 1926 but in a different way and with a different impact. The comparison is very enlightening.

Judith BAKER

In her book, *Women and the Miners' Lockout*, Marion Phillips, the then editor of *Labour Women*, a Labour Party women's journal, records how miners' wives were involved in public rallies and demonstrations as well as organising food parcels and fund-raising. In July 1926, an 8,000-strong annual demonstration of Labour women was turned over to the theme of the pit strike and miners' wives led the march through London.

The miners' wives were not organised in local and national groups as they are today, but the Labour Party women's sections and national committee worked closely with them. Marion Phillips records how she was approached by the Miners Federation to set up a women's committee to organise fund-raising and liaise with miners' families. This committee was later to help with fostering of miners' children when starvation began to set in and it also raised vast sums of money during the nine-month lockout.

The link between the miners' strike and women was made in a lengthy report to the 1926 Labour Women's conference. Attention was drawn to the special suffering of women in the mining communities. A call was made for housewives to support the demand for the nationalisation of coal as this would help generate cheaper electricity and more labour-saving gadgets.

So, women have organised before, but in 1984, with the experience of the women's movement and the changes in the labour movement behind us, the miners' wives are achieving something new.

These women are not just supporting the miners' strike through organising food distribution, fund-raising and welfare rights advice — they are politically leading through taking their own initiatives, on the picket lines and in mass demonstrations. The demonstration in London on August 11, the first national march in the city since the strike began, was a classic example of this.



30,000 miners' wives rally on August 11 (DR)

Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, was safely ensconced in a villa in Switzerland when the 20-30,000 miners' wives marched through the streets of London, chanting 'We will win, we will win, we will win'. This time they were supported by Labour Party women and other feminist groups. The men, including Arthur Scargill (the miners' union president) and Tony Benn (the leader of the Labour Party's left wing) were bringing up the rear. The women presented a 'cheque' of £49 million, on the way, to the government's Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS). This sum represented the amount which the DHSS has stolen from the miners and their families by deducting it from their social security payments. This deduction of £15 per week for each family is made on

the basis that the miners are receiving strike pay, which they are not.

The self activity of the women and in particular, their role on the picket lines has had a massive impact within the labour movement. The National Union of Mineworkers had previously been renowned for its nude pin-ups on Page 3 of the *Yorkshire Miner* (the union's regional journal). The women have been taunted by miners who tell them to go back to the kitchen sink. The women often say that, at first, their own husbands were also aghast. 'But now,' says Betty Heathfield, who is on the recently formed National Co-ordinating Committee, 'it has created a fantastic understanding between the men and women.' In a speech to a fringe meeting at the TUC (Trades Union Congress) conference, Betty Heathfield explained this further when she said, 'The women's activity is a means of awakening and uniting the whole of the labour movement at the grassroots. Our activity has, I think, brought a lot of men into the strike. And when we win, it will be a victory for everyone. It will wipe out forever the image of the wife who's very willing to escort her husband across the picket line...'. She went on to explain that there was a women's picket every week in the Nottingham pits and how women's experience on the picket lines had changed their attitudes as well.

New strength

In their new-found strength the miners' wives have also linked up with other women, not, as in the past, when Labour Party women were 'helping out' in the 1926 strike, but through action and self organisation. In fact, many miners' wives were directly inspired by the example of the women at Greenham Common. Lorraine Bowler of the Barnsley group explained it this way: 'It's because of the women's movement that we got organised. Women are now much more militant and informed. Some of our women would call themselves feminists, some wouldn't. Many of our meetings are explicitly women only; after all, the men have their branch meetings...'

It is clear that the self organisation of the women will have a lasting impact. These women will not, like their sisters before them, be left out of the history books. Betty Heathfield knows what she would like to see. 'No union or strike will ever be the same again. Now we need to get the wives of dockers, railway workers and lorry drivers involved....'

'We've got a national coordinating effort for the women underway now, because during the strike women have changed a lot. They are saying that when the strike is over they will not disperse and we don't want them to, either. The strike has been the quickest social and political education we could have gone through....Now we have become political animals. It would be a shame to let this go. It shows what can be done.' Indeed it does. It shows that women themselves can make history by organising together. ■

Solidarity with British miners

In recent months, a broad movement of solidarity with the British miners has developed in Denmark. This may in fact be the most extensive campaign of solidarity with a workers struggle abroad that we have ever seen. The main reason for this development is that a lot of Danish workers have immediately understood that the miners' fight is also theirs. Because, if the British miners can stop Thatcher, that will be an enormous encouragement to the Danish workers in the struggle to stop her little brother in Denmark, the right-wing premier, Poul Schleuter.

Soeren SOENDERGAARD

From the start of the miners' struggle, many workplaces and unions began passing statements of solidarity and sending financial contributions. In July an initiative was taken to coordinate solidarity and establish a national solidarity campaign. It was the Socialistisk Arbejderparti (Socialist Workers Party, Danish section of the Fourth International) that started the ball rolling, by inviting all the workers parties to a meeting to discuss the situation. Against this background, 24 shop stewards, local and national union leaders called the founding meeting of the Landsindsamlingen til de Britiske Hulminarbejdere (National Fund for the British Coal Miners).

Even though this assembly was held in the midst of the summer holidays, it was an enormous success. Representatives of all the political currents in the Danish union movement participated. For a start, more than 100 unions affiliated to the campaign, including three national ones — the Bryggeriarbejderforbund (Brewery Workers Union), the Soemaendenes Forbund (Seamen's Union) and the Hotel-og-Restaurationsarbejdernes Forbund (Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union). At the same time, 26 support committees were established on a geographical basis to distribute literature, hold meetings and collect funds.

Even though the Social Democracy, which is the biggest workers party in Denmark, has not officially affiliated to the campaign, a lot of Social Democratic-led unions have done so and many are contributing to the campaign.

Practical solidarity

In the first month of its existence, the campaign already collected more than 250,000 Danish crowns (about 25,000 US dollars), and it is not unrealistic to hope that the total may reach a million crowns by the end of September. At the same time, a lot of unions are sending money direct to the miners. For example, the executive of the SID, the union of unskilled workers, the country's largest union, has recommended to the

SID's National Board that it send 100,000 crowns.

Solidarity is also being expressed in other ways. The Seamen's Union have in a number of cases stopped Danish ships from carrying coal to Britain from Poland and South Africa. The Danish dockworkers are discussing blacking goods destined for Britain. And the Byggefagernes Samvirke (Building Trades Association) has decided to bring miners' families to Denmark for vacations and is calling on other unions to do the same.

The solidarity movement is so extensive that it has become a problem for the Landsindsamling to get enough literature printed. The first 30,000 information leaflets and 35,000 support stamps were exhausted in a few weeks and a new order is now at the printers.

At the moment, the Landsindsamling is preparing for a 14-day tour of a miner and a miner's wife as a prelude to a big solidarity weekend on September 28-30, when Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield [president and general secretary of the mineworkers union] have been in-

SAP publish special issue on British miners (DR)



vited to come to Denmark. On this occasion, among other things, a shop stewards' conference has been scheduled, which is expected to be attended by more than a thousand shop stewards from the entire country.

A big solidarity festival will also be held in the Folkets Hus (Community Center) in Copenhagen, which can accommodate thousands of people. Famous bands and artists have agreed to perform without pay for the benefit of the miners. The Folkets Hus is being turned over for the event free of charge, thanks to the Social Democratic-dominated District Labor Council in Copenhagen, and the surplus collected will go entirely to the Landsindsamling.

A common struggle

The Socialistisk Arbejderparti has made solidarity work with the British miners one of its central activities. This involves both what the party does in its own name and the work of its members in the unions. For example, the SAP is collecting money for the coal miners at the same time that it is involved in collecting 25,000 signatures in order to be able to run candidates in the next parliamentary elections. The party has also put out a special issue of its weekly paper, *Klassekampen*, with material on the strike to help in the support work.

Part of the material in this issue of *Klassekampen* was collected on a 14-day tour of the British coal fields by a member of the SAP leadership, who is also a shop steward at the B&W marine motor factory in Copenhagen and one of the initiators and leaders of the Landsindsamling.

In the unions, SAP members are raising the question of solidarity. One example of what can be done is the decision by the SID in Als, in southern Jutland, whose members were out on strike for several months in the spring in a long and bitter struggle against the government's assault on real wages. At its general assembly on August 25, it adopted a resolution that concludes as follows:

"The similarity in the attacks of the conservative governments is striking. We can and will block the sort of brutal attack on the Danish union movement that the British NUM is facing today. A victory for you is a victory for us. A defeat for Thatcher is a defeat for Schlueter. Fraternal greetings and 10,000 crowns from the SID-Als."

This is the line that the SAP is fighting for, not abstract solidarity with the British miners but concrete solidarity based on the understanding that the fight against right-wing governments is a common one for the European working class. Therefore, solidarity work with the miners is also practical preparation for the contract negotiations here that will begin early next year and will be a difficult and decisive test of strength between the Danish working class and the right-wing Schlueter government. ■

International solidarity with British miners

In Poland ...several statements in support of the British miners have been published in the journals of Solidarnosc. We reprint here an open letter to Arthur Scargill from three groups of Solidarnosc members in the Warsaw region, and a resolution from the Inter-Factory Workers Committee of Solidarnosc in the Warsaw region (MRKS). The open letter was first printed in the clandestine journal *Robotnik*, No 63, July 23, 1984 and the second in the journal *CDN - Glos Wolnego Robotnika*, June 26, 1984.

Dear Mr Scargill,

Over the last few months, we and thousands of our trade-union comrades have been anxiously following your struggle for the right to work. We know that, in its present stage, your struggle takes on a new importance, that it is in fact a struggle for survival of the British trade-union movement. We have already condemned, and we vigorously reiterate our condemnation of, the export of coal to Britain by the Jaruzelski regime. Given that Thatcher gets on so well with Jaruzelski, we think that it is time to draw some lessons. We hope, therefore, that, in the cause of workers' solidarity, you will modify your negative attitude towards our movement. Please make known to the British miners, and all trade unionists, our solidarity and our support.

'Robotnik' Political Group
Editorial team of *Robotnik* (journal of activists of
MRKS, the Inter-Factory Workers Committee of
Solidarnosc in the Warsaw region)
Emmanuel Goldstein Group

For four months the British miners have been on strike against a programme of mass closures of mines for economic reasons. The miners are threatened with unemployment. The government has rejected compromise solutions and has resorted to severe police methods against the strikers. Thousands of miners have been arrested; hundreds have been hospitalised and one has been killed.

The government of the Polish People's Republic, despite hypocritical condemnations of the activities of the British police in the columns of the regime's press and by the regime's pseudo-trade unionists, is profiting from the export of coal to Britain. It sells dirt cheap coal which has been mined in scandalously neglected working conditions and with reckless exploitation of the labour force and the coal field. The slave labour of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner.

British miners! The true sentiments of Polish trade unionists towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and their practices was shown in the recent electoral farce which was boycotted by the workers. In the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain that as you have supported and are supporting our struggle, so we are in solidarity with you. We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for their rights and interests.

Long live Trade Union Solidarity!

Warsaw, June 26, 1984

In Brazil ...the first congress of the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT — United Confederation of Workers) adopted the following solidarity declaration:

At this its first congress the Brazilian CUT expresses its total solidarity with the struggle of the 150,000 brothers and sisters, British miners, who have already been on strike for 168 days against the destruction of their industry, their jobs and their communities by Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government.

Once again, as in its aggression against the Argentinian people, as in its passivity before the deaths on hunger strike of Irish nationalists, this government has shown itself ready to resort to the most brutal methods in its efforts to defend the capitalist and imperialist interests which it represents. This strike has already seen the biggest police operation ever seen in Britain, with more than 1,500 miners pickets arrested, and two killed.

We Brazilian workers are familiar with this sort of repression, and worse; many times it has been exercised against us in defence of those same interests, including those of British multinational firms operating in Brazil.

We know that for our brother miners, and for those other trade unionists supporting them, this confrontation is decisive, capable of deciding for many years to come the future of the workers' movement in Britain, and even that of British imperialism itself.

In this struggle we have a common interest with the British miners. We give them all our support, and wish them every success.

Long live international solidarity!

Sao Paulo, August 28, 1984

In West Germany ...*Was Tun*, newspaper of the GIM, German section of the Fourth International, has established a special bank account for solidarity funds as a follow up to the successful tour the GIM organised for British miners. Account: Peter Bartelheimer, PSchA Frankfurt/Main, No 349 445-603, Federal Republic of Germany.

In the United States ...the International Executive Board of the United Mineworkers Association agreed to support the British miners and send a donation of 25,000 US dollars to the NUM. The August issue of the union journal *United Mineworkers Journal* carried a full report of the IEB's discussion and decisions and called on the union membership to support their 'brothers on strike'. The decision was taken after hearing a report and appeal for solidarity from a local union president of the NUM, who was also interviewed in the journal. The UMWA will send a fact-finding commission to see the British situation at first hand.

For further information contact Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP, telephone (01) 359-8180, or directly contact the National Union of Mineworkers, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield, telephone (0742) 700-388. ■

Mass struggles come together to produce explosive situation

The death toll of the wave of rebellions shaking the Republic of South Africa continues to rise. On September 17, a spokesperson of the Pretoria police announced three new deaths; two men killed by rubber bullets and a woman found with a bullet lodged in her skull. This brings the total to 57 persons killed and several hundreds wounded in the last few weeks, according to the official statements alone.

Nathan PALMER

The immediate cause of the riots was the 15 to 20 per cent rent rise for government-owned housing in the townships around Johannesburg, coming on top of the rises in General Sales Tax and basic product prices.

'To outsiders it might be beyond belief that a rent increase of only 5.90 rands [approximately £3] in the Vaal townships could provoke a sizeable work stayaway, protest marches and — once the violence has started — vicious attacks on community councillors. It also led to massive police action, including the use of shotguns, rubber bullets and teargas,' wrote a journalist in the *Johannesburg Star* (September 6, 1984).

The background to these events is the growing convergence of a rise in the mass struggles against apartheid and against the constitutional reforms of Pieter W. Botha. It is very significant that, at the same time as there was rioting in the Transvaal, the new three-chamber parliament was inaugurated and P. W. Botha elected president one thousand kilometres away in Cape Town, in the presence of the Unita leader from Angola, Jonas Savimbi.

The constitutional reforms, which concentrated even more power into the hands of the president, were put to the popular vote in a referendum among whites, the only ones at that time with the right to vote, on November 2, 1983. Two-thirds of the electors approved of these proposals while there was growing protest activity among the black population, giving birth to two new organisations, the UDF (United Democratic Front, close to the positions of the ANC) and the National Forum (structured around the Azanian People's Organisation Azapo, the inheritors of the black consciousness tradition).

Voting took place on August 22 for the 2.8 million 'Coloureds', and August 28 for the 850,000 'Indians'. News on the turnout for the polls was awaited impatiently because this was an

important test for the apartheid regime. Collaborators can be found. But could even a semblance of credibility be achieved? The response of the Coloured and Indian populations was clear. Many did not even register to vote, and of those who did only 30 per cent of Coloureds and 20 per cent of Indians actually voted.

The two winners in this electoral farce each received their ministerial reward. The Reverend Allan Hendrickse, leader of the Coloured Labour Party, and Amichand Rajbansi of the Indian People's Party were both appointed minister without portfolio. When asked about this status, P. W. Botha responded, 'If I find a Coloured or Indian capable of handling a portfolio, I will not hesitate to appoint him.'

To dispel any lingering doubts on the emptiness of these reforms, just remember that the members of the three chambers will not sit in the same room. The 178 whites elected to the House of Assembly, the 85 members of the Coloured House of Representatives and the 45 elected to the Indian House of Delegates will be neighbours but will not be sitting in the same chairs.

No opening for collaborators

The boycott campaign during the elections showed the growing strength of the black mass organisations, now at a higher point than they have been since the wave of repression in 1960. Leaders of the UDF and Azapo were among the 150 people arrested between August 20 and 22, just before the elections. Six leaders of the UDF had to seek refuge in the British consulate in Durban, where they still remain. Throughout the country, public meetings, calling for a boycott of the elections, took place.

The independent non-racial unions were also involved in the campaign. The Fosatu (Federation of South African Trade Unions), one of the most powerful non-racial federations, waged an intense campaign. Thousands of homes in the Eastern Cape were visited by

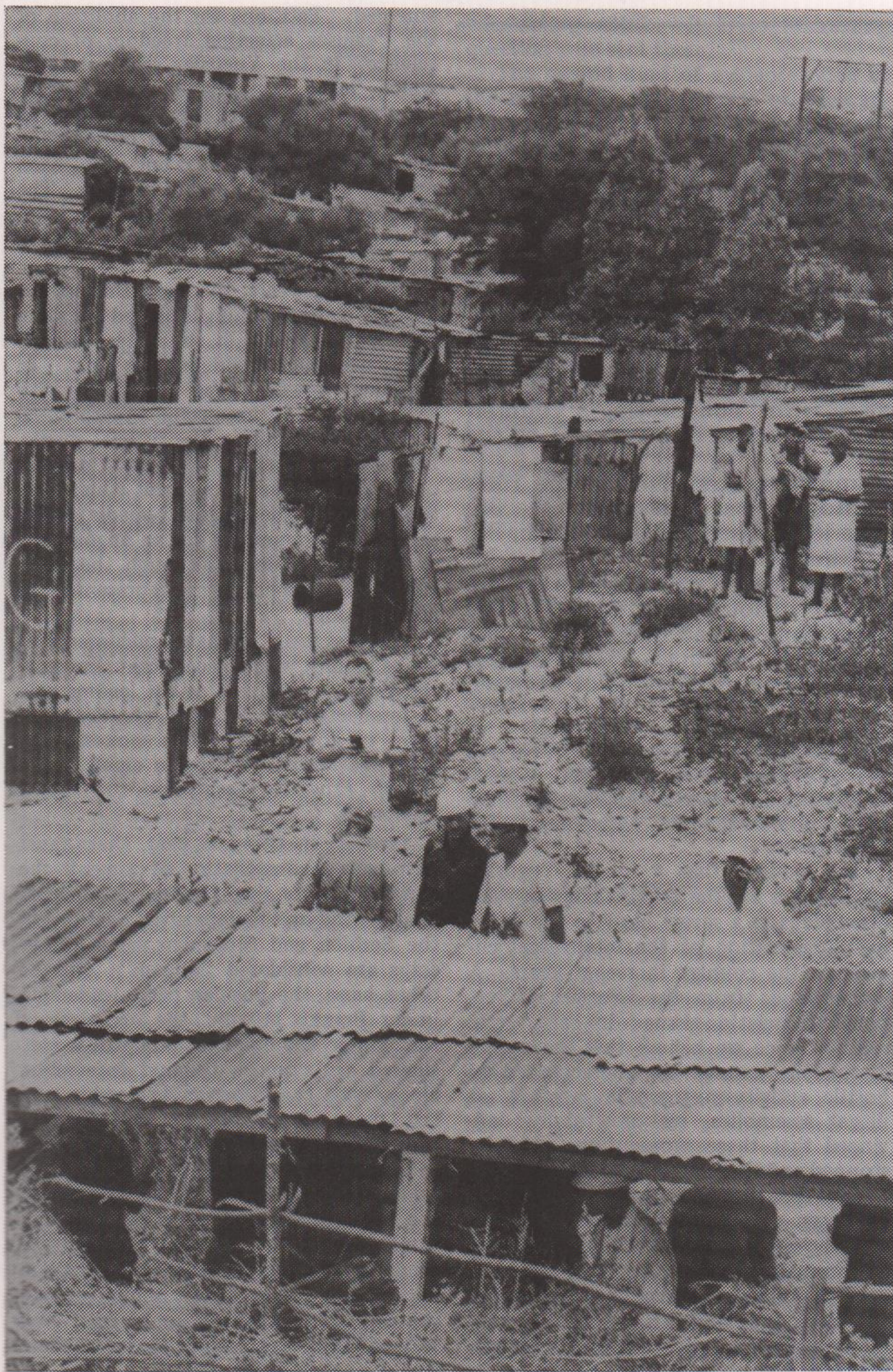
shop stewards and organisers of Fosatu who argued around the Fosatu slogans, 'Workers unite, don't vote. To vote is to vote for racism, to vote will only benefit opportunist leaders, to vote is to accept an undemocratic constitution.'

Young people still in education linked their specific demands to the campaign against the elections. Class boycotts started around three demands: recognition of the student representative councils; the abolition of corporal punishment; and the ending of age limits that interfere with the already limited educational opportunities of many young blacks. Taking up, as they had done in August 1980 and before that in June 1976, the question of the overall racist educational system, the relationship with the rejection of racist elections was obvious. The official figures showed that 630,000 students boycotted classes in the schools and universities on August 22. Thus, some 80 per cent of Coloured students joined the boycott.

The elections took place amid the fumes of teargas and amid violent confrontations. While a small minority were in the polling booths, the mass of black people took to the streets, despite the strong police presence, and the violence that the repressive forces habitually use. The demonstrators responded in kind, with whatever came to hand. Their determination was such that the minister of law and order, Louis LaGrange, had to turn back his armoured convoy when he saw the crowd he faced on his tour of inspection in the townships. This symbolic withdrawal took a practical form in the government's suspension of the rent rises.

One of the characteristics of the present situation in South Africa is the constant level of violence. The first legal strike by black miners has just learnt this truth through bitter experience. Up until two years ago the independent unions could not organise the miners. The gold mines are the economic lifeblood of the country, and the white union, the Mine Workers Union, led by Arrie Paulus, was in agreement with the employers in refusing to allow what they considered as a plague into the mines. However, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was recognised in 1982, and has now signed 17 recognition agreements and claims 70,000 members among the 480,000 black miners.

The cause of the strike is to be found in the annual wage negotiations with the Chamber of Mines. The employers' offer was a raise of between 9.5 and 10.9 per cent, while the NUM was demanding a minimum of 25 per cent. 'The offer is much lower than last year's settlement of 9 per cent for certain categories and 15.7 per cent for others. There is no way we can settle for less than last year,' pointed out Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the NUM. Certain sections of the employers wanted a test of strength, seeing this as an



The townships, scene of massive social upheavals (DR)

opportunity to cripple the union.

Confronted with the employers' arguments about the recession, the miners replied that with the price rises and the drought, which particularly affected the rural areas where their families live, they were not prepared to give up. This explains why, at the same time as a legal strike on September 18 was called in seven gold mines belonging to Anglo-American, an illegal strike broke out at a coal mine in the Johannesburg region, at Harlbeesfontein, and in other places.

Although the Anglo-American strike was legal, it was brutally attacked by the police. The violent confrontations that this provoked lasted all night, causing at least 10 deaths and almost

500 wounded among the miners. The conditions for black miners partially explain the strikers' reactions. Paid only a seventh of what white miners receive, the black miners face a death rate probably six times higher than in the United Kingdom, according to Dr Herbert Eisner, a British mine safety expert called in by the NUM. He also found local statistics on mine accidents 'misleading'.

The Chamber of Mines backed down to a certain extent, offering a wage increase of 15 per cent, which was accepted by the NUM. But peace has not been restored to this region, where there have also been rebellions in the townships. The curfew is still in force, and is not limited to the Transvaal.

The black masses have thus shown, on every front, that they have gone through their experiences and have no illusions that it is possible to live with apartheid. This is more than a simple setback for the regime. The fact that P. W. Botha is continuing with his constitutional reform policies, and that a new homeland, Kwandebele, to the north of Pretoria, will receive its 'independence' in December, making it the fifth black state in South Africa, should not create any illusions.

The agreements made with Mozambique and Angola were important successes for the regime and its strongman. They help to lend credence to the idea that the only solution for Pretoria's adversaries is to negotiate from a position of weakness and accept peace South African-style.

The events of the southern winter are a counterweight to these agreements. They show the impossibility of reaching that sort of negotiated settlement, a Lancaster House-style agreement [that is, the deal that achieved neocolonial stability in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe], within the borders of the Republic of South Africa.

No force representative of the black masses can take the risk of appearing as a collaborator with the apartheid regime. The principle of non-collaboration advanced by the Unity Movement in the 1950s is well and truly fixed in the consciousness of the masses.

Certain sections of white liberals have not yet given up the hope of reaching an agreement with the African National Congress, which has many times dangled this possibility. (1) But the ANC is caught in a contradiction: the national question is so central that it cannot go any further than an alliance with an organisation like the NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) whose rhetoric is quite close to their own, and does not appear representative of the white bourgeoisie in the eyes of the black masses.

The black uprising in the Transvaal shows what fate lies in store for blacks who collaborate with the municipal institutions created by the racist government. One can imagine the fate of a political current that crossed this Rubicon.

The race is on, therefore, to win hegemony over the mass movement, a race that hots up as the confrontations between the black masses and the regime intensify. While the riots of the last few weeks did not endanger the rule of white capital, they demonstrated that a shift in the relationship of social and national forces has opened a crucial period in the history of Africa. ■

1. According to press reports, a meeting took place between Colin Patterson (the commercial attache and only South African representative in Mozambique) and Joe Slovo, a leader of the ANC, at the end of August. This would be the first official contact between Pretoria and the ANC.

What is at stake in the trial of Belgrad six

What Poland was spared by the recent amnesty faces Yugoslavia this fall — a political show trial against a whole group of critical intellectuals. On the basis of their participation in the Free Universities movement in the Yugoslav capital, the following have been charged with “forming a group for the purpose of conducting hostile activity” (Article 139, Section 1 of the Criminal Code), as well as with “constituting a counter-revolutionary danger to the social order” (Article 114, Section 1 of the Criminal Code):

Vlaimir Mijanovic, age 38, the best known spokesperson of the 1968 Belgrade student movement; the translator Pavlusko Imsirovic, age 35; the sociologist Milan Nikolic, age 37, the journalist Dragomir Olujic, 35; the student Gordan Jovanovic, 24; and Midrag Milic, 55.

In mid-July, in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, an eight-year prison sentence was handed down against the left sociology professor Vojislav Seslj on the basis of things he wrote in an unpublished manuscript. The authorities clearly wanted to make an example of him. Following this sentence, the Belgrade Six are threatened with prison terms of between five and fifteen years.

Branko BRIZMAN

The six were arrested a few weeks after the police broke up a session of the Free University on April 20 at which Milovan Djilas introduced a discussion on the nationalities problem in Yugoslavia. Three of them then went on hunger strike, and two — Vladimir Mijanovic and Pavlusko Imsirovic remained on it for 42 days up until they were released on bail at the beginning of July.

The release of the six on bail was an unusual occurrence for Yugoslavia and can no doubt be attributed to the campaign on their behalf internationally and, particularly, in Yugoslavia to the thousand citizens who signed petitions to country's highest state bodies. The indictment handed down against them on August 6 indicates, however, that those in the party leadership who advocate tougher repression have for the time being prevailed.

In Belgrade intellectual circles, people stress the complete arbitrariness with which the authorities proceeded. Thus, the film maker Lazar Stojanovic said: “For seven years between twenty and fifty people met in private without bother from the police. I can't understand how they can pick out a few people without arresting all those who were there. I was there from the beginning, and, if necessary, I'll say that in court.”

A group of philosophers who were around the journal *Praxis*, which was shut down ten years ago, publicly took responsibility for the Free Universities. One of them, Ljubomir Tadic, said: “After our expulsion from the University of Belgrade, we tried to continue our intellectual activities. The regime knows that very well.”

Statements by participants indicate that a wide range of themes were discussed that are taken up too little or not

at all in public forums. They discussed Zen Buddhism and Stalinism, Rudolf Bahro and the theory of ideas as reflections, psychoanalysis and the Polish *Solidarnosc*.

No wonder that a lot of Yugoslav intellectuals see the criminalizing of such discussions as a severe blow to the growing liberalization of the intellectual climate in the country in recent years. A communique from the Croatian Philosophy Association issued in early June said: “Since we believe that theoretical discussions cannot be characterized as hostile activity nor public meetings as illegal assemblies, we are totally convinced that these prosecutions must be stopped and those arrested released.”

The fact that an indictment was handed down despite many protests of this sort shows that, against the backdrop of a continuing severe economic crisis, a general rollback of the liberalization in the ideological sphere is planned. In fact, in recent years, especially in the Slovenian and Serbian republics, certain areas of intellectual and democratic freedoms developed that are astonishing under a one-party dictatorship.

Back to thought control

In Yugoslav bookstores, you can buy the books of Rudolf Bahro as well as those of Solzhenitsyn, those of Ernest Mandel as well as those of George Orwell. Last year the magazine of the Serbian Young Writers Union, *Knjizevna Rec*, published startling articles on the complicity of the Tito leadership in the “persecution of the Trotskyists” (which was aimed 99% against non-Trotskyists) in the 1930s and during the liberation war.

On the basis of the right granted by the Yugoslav constitution to collectively petition the state bodies, a weak but not negligible democratic public opinion has

emerged. Petitions for the abolition of the “clauses affecting freedom of conscience” in the Yugoslav criminal code, which make it possible to prosecute people just for things they say, or against the death penalty have not only gained hundreds of signatures but also been openly discussed in the media. The Slovenian youth paper *Mladina* is conducting a full-fledged campaign against the death penalty.

In recent years, the Free Universities have of course no longer played the same role that they did at the time when all these possibilities did not yet exist. In Belgrade, however, the Free University sessions were an important underpinning for those working in the official media. In particular, for the “New Left” coming out of the student movement (this is the term used in the Yugoslav media), they served as a framework for an ongoing exchange of opinions, although the most various tendencies were represented in these sessions.

“In past years, we have concerned ourselves mainly with the economy, but now the Party has to resume the leading role in intellectual life.” That was the comment of government press spokesperson Ante Gavranovic, editor in chief of the Zagreb *Privredi Vjesnik* on the recent events.

In fact, in the past year, there must have been a constellation of power in the party oligarchy that forced the so-called liberal wing on the defensive. Sections of the Serbian and Slovenian party leaderships are considered “liberal.” On the other hand, the Bosnian party leadership under Branko Mikulic, the organizer of the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, is considered to support tougher repression, along with the Croatian leadership and the party heads in the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo.

Since this summer a man who is certainly well used to repression has stood at the head of the federal party organization. He is the Kosovo Albanian Ali Shukria. In recent years 800 Albanian nationalists have been sentenced to shockingly long prison sentences. The wave of trials in this area, moreover, continued unabated this summer.

Since the move against critical intellectuals is bound up with a power struggle in the bureaucracy, in which the present Serbian leadership under Ivan Stambolic could lose its skin, there have also been some other important parallel operations. In early May, the Central Committee of the Croatian party, under the chairpersonship of the well-known hardliner Stipe Suvar, held an ideological conference in which the intellectual tendencies in Serbia in particular were stigmatized as the expression of a creeping counter-revolution. There were strong protests in the Serbian press and violent arguments in the Central Committee of the Serbian party.

By the way of documentation for the conference, Suvar ordered the preparation of a 237-page white paper, which included a sort of index of all the expres-

sions by artists and journalists in recent years that he regarded as anti-party. This "Flowers of Evil" as the Belgrade press mockingly referred to the tom, was banned outright in Belgrade by court order.

Power struggle in bureaucracy

After a brief respite, this conflict escalated again in early August. In the Zagreb weekly magazine *Danas*, the Croatian politician Jure Bilic called for reprimanding a party leadership that had failed to keep the life of the society sufficiently under control. Everyone knew that he was referring to the Serbs.

Ljebomir Tadic summed up: "We now have different currents in the leadership — a very weak liberal current and an unfortunately strong neo-Stalinist grouping." The weakness of the "liberals" is indicated by the suppression of the Free Universities in Belgrade, which was obviously imposed against the will of the Serbian authorities by the Federal authorities and in particular by the State Presidium.

Moreover, before the trial of Vojislav Seselj, the Slovene Mitija Ribicic spoke out in the Belgrade magazine *Nin* in opposition to taking administrative measures against intellectuals: "The way to fight books is with other books." This advice was not followed, as the condemnation of Seselj showed.

Since it is to be feared that the Sarajevo trial will be taken as a model for the Belgrade case, it is worth taking a more careful look at the judgment of the court. The essential target of the indictment was a manuscript that Seselj sent last fall to the editor of the party journal *Komunist*, Dusan Bogavac, in Belgrade. It bore a title with historical resonance, "What Is To Be Done?" Bogavac testified that he never got this manuscript. Obviously the state security police took it.

In fact, during the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo the manuscript was seized during a search of Seselj's home, along with 1,700 pages of other unpublished manuscripts. Excerpts from this article, which besides the author only the police had seen, were shortly afterward revealed by leading politicians. Mitija Ribicic did so on April 12 and the then minister of the interior and present member of the State Presidium Stane Dolanc did so in a TV interview May 8. It was not they, however, who were arrested for counter-revolutionary propaganda, but Seselj who was jailed on May 15.

Although the prosecution was unable to produce one witness to say that Seselj had put the manuscript into his or her hand, the court upheld the charge that the author had engaged in counter-revolutionary propaganda for the purpose of carrying out common action with others. There are some other interesting facts. After Seselj's arrest, some people in Sarajevo got anonymous letters, along with photocopies of the supposedly in-

criminating article. It is an interesting question who sent them.

The second kind of evidence cited in the indictment were reports of disparaging remarks that Seselj supposedly made to individuals about Yugoslavia's political system. One of these "witnesses" had never seen Seselj in his life before testifying in court. Others are considered to be agents provocateurs at the University of Sarajevo.

Despite such laughable evidence, the court imposed the sentence of eight years, and the judge, Milorad Potpalic even had the nerve to say that this amounted to clemency because Seselj's activity had represented "the strongest attack on the bases of the new Yugoslavia" since Tito's break with Stalin.

In fact, as far as can be judged from Seselj's previously published works and the quotes from "What Is To Be Done?" given in the Yugoslav press, they were intended to be a socialist critique of the political relationships in the country. Seselj criticized the chaos of the unplanned and bureaucratic model of self-management in Yugoslavia, pointed to the undemocratic traditions of the League of Yugoslav Communists, and demanded an investigation into the responsibility of the late President Tito for the present crisis of the country.

A decisive test of strength

During the trial itself, witnesses report, despite his 42-day-long hunger strike, he expressed himself with no less vigor and courage. Even colleagues of Seselj in Zagreb and Belgrade who did not agree with his views or actions rejected the disgusting campaign of slander against him in the Yugoslav media, which has sought to present him as venal and a political madman.

The main attack by the media against Seselj was focused on a short passage in his manuscript "What Is To Be Done?" which most dissidents in Yugoslavia would regard in fact as a serious error. In it, Seselj proposed the abolition of the republics of Bosnia and Montenegro and dividing up their territory between Serbia and Croatia, as well as the non-recognition of the "Muslims" as a nationality.

Either step would undoubtedly dangerously excite national passions in Yugoslavia and, in particular, lead to a grave crisis in Bosnia, which is inhabited by Serbs and Croats, Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims. On this, Ljubomir Tadic said: "These views can be criticized, but all this relates to the questions under discussion — the way our federation is organized, our nationalities policy."

The moral of this farce is quite clear. Every dissident intellectual now knows that he or she can be put on trial any time the authorities feel like it, even if the police cannot produce a shred of evidence of any illegal activity. Already this summer the critical intellectuals in Belgrade got a foretaste of this new pro-

cedure. The interrogation of some ninety people, four house searches and numerous confiscations of letters and manuscripts created a climate of constant anxiety and insecurity.

The indictment against the Belgrade Six drawn up by the state prosecutor, Danilo Nanovic, concentrates on counting up the number of time each of the accused is supposed to have been present at Free University sessions since 1977. Vladimir Mijanovic is accused of being "responsible" for the organizational aspects of the sessions.

Miodrag Milic is supposed to have spoken critically about the personality cult around Josif Broz Tito, and Dragomir Olujic is supposed to have stressed the importance of a strong trade-union movement in Yugoslavia. Quotations from the manuscripts of the accused as well as verbal statements attributed to them are supposed to prove the "counter-revolutionary character" of the sessions.

Thus, Srdja Popovic, one of Vladimir Mijanovic's lawyers, said in response to the indictment: "The prosecutor's office suspects the accused of having done something that has always and everywhere been allowed — visiting people, receiving people and engaging in discussions. It calls all this illegal because it attributes 'counterrevolutionary' views to the accused. There is no proof of this accusation. By this method anyone could be charged or any sort of everyday activity if certain views were attributed to them."

As the Seselj case has shown, the verdict depends little on the strength of the proofs offered by the prosecution or the counterproofs of the defense. Behind it there will be a political decision. It was no accident that days before the official indictment was made, State Chairman Veselin Djuranovic announced at the Central Committee plenum of the Montenegrin party that the trial was going to be held in the near future.

On August 6, Vladimir Mijanovic replied as follows in an "Open Letter":

"Just keep on sowing anxiety, so that you won't have to face any disagreeable questions about your historical, personal and collective responsibility for the economic, political and moral impasse in which the country finds itself! Just keep on demanding that 'The Central Committee get off the defensive' by sending me and others to prison. I tell you: I'm not going to let you get away with waging the 'special war' you have dreamed up at my expense. I'm not going to let you get away with making an example out of me to intimidate others! Is there a way? There is one possibility, a general political amnesty now!"

Agence France Press has reported that all six have declared that they will go on an unlimited hunger strike if they are convicted. This trial is shaping up as a test of strength both between the critical intellectuals and the authorities and between the different factions within the bureaucracy that will set the course for the future evolution of Yugoslavia. ■

After the failure of the campaign for direct elections

SAO PAULO — While it remains an open question who will succeed General Figueiredo as president in March 1985, the late winter weeks here have shed light on the probable nature of the transition from the dictatorship to some form of bourgeois democracy.

Even though the mass movement for "Direct Elections Now!" failed to force a favorable vote from parliament on April 25 and then collapsed, it at least barred the way for a simple continuation of the dictatorship and facilitated a qualitative advance in the liberalization process that has been going on for many years now.

The PDS, the party of the military, has split; and the army command no longer acts as a united force. A reaction by the military, such as a new coup, seems impossible for a long period, even if, in a Latin American country, such an eventuality cannot be excluded.

Jakob STUDER

On June 27, the second attempt in parliament to win direct elections failed, since President Figueiredo simply rejected an opposition amendment to his proposal calling for introducing direct elections in 1988 that would have brought them in immediately.

The weekend of August 11-12 settled a number of previously open questions, around which confusion had reigned since April 25. On the one hand, the big opposition party, the PMDB, finally gave up on direct elections now. And, at its congress, Tancredo Neves, governor of the state of Minas Gerais, was nominated as the party's candidate for the election to be held through the electoral college.

At the same time, at its congress, the government party the PDS, selected as its candidate the corrupt ex-governor of Sao Paulo, Paulo Maluf. He was chosen by a resounding 60% vote over the somewhat less compromised minister of the interior, Andreaza, who got 40%.

These two candidates of the big parties will face each other in the infamous electoral college on January 15. The procedures for the actual vote are to be discussed shortly.

Tancredo is clearly a representative of the conservative bourgeoisie. But, having been minister of justice under the presidency of Getulio Vargas in 1950-1954 and a minister in the government of Jango Goulart, he has not linked himself to the military. However, he has not burnt his bridges to them, either. Thus he has not hesitated to hail the "gains" accomplished by the military since the 1964 coup and to praise Figueiredo's "democratic sense of responsibility."

As governor of Minas, Tancredo has followed a course consistent with this sort of position. For example, he has set police on demonstrators several times, even against those demonstrating for

direct elections, a demand that he also supported, although only as a way of gaining an opening for his candidacy.

The choice of Tancredo as the candidate of the PMDB went hand in hand with this party distancing itself from the left, which was accompanied by successive retreats of the left within the party. Having been first projected as a "unity candidate of all the opposition parties" for direct elections, Tancredo is now the candidate of the right center for indirect elections.

Choice between two bourgeois candidates

This was made possible by the split of the "liberal" wing of the PDS, the part that joined with the opposition in the demand for direct elections. After some maneuvering, including a vain attempt to get President Figueiredo's support, the leader of this wing, the incumbent vice president, Aureliano Chaves, opted for a pact with the PMDB and with Tancredo. This meant that he had to give up his own candidacy, but it left his chances intact for a later try.

At the same time, moves are afoot to transform this "liberal" wing of the PDS into an independent party. And it is unclear whether or not it is going to join with the right-wing sections of the PMDB to form a new big center party.

So, the pact between the PMDB and the breakaway group from the PDS has taken the form of an electoral alliance called the Alianca Democratica. Tancredo's running mate is Sarney, who up until June was president of the PDS and a pillar of the dictatorship.

Of course, this nomination aroused some opposition in the "Direct Elections Only" group in the PMDB — an "independent left" wing that continues to hold to the demand for direct elections. But in the congress this backlash was reflected

only in a rather weak abstention vote. The other left wing, the Stalinists of the PCB, PC do B, and the MR-8, capitulated just as totally, chanting at the congress, "Hey, Hey, Tancredo and Sarney!"

It goes without saying that the electoral program of this alliance is vague and noncommittal. In virtually all questions key to breaking with the heritage of the dictatorship, no radical reforms are proposed — no moratorium on payments to the IMF, only new negotiations; no agrarian reform; and no guarantees for meeting the most important workers' demands regarding job creation, the introduction of unemployment insurance, and cost-of-living increases. Likewise, there is not a word in the program about repealing the "Security Law," the dictatorship's charter for repression.

Direct elections on all levels are promised. But no dates are set (according to Figueiredo's proposal, the presidential term will still be six years.) The program also promises the calling of a constituent assembly. But Tancredo is only talking about the possibility of conferring "constituent powers" on the parliament.

What distinguishes the two slates is not program but the different social forces that support them. Maluf represents the old oligarchy, linked to the dictatorship, which has worn out its credibility with the people. On the other hand, Tancredo represents the oppositionist bourgeoisie, and, moreover, is seeking the support of the middle class, the mass movements and the unions in order to achieve a broader base for Brazilian capitalism.

In this sense, Maluf is the candidate that represents continuity of the regime, although in the present period the protagonists of the dictatorship do not have any fascistic schemes. And Tancredo is the candidate of transition, a transition that does not mean a break from the dictatorship and its apparatus, but rather is directed toward achieving "national reconciliation."

There is no doubt that important sections of banking and industrial capital today are pushing this scheme for national reconciliation, with the aim of achieving a maximum of social stability for a minimum of concessions and reforms. The detested Maluf is, therefore, not the sort of figure needed to carry out this scheme. (The polls give him 10% to 15%, as against 40% to 50% for Tancredo.) Indeed, even Figueiredo and the "modernist" sections of the military command are giving Maluf only half-hearted backing.

However, even though the support of the breakaway "Liberal Front" seems to have given Tancredo a better chance for victory, Maluf cannot yet be counted out. The reason for this is to be found in the tradition of the Brazilian political system. It is a tradition of local bosses, patronage and corruption, a tradition that has an inertia of its own and may conflict to a certain extent with the interests of capital as a whole. This is particularly true in the case of indirect elections through a body that was created precisely

with the objective of maintaining continuity.

But what is the response of the workers movement to all this? I have already mentioned the Stalinists. As for the PDT, Brizola's populist Social Democratic party — which cannot be definitely characterized as belonging to the workers movement — it has also accepted the indirect elections and will vote for Tancredo if its votes are necessary to block Maluf.

In view of his own electoral ambitions for a later time, Brizola is trying to put some distance between himself and Tancredo. He would like to see Tancredo's term in office limited to two years. That is, he wants a caretaker presidency that will open the way for direct elections and a constituent assembly in 1986.

In a way, the PT, and along with it the CUT, have benefitted from the rightward shift of Tancredo's candidacy. When he was proposed in May/June as the unity candidate of the entire opposition for direct elections, the PT leadership got caught up in the operation and came out for supporting him. This did not fail to provoke a reaction from large sections of the PT, who remained committed to working-class independence. Their slogans were, "Boycott the Electoral College; No Support for Tancredo — Not in Indirect or in Direct Elections; Run a Working-Class Candidate Pledged to a Minimum Program" (basically this meant the 10-point program already adopted by the PT, which calls for major social and democratic reforms). The rightward lurch of Tancredo's candidacy strengthened these positions, and the leadership around Lula was forced to go along with them. So, today the PT is relatively united and appears as the only force not implicated in the betrayal of the mass mobilization for "Direct Elections Now."

However, this does not mean that the PT is automatically going to revive the mobilization, or that the CUT is going to be able to launch the general strike that it has decided on. The PT is on the rise (as is shown by the fact that in the vote for prefect in the port city of Santos its vote rose from 10% to 20%, while that of the PDS fell to 3%).

Opposition slates that declared support for the CUT won the elections in some unions that have been dominated by *pelegos* [corrupt bureaucrats serving as a labor police for the state]. Nonetheless, the PT and the CUT remain minority forces. Moreover, the political weaknesses of both leaderships are proving very costly.

For example, during the mass mobilizations, the PT leadership operated only as the left wing of the broad opposition alliance, and did not attempt to build a real alternative to the liberal bourgeoisie through a workers' program and a united-front policy based on the workers movement as a whole and the various mass movements. Today, it is still playing this losing game. It is still acting like the left wing of an alliance for "Direct Elections

Now" that no longer exists.

Along with the pathetic remnants of this alliance — the PDT and the "Direct Elections Only" Group of the PMDB, which in fact have already fundamentally capitulated — the PT is trying, mainly in the parliamentary arena, to trip up the transition operation. It is obstructing the passage of the rule for the electoral college and trying to get a vote on a third pending proposal for introducing "direct elections now." So, it is in danger of being left isolated and once again coming under pressure to vote for Tancredo in order to block the greater evil, Maluf, and of getting caught up in the game in the electoral college.

The polls favoring Tancredo already show that millions of people who went onto the streets a few months ago for direct elections have, for lack of an alternative, been sucked into supporting the "lesser evil option." On the other hand, up to 25% do not want either Tancredo or Maluf. Tancredo and his democratic alliance are hesitating, and not without good reason, to call street meetings. In Belo Horizonte, there were only 7,000 people. At the same time there was a detachment of police called in because of fear of the radical forces.

The independent union movement

The CUT leadership has not taken any better advantage of the opportunity to put the workers movement in the lead of the fight for democracy than that of the PT. Before April 25, it hardly showed its face in the campaign. But then it decided to call a general strike to impose the demand for "Direct Elections Now." It has tossed this hot potato around a lot in discussions, but so far has undertaken no systematic practical preparations for such an action.

In particular, the CUT has not been able to establish a link between the wave of workers' struggles in the cities and in the countryside which arose in the opening created by the mass mobilization and are still continuing. It has not centralized these struggles and has not taken up their economic demands in order to integrate them into the political confrontation with the dictatorship. In fact, it is not enough just to keep shouting for "Direct Elections Now." The CUT held back too much, waiting for the entry of the CONCLAT (1), which now, of course, is fully committed to Tancredo's notion of national reconciliation.

In this situation, on August 24-26, exactly a year after its founding, the CUT held its first regular national congress in Sao Bernardo do Campo, in the so-called ABC industrial region outside the city of Sao Paulo.

Up to 5,000 delegates, representing 11.5 million workers, of which 3.2 million belong to established unions, showed that the CUT unites the vital and combative elements in the Brazilian workers movement. The congress demonstrated, in fact, that the CUT represents a growing political force that can finally

put an end to state-controlled unionism and break the power of the *pelegos*.

A special role was played by the agricultural workers delegations, some of which came from the most remote states. The CUT has become more aware of the importance of these forces.

The discussions were very open, and often delegates did not hesitate to make sharp criticisms. But that does not mean that everything has been going well. Indeed, the CUT Executive issued a self-criticism that would normally have been sufficient grounds for resignation. But it was reelected virtually unchanged, since there was no alternative and the class consciousness of the rank and file is not yet very developed. The determination of this leadership to block the advance of the revolutionary organizations was also quite clear.

The debates and decisions of the congress reflected and confirmed the "centrism" of the CUT, rather than drawing the conclusions of a correct analysis of the situation. A large number of resolutions were passed, some of which were contradictory, without any priorities being established. But this congress will give a new impetus to the work of building up the organizational basis of the CUT.

The following were the most important decisions:

— Because of lack of time, a critical balance sheet was referred for further discussion to the incoming leadership.

— More attention was given to the land question, and a program for a radical agrarian reform was adopted.

— The congress decided on a boycott of the electoral college and for reviving the "Direct Elections Now" campaign by a march on Brasilia.

— The decision to call a general strike was upheld. It is supposed to take place before the presidential elections on January 15, 1985. But no concrete plan for building it was presented.

— A minimum program was adopted for uniting and politicizing the economic struggles, including cost-of-living increases three times a year, unemployment benefits, a forty-hour week, a break with the IMF. But the demands for a constituent assembly and a workers government were explicitly rejected.

— The statutes were not changed to facilitate building the CUT among the ranks of unions dominated by the *pelegos*. Only entire unions, associations and trade-union-like bodies can be members of the CUT. But in the *pelego* unions, rank-and-file groups (nucleuses) will be promoted.

— A congress and new elections in the CUT every two years (the leadership had proposed that this be every three years).

— The congress called for building a conference of Latin American trade-union confederations.

1. The wing of the left unions, dominated by the Stalinist forces, that held back from joining in the foundation of the CUT as an independent union confederation. — IV.

The government faces a growing crisis

Throughout the month of August and the beginning of September, the Northern province of Jaffna in Sri Lanka has been in a virtual state of siege. Following renewed activity in early August by groups representing Sri Lanka's 2.6 million Tamils, the Sinhala-dominated army has gone on the rampage — looting, burning down shops and killing Tamil civilians. On August 4, government patrol boats shelled a fishing village. On August 21, about 300 young Tamils were rounded up by the army supposedly looking for terrorists. This brought the total held in the month of August to 900. These young people have been taken to unknown destinations without relatives or friends being informed. It is suspected by some that the army is already being trained in these counterinsurgency methods by Israeli advisers, newly arrived in the country.

As the violence continues with further incidents taking place on September 12 and 13, the Jayewardene government's initial stance of blaming it all on the Tamils has become increasingly absurd. The government have had to announce that 36 soldiers have now been confined to barracks pending investigations into the burning of shops in Mannar and Point Pedro.

It is clear the state of emergency in the country is being used by the army as a pretext for harassment and intimidation of the Tamil population. The repressive activity also extends to the South of the country where many Tamils work on the vast tea plantations. The case of the Balangoda 18, accused of subversive activity is an example of this.

On June 15, 18 workers from the Rye Estate tea plantation, a leader of the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International amongst them, were rounded up and detained by police. To this day formal charges have not been put but the 18 were held on suspicion for three weeks before being released on bail.

The workers were discussing legal problems concerning a strike they had been involved in the previous April, when the arrests took place. Upali Cooray, a barrister, was with them. Upali is a leader of the Revolutionary Marxist Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International.

The 18 were taken into custody after police burst in and accused everyone present of taking part in an illegal meeting. They were forbidden to see either lawyers or relatives.

After several applications, the 18 were only finally released on bail because of an error by the police as to what section of the Emergency Powers Act they could be arrested under.

The new trial date is October 4. It is vital that a campaign of international solidarity is built up now to defend the 18 and to protest at the abuse of emergency powers and the suppression of democratic rights which this case symbolises.

Letters of protest should be sent to the President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, President's House, Sri Lanka. Please send messages of support and donations to Balangoda 18, 53 Rajamalwatte Road, Colombo 15, Sri Lanka.

Upali Cooray spoke to Mogens Pedersen about the situation in Sri Lanka on June 6, 1984.

Question. It appears that an Israeli interest section is to be opened up in the American embassy in Sri Lanka — amongst all the other problems facing the country — what is the significance of this?

special, elite commando, apparently to protect the president himself. I think that this shows both the desperation of the government and the contradictions within it. This will only alienate the Muslim community, who has hitherto been either pro-government or in any case not generally leftist. The Muslim community has a reputation of being conservative. If you look at the elections of 1977, in the Eastern province, most of the seats the UNP (1) won were in Muslim areas. But with the announcement

Answer. There is, in addition to this, an agreement made with the Israeli government to obtain the services of the Mossad, the Israeli secret service, as well as commando-training. It has been known for some time that the government has brought in Israelis to train a



Demonstrators protesting against massacres of Tamils burn

of an Israeli interest section being opened up, already there has been a tremendous amount of opposition from the Muslim community. Apparently the Israeli flag has been burnt and there have been demonstrations inside the mosques.

It is likely that this could provoke some anti-Muslim feeling amongst some sections of the Sinhalese, particularly the pro-government section who might be encouraged to oppose this Muslim protest. I think that this would be an extremely unwise move from the government's point of view. Firstly, it could endanger jobs and trade in the Middle East. (2) Already tea prices are falling

1. UNP — United National Party. The elections in 1977 gave the UNP more than two thirds of the seats in parliament. J. R. Jayewardene became prime minister and later president.

2. Because of the bad employment situation and very low wages, many Sri Lankans are going abroad — for instance to the Middle East — to find work.



Burnt effigy of Jayewardene (DR)

and there is a big drop in tea sales to Middle Eastern countries which will effect the economy very badly. But I think this also shows the kind of desperate mood the government is in. Because even before the armed youth in the North (3) had really started fighting, they had been engaging in preliminaries such as punishing informers, attacking torturers and collecting money. As yet, except in one case when 13 soldiers were killed in reprisal for a number of rapes, there has not been any general attack. Nevertheless the government are really panicking because they know they will not be able to contain it.

Q. Do you think that this decision to have the Israeli interest section reflects that the government is getting less and less interested in maintaining popular support, that it is going towards a more and more openly repressive regime, if

not a direct dictatorship relying on the military?

A. Within the government there is a division of opinion. We cannot talk any longer of a government policy because there are so many different opinions. But certainly one section is of the view that if one pursues a militaristic policy, it will be more popular among the Sinhalese and that it will be possible to retain support of a section or majority of the Sinhala people. But that is doubtful, because in any event the UNP is not the only one that takes that position — the SLFP (4) also supports that militarist policy.

But the real reason is that in the government there is no statesperson ready to take a strong stand on the national question, that is to come out and say 'Here is a political solution, we must implement that because it is acceptable to the Tamil people and at the same time we can maintain a unitary state'. For instance, Annexe 'C' to the Round Table talks (5) gives that kind of solution but having presented it, the government then dissolved it.

The government is frightened to come out and support an initiative which would resolve the problem through peaceful negotiations. On the other hand, it feels that in order to maintain its dwindling support amongst the masses it must pursue this kind of militaristic, jingoistic, anti-Indian policy. But in the medium and long term it is going to be counter-productive. More and more people are going to get alienated and, sooner or later, the Sinhalese will not be fooled by these continuous attempts to whip up chauvinism.

Q. If we look at the situation in the North where the government is carrying out its main attacks on the minority, what kind of repression is going on? What are the activities of the armed forces there?

A. We have a new Minister of National Security. His policy is, on the one hand, to create the impression to the world that they are trying to deal with the terrorists in a firm way, but at the same time to be fair to the rest of the Tamils and deal with the problem in the most civilised way possible. He has even gone on record as saying, 'We must remember that Tamils are not our enemies, even the terrorists are only temporary adversaries.' But this contrasts with what is actually happening in the North and East, which is not publicised. The only newspaper that is willing to publish material about the nature of the repression, *Saturday Review*, which is published in Jaffna, is heavily censored so that it cannot publish anything. The government-owned press and the other capitalist press have a self-censorship and conceal what is happening.

But what is going on is frightening. The army is going from village to village, from block to block, arresting all young people and most of them are locked up — unless they have good connections.

They are then subjected to inhuman torture. Some of the soldiers who come to the South on leave boast about the kind of torture they use. They hang people by their feet, cut them with knives and blades. They put ballpoint pens on the ear and hit so hard that it pierces from the outside. They push pipes up anuses.

This brutality goes hand in hand with another new development. The army, like the police, is trying to make a fast buck out of these arrests. If a young person is arrested they will be asked for a certain sum of money to pay for their release. But none of this is actually publicised. The government is refusing to say how many have been arrested. It must be a large number of people. Recently, for instance, in Batticaloa, in one incident, more than six hundred youth were arrested. Luckily, a Catholic priest intervened and got most of them released. The prisoners are detained in all kinds of places, no longer only in prisons or police custody, but even in army custody, in private houses and various other places. Very few people up to today, have been brought to trial as a result of these arrests. What has been happening is that a large number of people have been killed. The official explanation is that they have been killed while trying to escape from army or police custody. This cannot be so considering that in each of these cases a large number of army or police were present — it would be insane to try to escape under these conditions. The other point is that in none of these cases will the government hold an inquest in order to ascertain the real cause of death.

Q. What are the main demands that should be raised to try to develop a struggle against this repression of the Tamil minority? What is your solution to the national question?

1) A. As an immediate set of demands we will demand an immediate withdrawal of the army from the North and East and the establishment of civilian rule.

2) We must also call for the abolition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act which permits the government to hold people in custody for more than 18 months, without trial, anywhere they like. A further part of the campaign is to take whatever steps are possible, both legal and political, to get the people who have been arrested and released to take action against torture so that we can push the government to retreat on these ques-

3. The militant groups of the Tamil minority, struggling for an independent state — called Eelam — in the North and East of the country where the Tamils are in a majority.

4. SLFP — Sri Lankan Freedom Party, a bourgeois opposition party. Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike was prime minister for several years, but lost governmental power in 1977, following a big electoral defeat.

5. Conferences with participation of different parties and organisations to discuss how to resolve the problems related to the existence of two main groups and nationalities; the Sinhalese (some 74 per cent of the population) and the Tamils (18 per cent).

tions. I think it is important for us to explain the facts to the people, particularly in the South, because they don't seem to know what is happening.

I don't think this government or any capitalist government will be able to resolve this question. If it were serious, it would not be difficult to make some kind of agreement. The Tamil political parties, which were represented in the last government — the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) and the TC (Tamil Congress) — would have been prepared to accept regional autonomy — police, education and the health services controlled by regional authorities. All the problems, including land settlements, which the Tamils have been raising in the past could have been amicably settled, if the government really wanted.

But the government is either not seriously interested in resolving the national issue or it feels that in the context of the growing economic crisis with growing opposition of people up and down the country, anti-Tamil feeling is a useful diversion. So you have the incredible situation in which the government has one minister saying 'we must be very cautious, you must not alienate your own neighbours, we are very small and we must not be rash', and on the other hand, you have the prime minister making anti-Indian speeches and challenging Indira Gandhi to come and invade, saying that he will fight her to the last man and woman — whatever that means!

There is no doubt that this problem can only be resolved when a substantial number of people, particularly among the Sinhalese, recognise the right of the Tamil nation to determine its own destiny, that is, the right to self-determination which includes, of course, the right to secede.

More and more political groups, even the armed groups in the North, recognise that this government is not only anti-Tamil, but also that it oppresses other people. So they have been seeking to find ways and means of — if not combining forces with the oppressed of the South — at least having some understanding. It is very interesting, for instance, that in a recent interview, a member of one of the armed groups went out of his way to point out that they themselves had not killed one person, but were involved in particular types of actions. He said they believed in political struggle, that they are Marxists and see it as part of a struggle to overthrow this whole capitalist government. That was the EPRLF (Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front).

We will only have a solution when the working class and other oppressed layers develop a movement strong enough to push forward demands that the problem of the Tamil nation must be resolved through negotiation and through recognition of their right to self-determination and that we must end this insane militarism which is not only causing hardship and oppression to people in the North, but also draining enormous resources and

causing problems in the South.

Q. Has the UNP leadership strengthened its capability to turn the anger and dissatisfaction of people in the South against the so-called terrorists in the North or is the UNP leadership as a whole being weakened?

A. Terrorism in the North could be used to get passive support from large numbers of people in the South. But that is not really a test of UNP popularity. Because, while the bourgeois parties have taken an extremely racist line, the reformist left has not countered it with a forceful alternative position. Despite this, more and more people are beginning to see through the UNP line. For instance, Colin da Silva (6) in his May Day statement on militarism tried to make the point that the government is seeking to use the situation in the North to develop a police-military state and that people should get together to combat this danger.

In addition, in January you had the situation of the kidnapping. (7) This made the government look stupid. One section of the people thought that the whole thing was organised by the government; others saw that the government could do absolutely nothing.

Q. Concerning the situation in the South, has the government come under any kind of pressure from the working class or other oppressed layers raising specific demands? By this, I mean, not demands on the national question, but those concerning democratic rights or defence of living standards. Is there any movement like this bringing any pressure on the government?

A. In the recent period the only movement or action, which did put the government under real pressure, was the strike of the plantation workers. That upset the government and they very rapidly did everything to settle it. But the divisions in the urban working class movement, particularly after the 1980 strikes, have meant that, while there has been a lot of hot air and demands and a lot of meetings, there is no real movement that is threatening the government. Any struggle that takes place is isolated and there is no real possibility at the present stage of developing it into a general offensive. This is largely a political problem because traditionally in this country the trade unions have been under the political leadership of various parties. The trade unions themselves have very rarely developed into independent movements which could challenge the government.

On the other hand, it is only with a political struggle against the government and the emergence of some political movement that you will see struggles which go beyond the local or factory level. And here we can see an opposition developing which at the moment is still not clearly defined. We have seen the formation of yet another alliance of parties called the Four Party Bloc which

includes historically reformist formations, the Communist Party and the LSSP, and certain radical split-offs from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

The SLFP has begun to move right in the last period. Their latest split-off is the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP) which seems to have won most of the organising cadres of the SLFP in many areas. (8)

The SLMP today is attracting many people, especially young people. This is for two reasons. One is that most of the young people who supported the UNP in 1977 have now become disillusioned and are looking for some alternative. Secondly, the collapse of the JVP (9) and its shift to more and more parliamentarist positions has meant that some do not now see the JVP as a real alternative when compared to the SLMP.

The problem, however, for the SLMP is that, although verbally radical, it is parliamentarist and dominated by a bourgeois party. Moreover it is very unlikely that the government in the present situation will hold elections. So the SLMP has a parliamentary perspective without any immediate prospect of an election.

The next elections are due to be held in 1989. What this means is that sooner or later (and I would say sooner) some of the youth who are now behind the SLMP will begin to get demoralised, begin to see that it is not going to get them anywhere and that it will be necessary to find something else that will really organise extra-parliamentary struggles.

The question is whether the Four Party Bloc (although now the NSSP (10) wants to join, it would be the fifth party) will organise extra-parliamentary struggles. The leader of the SLMP during the last mini-election, or by-election, stood up to UNP thuggery and resisted it in some cases. But the Bloc they are in, which includes the Communist Party (by far the most conservative party in the Bloc), is very unlikely to do anything that would be considered illegal, unconstitutional or ultra-left. This would only change if there arose, on the horizon, something to the left of this Bloc which could begin to take the initiative in a number of situations and then compel the Bloc to join it, to link up with it or to be isolated.

Q. Concerning the Four (or Five) Party Bloc and the new party, the SLMP. One of the coordinating secretaries, W. A. Abeyasinghe, is quoted as saying that 'both the capitalist UNP and SLFP which support capitalism, should be defeated', and 'the need of the hour is not

6. Leader of the LSSP, Lanka Sama Samaja Party, a reformist, class collaborationist party.
7. A group of Tamils on hunger strike were kidnapped on January 19 by armed men.
8. Besides the LSSP, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the SLMP and the MEP (Mahajan Eskath Peramuna) are involved in the so-called Four Party Bloc.
9. JVP — Janatha Vimukthi Peremuna.
10. NSSP — Nava Sama Samaja Party, part of the international current to which the "Militant" in Britain also belongs.

an anti-UNP front. Defeating UNP is meaningless unless capitalism is wiped out', (quoted in The Island, June 5, 1984). What is your reaction to this statement?

A. This is not the first time they have said this. In fact, one of the key people who has been repeating this quite often is the wife of the SLMP secretary (the popular leader and film star, Vijaya Kumaranatunga) whose name is Chandrita Bandaranaike. This woman is the daughter of Mrs Bandaranaike (the former prime minister) and a student of Althusser. She has also said that 'our fight is anti-capitalist'. But we have to look at this from a historical standpoint. If they said the fight was against the UNP only, it would pose the question — why did you split from the SLFP and form another party? You are now also dividing the anti-UNP forces. That is one of the reasons why they keep posing this question.

The second point is made demagogically. That is, today the more political people see that the sort of alternating of capitalist policies of the UNP and SLFP parties has not resolved anything. So if another party comes forward with similar policies, it will not cut much ice. That is why the SLMP uses anti-capitalist rhetoric. But the problem for them is that they do not have a clear policy of their own. It does not say exactly where it stands on the question of private property, imperialist investments, workers rights, the national question. They say general things like, 'We are against racism', 'We are against capitalism', 'We are for socialism', but it does not specify what they are going to do.

There is another more important aspect too. If we look at the SLMP at a local as well as at leading levels, we can see that the key elements of this party are the same local capitalist elite which the SLFP have. It is just that one section has shifted from the SLFP to the SLMP. They are still determining the party delegations, party representations and so on, and they back this party with their finances. They are therefore an important element. This is not to say, that in a new period of generalised struggle, the youth elements of this party will not take to the streets. But that is only in the context of extra-parliamentary struggle. In a parliamentarist perspective, which the party has, it is the other way around. It is then the local elites that will determine who is going there and who will hold parliamentary seats and so on.

Q. Despite the vagueness of their political line, what is their general view on the national question?

A. I have heard two statements which, in my view, are designed to conceal, rather than clarify their real position. In the first, Vijaya Kumaranatunga made a speech saying, 'We are against racism.' But that can have many meanings. If it has the best meaning, it is that, 'We are against Sinhala racism or

chauvinism.' This would be fine as far as it goes, but then there are several other questions. What is their attitude to the armed youth which the government calls terrorists? What is their attitude to the stationing of the army in the North and East? What is their position on the demand for a separate state and what is their position on the right of self-determination for the Tamil-speaking people? This has not been spelt out. The SLMP has stated that it is the government that has brought about terrorism. It is seeking to pinpoint the responsibility with the government and say, 'We are nice people.' 'We do not want racism.' But beyond that they keep their options open, to determine whatever policy they want. This is typical, of course, of all bourgeois populist forces.

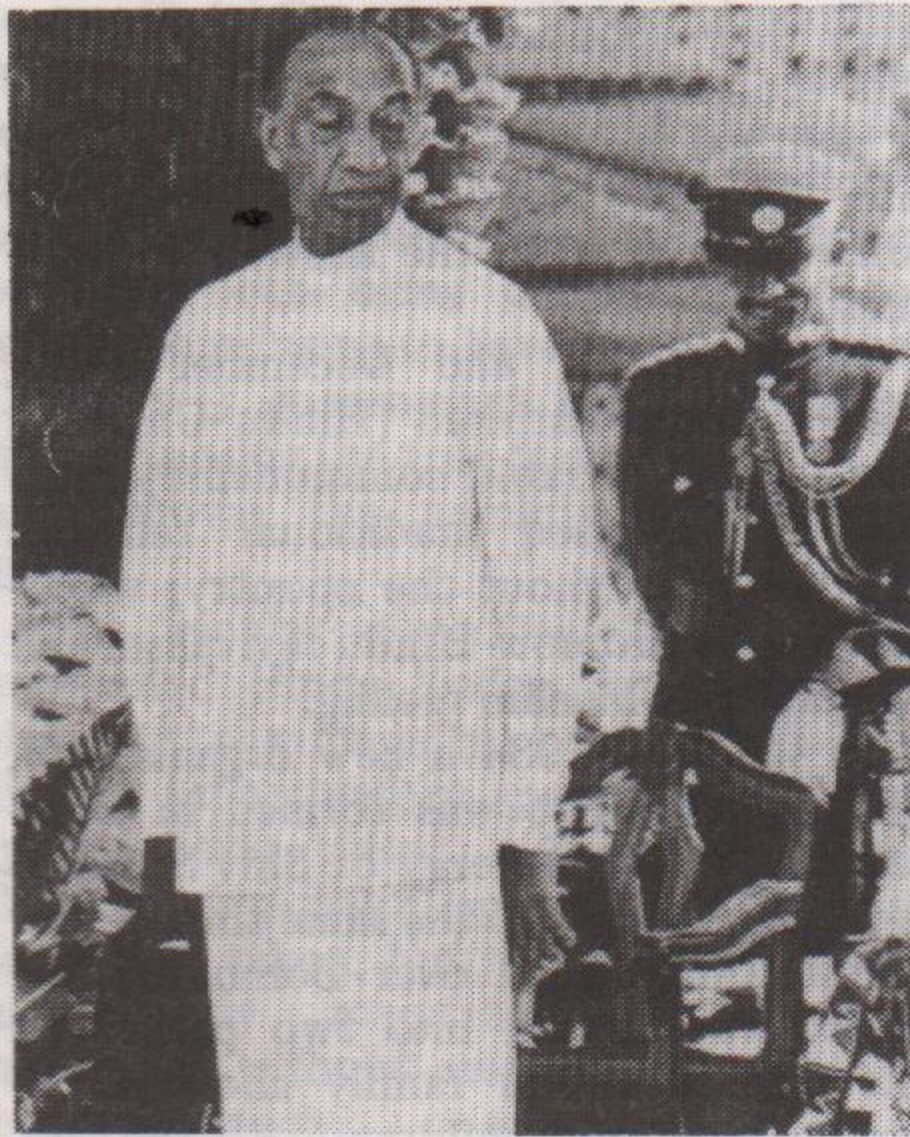
Q. What you are saying is that it will be necessary to build broader, extra-parliamentary struggles and a left-wing alternative to the Four/Five Party Bloc. What can be done to further this?

A. We have already seen the beginning of the emergence of an alliance of what one would call the far-left parties, which, in general, I think we can take the credit for ourselves. This includes us, the Revolutionary Marxist Party; Socialist Worker; the Revolutionary Workers Party, a former section of the Fourth International; and the Socialist Peoples Movement, a split-off from the Communist Party.

Every one of these parties recognise the right to self-determination of the Tamil speaking people, is opposed to parliamentarism, wants to develop extra-parliamentary action, recognises the growing dictatorial and militaristic nature of the government and understands that unless there is a mass upsurge which threatens the government on an extra-parliamentary basis it is very unlikely that there will be elections at all. This means that a perspective based on elections is a dead one.

On May Day, at our invitation, all these groups came together and we now want to develop closer links and build up an alliance. We must see how we can be-

President Jayewardene (DR)



gin to pose some demands around which mass struggles can be mobilised. If the Four Party Bloc participates, then the objective effects of that struggle will be much bigger than the far left could achieve. So we have to seek ways and means of compelling them and any others who join them to participate in mass actions which will be either initiated, proposed or promoted by the far left. If they reject mass action, then very soon they will be exposed, which is something they would not want.

Q. What demands could such mass struggles develop around?

A. Well, we could think of many demands around which we should develop struggles. It is very difficult to say in advance which one will spark off a response. It could, for instance, be the attack on some workers, young workers or women workers or whatever. It could be an attack on democratic rights.

The government has been doing quite a lot of extraordinary things and one of these days they will go too far which would result in an enormous upsurge of anger. To give an example, in May 1983, during the mini-elections they shot Vijaya Kumaranatunga. He did not die, but someone with him did. Today if anyone attempts anything against Vijaya Kumaranatunga, it would provoke mass anger, because people see the emergence of an opposition and the government's attempt to suppress it. That is the kind of thing I have in mind. It could be sparked off among students. Any flash point could set off a chain reaction.

Q. What are the main organisations building a left alternative to the Four Party Bloc today?

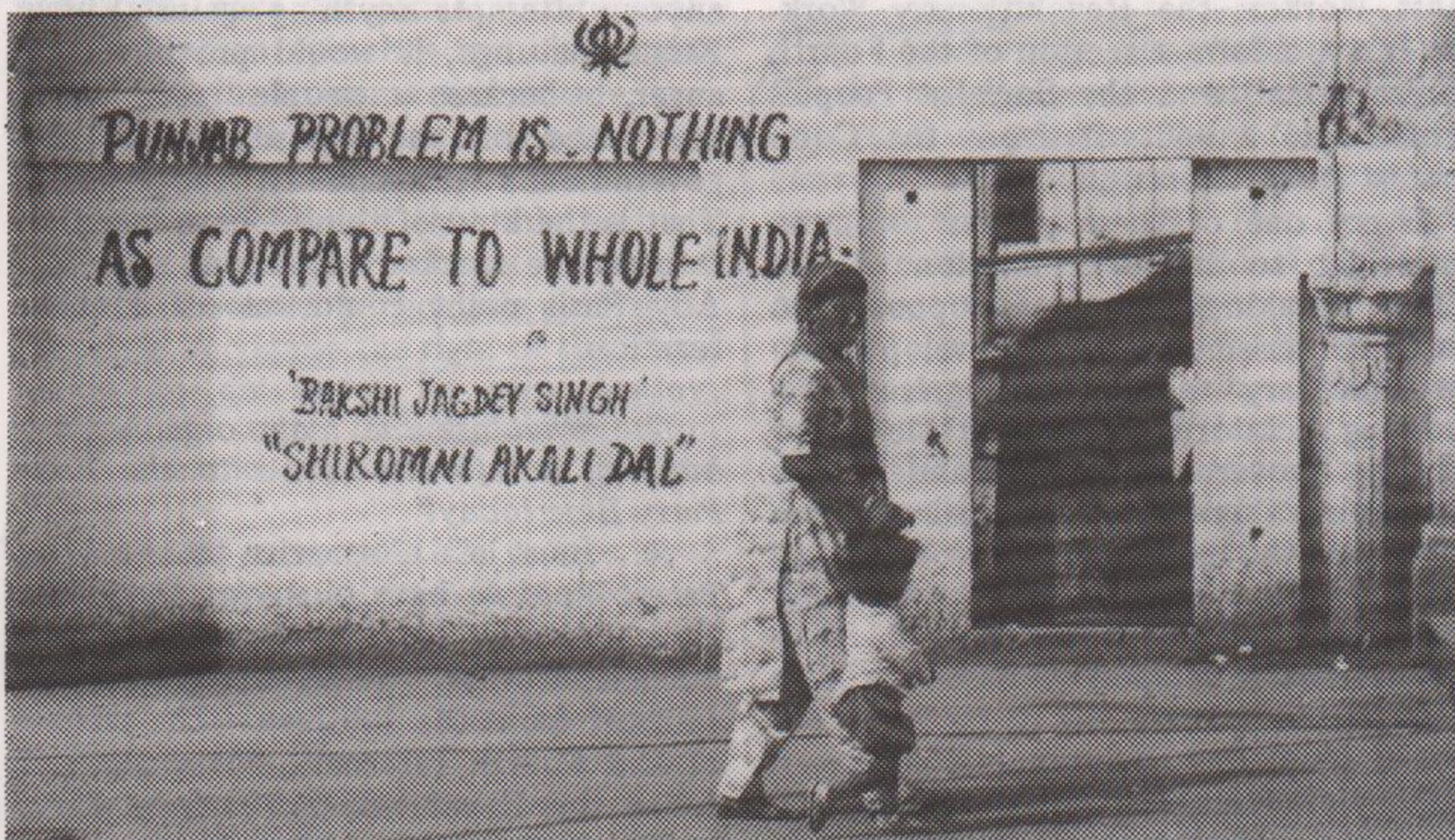
A. In a left alternative to the Four Party Bloc we have our own party, the Revolutionary Marxist Party, and the Socialist Worker. We have also an earlier split-off from the LSSP(r) — the section of the Fourth International in 1969 — called the Revolutionary Workers Party of Edmund Samarakoddy. We also have a recent split from the Communist Party, the Socialist Peoples Movement. In 1978, the CP came out with an historic statement which said that they were opposed to both the UNP and the SLFP because they are both capitalist, but then a couple of years later they made an alliance and this resulted in a split led by the main ideologue of the 1978 resolution. Then there is an earlier group which split from the JVP, criticising it for its opportunist line in 1972. This group is called the Janatha Sangamaya, that is, the Peoples League. Outside of these five organisations there are others. For instance, there has been a more recent split from the JVP involving one of the key leaders from 1971 (Lionel Bopage) on differences over the national question. There are similar groups emerging and it will be through the joint action of these organisations that we will see the emergence of a left alliance.

Communalism - its causes and consequences

Throughout India in the past 15 years there has been an increasing trend towards communalism. (1) The number of lives lost in communal rioting go into thousands and even for those only marginally affected in a material sense, the events have had a lasting impact. Every year, an average of more than 150 incidents have occurred, killing hundreds and making thousands homeless, jobless and rootless.

Since 1977, the incidences of communalist violence have increased tremendously. There were 375 deaths in 1980, as compared with 36 three years earlier. This trend has continued unabated since then. In 1983 more than four hundred communalist outbreaks were reported. In 1984, in Maharashtra alone, about three hundred people lost their lives.

The following article aims to examine the issue of communalism by making a concrete analysis of, in particular, the recent riots in Bhivandi, Thana and Bombay in May of this year. This text is an edited version of a document drawn up by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (Inqalabi Communist Sanghathana), Indian section of the Fourth International.



Sikh slogans on wall in New Delhi (DR)

On May 18, 1984, the city of Bombay was shaken by communalist riots. Bhivandi, a textile town just forty kilometres away from Bombay itself, was the scene of the drama. On that day there were mass stabbings, lootings and burning of huts there. The riots spread to Bombay, the first time since independence that such a level of violence had been seen in the city. After 10 days, when the riots were ultimately brought under control, official figures declared about 300 dead and 1,800 wounded in and around Bombay. The unofficial figures, which are more reliable, claimed at least 1,000 dead and 4,000 injured. Sixty thousand people were homeless by the time the riots ended and about 50,000 workers were jobless in Bhivandi alone. Needless to say, the vast bulk of the casualties have been borne by the Muslim community.

What was the cause of these riots? Were they spontaneous or pre-planned? Did economic factors play a major role or political factors? It is necessary to go into the chronology of these events to come to grips with the answers to these questions.

In November and December 1983, Vishva Hindu Parishad (Hindu Universal Conference), a rabid communalist organisation, organised traditional religious marches throughout the country, whose aim was to promote Hindu revivalism and generate anti-Muslim feeling.

In January 1984 a new organisation, Hindu Mahasangh was formed in Bombay with Bal Thackeray of Shiv Sena (2) as its president. At the same time, a new poster went up all over Bombay. The poster was divided into two parts: on one side, a Hindu family showing the parents and two children with the cap-

tion, 'We two and our two'; on the other side a Muslim family showing a husband, 4 wives and 25 children with the caption, 'We five and our 25'. Finally, the poster warned that it was time to act before the Muslims overtook the whole country. (3) Immediate action from the authorities over the openly communalist propaganda was necessary and instead there was only grinning tolerance.

In April, the Maharashtrian festival, Shiv Jayanti is celebrated. Since the 1970 riots this procession has been banned in Bhivandi. This year, after 14 years, the state authorities decided to allow it. Bal Thackeray and other Hindu communalist leaders were in attendance. The procession went through many Muslim areas raising provocative slogans. At the meeting afterwards, speakers demanded a uniform civil code giving as the reason the danger of a Muslim takeover. It is interesting to note that there was no such procession in Bombay or Pune but only in Bhivandi with its 60 per cent Muslim population. At a time when communalist feelings were already running high, there seems to be no justification for the state authorities allowing this provocative march to go ahead.

On April 21, Bal Thackeray made his famous speech in Chowpatty at a gathering of Hindu Mahasangh. (4) He warned that if they were not stopped, the Muslim community would grow like a cancer and that the only solution to this was an operation. As a further provocation, he made derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammed.

From this point on, it was only a matter of days before the situation was to reach boiling point. On May 16, in the Parel district of Bombay, a virtual curfew was imposed by Shiv Sena and in the next two days shops all over Bombay were made to close. On May 17 some Muslim boys in Bhivandi insisted on hoisting the Islamic green flag near a Hindu area and a fight broke out. This was settled by an intervention of the police commissioner.

That night, some Muslims gathered in a school compound in Bhivandi to discuss how to respond to Bal Thackeray's communalist statements. After much debate, the moderates prevailed and the meeting decided to send a delegation to Thackeray to verify his statements.

However, during the night, a series of coordinated and systematic attacks were launched in Muslim areas of the city. Whole areas were looted and burnt and

1. The term communalism means communal disharmony. It describes regroupment and mutual aid based on ethnic and religious ties. It is sometimes bound up with political groups and castes.

2. Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) is named after Shivaji Bhonsle, a warrior of the eighteenth century. This organisation, founded in 1965 by Bal Thackeray, is motivated by strong nationalist sympathies as well as a fervent Hinduism. They advocate anti-Muslim nationalism on the theme of Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians.

3. Hindus (including Untouchables) represent 84 per cent of the total population, Muslims represent 13 per cent. In Maharashtra, Muslims represent 12 per cent.

4. See IV, No 57, July 16, 1984.

many people died. The coordinated nature of the attacks, and the type of arms used, belie any theory of spontaneity. In no time, about 50,000 people had lost their belongings and were homeless. The police, when they turned up, behaved like dumb spectators. Even after these attacks no call was made to bring the Army in. At a place called Nai Basti, where about fifteen hundred families live, an interesting development occurred. A slum area, Nai Basti, has a largely Muslim population but a number of Hindu families also live there. In this area Hindus and Muslims joined together and were able to resist for some time. This phenomenon of Hindus and Muslims fighting together was to repeat itself many times in the next few days in Bhivandi as well as Bombay.

The riots and sporadic violence and murder continued for the next 10 days and by the time the army was called major damage had already occurred.

Many people returned to their villages and about fifty thousand rotted in the so-called relief camps. The government relief was either swallowed up by the middlemen or else food and other necessities were sold on the black market by the government.

Meanwhile, in Bombay, rioting and arson had also started on May 19. Stabbings and looting took place in several Muslim areas. The situation got worse over the next few days and whole shantytowns were set on fire. After a few days the army was brought in and rioting came to an end. In Bombay city the construction companies used the situation of communal tension to their own advantage. When the shantytowns were burnt down the people who lived in them were not allowed to return. The companies were greedy for land and they engineered the burning of these settlements under cover of communal riots. Immediately after the dwellings were burnt to the ground, the land was occupied by the construction companies with the help of the police.

After the situation had returned to normal, the state government awoke from its state of hibernation and threatened to file a vaguely worded suit against Bal Thackeray for spreading communal hatred. It is obvious that this prosecution will not lead anywhere.

The role of the police

Bhivandi is a centre of textile production based principally on the powerloom sector. In fact, this unorganised sector produces more cloth than the entire textile industry in Bombay. During the 1982 textile strike (5) the powerloom industry received a major boost, giving rise to intense competition. Since many Muslims are powerloom owners, the competition between different sections of the textile trade can take on a communalist flavour.

The role of organisations like Shiv Sena and Hindu Mahasangh in stirring up communal hatred is clear. What is in-

teresting, however, is the role played by the police and the state government of Maharashtra led by Mrs Gandhi's Congress Party(I).

Judging from all reports received at the time, the police, when not actively helping Shiv Sena supporters, were playing the role of passive bystanders. In Cheetah camp at Trombay, which is a very large slum area, housing Muslims, Hindus and Christians, the police played a heinous role. All the religious communities had joined together to ward off any outside attack. This 'outside attack' came, not from anti-social elements, but from the police themselves, who on May 15 entered the camp with the army and killed at least 15 people. At the time the police were heard to shout pro-Shiv Sena slogans. The police commissioner could not deny that such excesses had occurred in his department. But an internal rather than a judicial enquiry was ordered, which will undoubtedly lead nowhere. In this and other areas the police clearly told the Muslim population, 'In our uniforms we are police but underneath we are Shiv Sena.'

Discussions with people in Bhivandi exposed the universal partiality of the police. In each affected area, the people told almost identical stories. The attacks came from people — local as well as truckloads of outsiders — who were well-armed, nearly every one with a sword or dagger. When people from the shantytowns (mainly Muslims) tried organising to resist, they found to their astonishment, that their attackers were accompanied by police. Seeing their comrades falling under police fire, many Muslims fled, leaving their property, relatives and friends at the mercy of the attackers who had a field day of destruction and killings.

The Congress Party (I), which is the ruling party in Maharashtra as in the whole of India, proclaims secular ideals when convenient, but has shown through its conduct in the recent riots that it has now stopped even paying lip service to secularism.

The governor of Maharashtra, Vasantdada Patil, has refused a judicial enquiry into the recent riots, in which, according to unofficial figures one thousand people, mainly Muslims, lost their lives. As the Madon commission report of the 1970 Bhivandi riots shows, these judicial probes do not have much practical value but they can bring certain things to light. By refusing to have an enquiry, the Congress(I) government has shied away from exposing the true facts which would have shown the administration's own guilt.

The 'secular' government could have prosecuted Hindu leaders for publishing blatantly communalist posters and delivering inflammatory speeches. Not an eyebrow was raised. Moreover, after Thackeray's April 21 speech not only was no action taken, but the state governor subsequently maintained Thackeray's innocence, without even listening to the recorded speech.

On May 3, of course, the Shiv Jayanti procession was allowed at Bhivandi, lifting a ban of 14 years. The government gave its consent knowing full well the increase in communalism. This speaks volumes for the so-called secularism of the Congress Party (I).

Having a very efficient intelligence network under him, Vasantdada must have known in advance what was being planned. After one particular outbreak of violence he raised communalist doubts about the truth of the reports. Till this day no action has been taken against Thackeray. In fact, within a month of the riots Vasantdada had joined up with Thackeray for the elections to the Legislative Council.

Baroda and Godhra riots

On the national level the story is the same. When informed of the bias in police reports and presented with proof of it, Indira Gandhi merely shrugged her shoulders and said, 'We will have to look into it.' No police officer has even been reprimanded for his conduct.

All these facts lead inexorably to a single conclusion; that the Vasantdada Patil administration actively aided the Hindu communalist forces and is as much responsible for the riots as anyone who has taken a physical part in them. The so-called secularism of the Congress Party(I) is clearly a myth.

An examination of the previous riots in Baroda, Godhra and Jamshedpur will also begin to bring certain features to light. Baroda, for example, is fast becoming the industrial capital of Gujarat. The population of 900,000 is 15 per cent Muslim, 35 per cent Marathas and 52 per cent Gujaratis. Muslims and Marathas are generally very poor, in fact, 85 per cent of Muslims in Baroda live below the poverty line.

Due to prohibition, the illegal liquor business is thriving in Baroda. The turnover per day from the illegal trade is about 100,000 rupees (about £7,500). The police and politicians are the protectors of these liquor dens. In fact the police are estimated to receive approximately 60,000 rupees (about £4,500) per year for protection of these liquor kings.

The illegal liquor business is mainly carried on by Bhois and Kahars amongst the Hindus and also by the Muslims. There is acute competition between the different sections, even involving rival factions in the ruling Congress Party(I) and government itself. The riots in the area were, mainly, a product of this. In October 1981, when they erupted, the Muslim population was mercilessly butchered by the police. Then they demanded the transfer of certain police officers. But the attempt of the government to transfer the commissioner, Jaspal Singh, only led to fresh riots. The communal tension lasted for more than

5. See IV, Nos 17 and 18, November 15, 1982 and December 29, 1982.

a year causing the loss of 33 lives, with 336 injured and enormous loss of property.

Godhra is a growing town with a population of 85,000. Out of this, 35,000 are Muslims with 20,000 Ghanchis, 5,000 Syeds and 10,000 Bhoras. Ghanchis are the poorest among these.

In 1947, just after partition (6), a large number of Sindhis migrated from Pakistan and settled down in Godhra. There are about 8,000 Sindhis at present in Godhra. Traditionally, Sindhis have been petty traders. The Hindus have always had a monopoly in the grain trade. This monopoly has now been broken and the Sindhis, who are considered to be of low social status by other Hindus, have established their own monopoly on the trade. Shortage of housing is also a major issue.

In 1948, when the Sindhis migrated from Pakistan they brought with them fresh memories of the communal riots in Pakistan during partition. Their anger and insecurity was immediately translated into frenzy and in 1948 Godhra was struck by communal riots. Since then, communal riots have been a regular feature of Godhra.

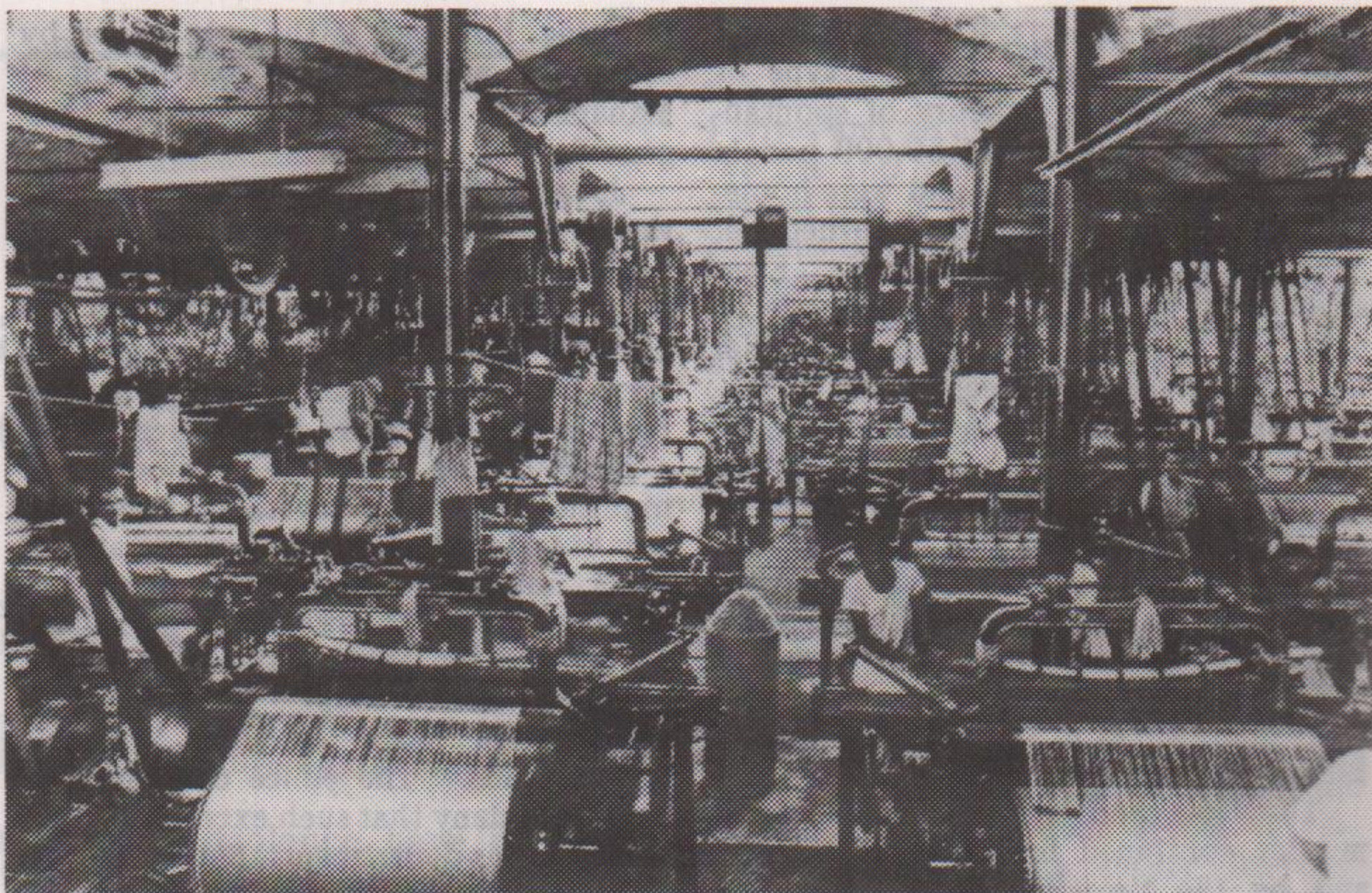
The Hindu communal organisations hit by the grain monopoly of the Sindhis have managed to foster rifts between the Sindhis and the Muslims. In October 1980, five Sindhis were burnt alive by Muslims and the riots continued up till August 1981.

Jamshedpur riots

Another instance of recent communal violence was the Jamshedpur riots of April 1979. The city is a fast growing industrial town with a massive influx of migrant labourers. The population of the city which was 5,000 in 1911 grew to 300,000 in 1961 and to about 800,000 in 1979. The poor workers, migrants, traders and businessmen mainly settled in the outlying areas of the city. This area was at one time, the province of Adivasis. Due to the rapid increase in population immense pressure on land was generated. Many disputes and even killings took place over this issue.

In the 1964 riots about 4,000 Muslims fled to Pakistan. The 1979 riots were also caused by the driving of sections of the Muslim population from their lands. The majority of those in Adivasis are landless labourers or contract labourers. As such their anger was directed against the land grabbers. The Hindu leaders managed to direct the wrath of the Adivasis dwellers against the Muslims. People from Adivasis were the major participants in the latest riots.

From the examination of these and various other riots a few common points can be identified. First of all, it is important to note that between 1950 and 1964, a smaller number of communal disturbances took place. From 1964 onwards, the incidences of communal violence were on the increase. Communal



For workers in this factory the problem is their exploitation as workers (DR)

riots in the 1950s appear to have been more the result of a sudden outburst by certain groups. From 1964 onwards they became more planned.

The loss of life during communal riots in the 1950s was much less. The total lives lost during this period were 316. Since 1964, the loss of life has greatly magnified with three times more lives lost in 1969 alone than in the previous period. Moreover, in every riot larger and larger numbers of Muslims are losing their lives. Similarly, the loss of property suffered by Muslims far outweighs the destruction of property owned by Hindus.

Communal riots generally occur in urban areas but they have begun spreading to the rural areas in recent years. They do not just occur between Muslims and Hindus but between Sikhs and Hindus, Hindus and Christians, Hindus and Buddhists, etc.

History of communalism

In recent years the riots have been more prolonged. For example, the clash in Baroda lasted for more than a year. Both Hindu and Muslim communal organisations have been growing in strength and numbers in recent years.

Finally, there is a difference between those people who generate communal hatred and those who participate in communal riots. The middle and upper classes have been observed to openly propagate and organise communal hatred, but the participants in the riots are mainly people from the lower classes.

A superficial analysis of the riots can lead one to conclude that in most cases the events that triggered them off were trivial. But it would be a grave error to assume that communal riots are nothing but collisions between fanatics over petty religious issues. Ultimately, these riots are only the products of a sustained, seething and continuous discontent within people. Riots are the sharpest expression of this but communalism exists all the time. For in our society everyone is subjected, from birth, in a

conscious or unconscious way, to a daily recipe of hatred towards the 'other community'. This onslaught of ideology occurs through apparently harmless jokes, through textbooks, through the media and through the speeches of politicians.

Many people confuse religious beliefs with communalism. They believe that whenever and wherever more than one religion exists, invariably communal conflict takes place. This is false. One finds in the history of civilisation and in the history of India itself that various religions have co-existed for centuries. There are reports of communal riots occurring in our history for example in the fourteenth century, but there is no generalised trend. For example, even the fight of Shivaji in the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was not a Hindu-Muslim fight, but a fight against expanding central authority.

No individual has the right to deny freedom of religion to any other individual. It is only when this religious belief takes on a political form and content that the problems arise. It is our strong belief that communalism has to be seen as a structural part of Indian society today and also as a strategy of the ruling classes to divide the masses and preserve their vested interests.

It is becoming obvious that political factors have played a significant role in all communal riots. But politics does not operate in a vacuum either. It requires an appropriate socio-economic atmosphere. What are the socio-economic factors which lead to communal riots?

Communalism as a generalised phenomenon only came on the scene in the second half of the nineteenth century. For historical reasons, a section of the Hindu population became exposed to British education fifty years prior to the Muslims. Certain reformist movements began within Hindu society and even nationalist sentiments were first express-

6. In 1947 at the time of the collapse of British rule in India, a partition of the country was created along religious lines. There was a Muslim majority in Pakistan.

ed among the Hindu middle classes. The Muslim middle classes who began to be educated fifty years later, identified nationalism with Hinduism and therefore a section of them began to demand a separate Muslim nationalism. Furthermore, some Muslims were, to a large extent, dependent on the British administration. The Muslim population therefore remained, largely, outside the mainstream nationalist movement and even when they entered it after 1910, they entered with a specific Muslim ideology.

Furthermore, the leadership of the nationalist movement itself adopted a communalist approach at times. Gandhi himself (1869-1948) used certain religious concepts to mobilise the masses which Muslims were unable to identify with. At the same time, Muslim as well as Hindu communalist forces utilized the discontent amongst the masses to generate communal frenzy.

The British rulers also used communalism for their own purposes, whipping up communal hatred in the build-up to the partition. Feelings were running so high by 1947, the time of partition itself, that they gave rise to the worst communal riots in Indian history. The main areas affected at that time were Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi, Bengal and Kashmir.

Causes of the riots

For some years after independence, communalist frenzy died down but in the 1960s, especially after 1964, it started again. Sometimes riots have begun over non-communal issues. Most of the towns where the riots have taken place are towns which are commercially and industrially developing and, in some cases, have a significant Muslim population. In towns like Kyderabad, Meerut and Aligarh, Muslims constitute about 30 to 40 per cent of the population and in Malegaon it is as high as 67 per cent although in Baroda and Ahmedabad it stands at only 10 to 15 per cent. All these towns are developing commercially and industrially. Baroda is a very large industrial centre, Ahmedabad and Bhivandi are large textile towns, Jamshedpur is at the centre of the steel industry and Moradabad has a large brass industry.

All these towns were affected by riots. In all these growth centres there is some sort of economic competition and clash of interests between Muslims and Hindus. This has been expressed in many ways.

Immediately after partition, for example, a large number of Muslims migrated to Pakistan. Those who stayed in India were either the zamindars (large landowners), who would have lost all their property if they had migrated, or a section of the artisan class. The educated middle class, on the whole, migrated to Pakistan as they would have much better career opportunities there. This trend continued for about 15 years after independence and created a 'middle class vacuum' amongst Muslims in India.

Artisans and craftsmen were, at that time, dependent on the landed aristocracy. Uneven and combined development in India was expressed mainly in the abolition of the zamindari (vast landed properties), coupled with inadequate industrial expansion. This forced Muslim artisans and craftsmen into the hands of middlemen and traders — invariably Hindus. Thus a clear economic stratification developed on communal lines.

In all the growing towns pressure on land is very great. As the town grows, more and more migrant labourers arrive and settle in the outskirts of the town. Land prices go up and the real estate business thrives. Land which was earlier useless, became commercially viable, thereby attracting investors who wanted to throw out 'unauthorised' occupants of the land. What better method than communalism to throw these occupants out? In addition to this, the newly rich Muslims have recently been entering into the real estate business. This again provides fertile ground for communalist feeling. In places like Aligarh and Moradabad, this has been one of the major reasons for riots. Even in the present Bombay riots the land factor played an important role.

Contrary to the usual view that communal riots are a product of the disintegration of society it can sometimes be quite the opposite. The economically backward, politically subdued and culturally inward-looking Muslims of the 1950s have started asserting their existence. The earlier aloofness is fast disappearing.

A section of the Muslim population is finding its economic bearings and is trying to assert itself politically, thereby threatening the Hindu communities. This aspect is apparent in the history of Jamat-e-Islami (Hind), a Muslim communal organisation, founded in 1948. For a number of years it propagated that Muslims should withdraw from political activities in India, for example, that they should boycott all elections. This was based on the theory that a true Muslim society could exist only where the government is in the hands of the Muslims and as Hindus were a majority in India, such a state of affairs could not exist. Since the 1970s, however, the Jamat has had to change its position because the now economically assertive Muslim population is demanding proper representation. As a result, Jamat has now started taking part in elections.

The competition between growing and declining social layers finds its expression in communalist riots. India is a developing capitalist country but full-scale capitalist development, involving the disappearance of artisans, money lenders, etc., has not yet taken place. Nor has the concentration of capital been sufficiently centralised. Pre-capitalist relations still persist, giving rise to an uneven and combined development of the society as a whole. In many places, sections of the population who were earlier economically and politically dominant are losing their stronghold, while others are gaining in strength. Clashes occur between these

rising and declining strata.

The caste structure in India today more or less matches the class structure. But the changing dynamic of the society has provided certain sections, which are known as backward castes, to have upward mobility in the economic sphere in the last twenty years. Such backward castes fall in to the intermediate level of the caste structure. These intermediate castes (like yadavs in Uttar Pradesh or Marathas in Maharashtra) are vying for political and cultural status commensurate with their upward economic mobility. Their aspiration is to reach the highest stage within the caste system and they express this by aggressively distinguishing themselves from other sections of the same, as well as other, religions. These feelings, coupled with economic and political factors, are bound to give rise to caste and communal riots.

The ruling classes in any country require a mixture of repression and consent for maintaining their hold and for economic growth. Sheer repression, except in extreme conditions, is neither sufficient, nor congenial in the long term. The ruling classes must have the backing of the masses. Up to the 1960s, so-called Congress socialism was the common ideology which sought to bind the majority of the masses to the ruling class. But once the initial economic boom was over, and the conditions of the masses had started to decline, so their faith in the government diminished and this ideology lost its meaning. Since the 1960s there has been no common ideology and this has meant a crisis of legitimacy for the ruling class. Communalism is an ideology which can be stirred up on a national level amongst a majority of the people, diverting their attention from the real issues and securing the interests of the ruling classes. This is the reason why even the ruling party is coming out more and more openly with its communal bias.

Class identity

In general, communal riots do not take place when strong movements of the toiling masses are taking place. During the textile strike, communalism in Bombay was down to a minimum and the influence of Shiv Sena was at an all time low. This is a matter of collective identity which everyone is searching for and which asserts itself in different ways under different circumstances. Either caste identity, religious identity, national identity or class identity will come to the fore. It is in the interests of the ruling class to let all identities apart from the class identity come into play. In times of acute class struggle, people's class identities prevail, submerging all other identities. Individuals then start to identify totally with their class regardless of religion or caste. When the class struggle is in decline, other identities push for recognition.

In a period of decline of the class struggle, various tensions and patterns

in a society still exist. Setbacks in the class struggle give the masses a 'false consciousness' that class identity is not the major identity and that not much can be achieved through it. In this way the masses look out for other identities and they discover enemies other than class enemies as the cause of their frustrations. This is what leads to caste riots, regional chauvinism, communal riots or war hysteria. This blurring of the class issues is precisely what the ruling classes desire and explains why they sometimes generate these feelings themselves. It is important to note also that this consciousness of the masses is not totally false in the sense that caste exploitation does exist and there is also marked discrimination against Muslims.

Rising unemployment, escalating prices and pressure on land caused by the inability of the ruling classes to control the economic stagnation of society are the major causes giving rise to the frustrations of the people and one of the ways in which these frustrations are vented is through communal frenzy.

The state, which is supposed to be wedded to secularism, is in fact the main perpetrator of communalist feelings. In 1976, the word secularism was added to the preamble of the constitution. Since its inception, the constitution gives equal status to all religions. This is what makes many people think that the state is, in fact, secular.

The notion popularised through Jawaharlal Nehru in the Congress in the pre-independence days is that secularism means 'respect for all religions' and is widely accepted. What is not understood (even after decades of horrifying experiences of communalism in India) is that this so-called tolerance has led to vital areas of life such as marriage, sexual relations and inheritance being left to religious diktats. In the name of tolerance, all sorts of religious processions, customs or offensive speeches have been permitted. And in the name of 'cultural ethos', 'spiritual climate' or 'moral values' even the state-sponsored mass media end up perpetrating the religious chauvinism of upper caste Hindus.

Secularism should mean that the state deals with relations between men and women but not between them and their god. It should not mean tolerance for all religions but should assert that religion is the personal affair of individuals. By secularism what is meant is that the state allows or even protects peoples' right to hold whatever religious beliefs they want in their personal life but at the same time prohibits any public imposition of these beliefs.

The so-called secular character of our state is quite apparent on the walls of our parliament buildings. The walls of the 'temple of democracy and secularism' have engraved on them quotations from Hindu texts, not from Islamic, Sikh or Christian texts.

Ultimately, the state serves the interest of the ruling classes and the ruling classes use any means which are necessary to

mould relations between people to their own advantage. Religion is one means and it is so used by the ruling class. It is in their own interests to generate support for themselves and to divide the toiling masses. Religious fanaticism is used precisely for this purpose even by the big industrial bourgeoisie. In reality, the Indian state deals not only with relations between human beings but also with relations between humans and their god!

The Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India — Marxist (7), which have an otherwise quite radical and secular stance (in relation to Hindu communalism at least), believe that Indira Gandhi is god's gift to humanity, that the Congress Party(I) and even the state itself is secular.

As we have seen, this secularism of the Congress Party(I) was meted out to the masses during the recent Bombay/Bhivandi riots. It is an open secret that the Congress Party(I) consciously built up the Sikh leader, Bhindranwale and made full-scale attempts to direct the Akali demands into Sikh-Hindu communal agitation. (8) Gandhi played a similar role in Assam. The Baroda riots were, in fact, started because of a faction fight between Congress Party(I) leaders. Immediately after visiting Bombay during the 1984 riots Mrs Gandhi appeased the Hindus by making a public statement that she would not do anything to the detriment of the majority community. In fact, immediately after the Bombay riots, during the election of the deputy chairperson of the Legislative Council, a chief minister of the Congress Party(I) met Bal Thackeray and they joined together to defeat the opposition candidate.

Government fails to act

The Congress Party(I) has traditionally relied upon the block votes of the minority community and the inferior castes for its support. But over the years these sections have been unhappy with Congress. Thus the steady base has eroded forcing the Congress Party(I) to look for other allies. This it is trying to do by enlisting block support from upward moving middle and the upper castes. The question is, if the Congress Party(I) is essentially a communalist organisation, why is it not trying to make India into a Hindu state? Why, in 1976, did they introduce secularism for the first time into the constitution? Why does the Congress Party(I) oppose the scrapping of Muslim personal law? Why does Indira Gandhi bother to pay lip service to secularism? The answer to this is multi-faceted. The Congress Party(I) and Mrs Gandhi should be seen as representatives of the ruling classes. No ruling class will cling to any belief or follow any practice which is harmful to its class interest. The ruling class adopts a particular belief or practice only as long as this meets its class requirements. On its own, no single aspect of communalist politics

can, for long, serve the interests of the ruling class. The ruling class is, on the whole, as much aware as Marxists that religious fanaticism (Hindu or Muslim) is in itself diversionary. Communalism is useful only when it allows the ruling class to achieve certain non-communal and non-religious goals. This, of course, is not to deny a certain autonomy of communalist forces from the diktats of economic interests. As long as she relied heavily on Muslim votes, Mrs Gandhi kept some distance from communalist forces. Today, the ruling classes need a dominant ideology in order to get the full backing of the masses. Communalism is the most suited to this purpose — it keeps the masses divided. However, Mrs Gandhi, as prime minister of the largest 'democracy', as the 'most popular leader in the world', and as the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement cannot afford to be openly communalist. But in a 'parliamentary democracy' like India, the rule of the majority is supposed to prevail. The majority being Hindus, there is no need for any special discrimination against Muslims. They are discriminated against as a matter of course. This is the reason why, even under British domination, Muslim and Hindu communalism came out in different forms. The Hindus, being the majority, appeared extremely rational in propagating single nation rule by the majority while at the same time being extremely communalist. Muslim communalists, on the other hand, could not wear the garb of nationalism because, for them, nationalism and democracy implied rule by the Hindus. So, for them, the issue was one of demanding reserved Muslim seats or a separate Muslim state.

Further evidence of the Congress(I) government's attitude to communalism is shown in the measures proposed in certain communal trouble spots to increase surveillance and strengthen law and order. State governments all over India have been asked to set up special intelligence groups, to make improved arrangements for the maintenance of law and order and to be extremely choosy about the appointment of officers at all levels. However, these proposals have not been thoroughly implemented and the government has taken few steps to ensure that they are, although much harm could have been prevented and many lives saved through this scheme. It could also be mentioned in passing that even the Marxist state governments have not taken any genuine initiative to curb communal violence.

7. The Communist Party of India was founded in 1928 but exercised virtually no influence on the nationalist currents in the first twenty years of its existence. The party underwent an internal crisis in the 1950s. The Sino-Soviet split in 1961 created different factions inside the party. An important section of the base left in 1964 to form the CPI-M.

8. Bhindranwale was the high priest of the renewed Sikh fundamentalism. When the Indian army led the assault on the Temple of Amritsar in June 1984, he was among those killed. Akali Dal, founded in 1920, is a party composed essentially of Sikhs.



Indira Gandhi (DR)

It is necessary to oppose communal organisations, not because they only serve the interests of people belonging to one religion, but because they do not even do that effectively. Moreover, communalist organisations are opposed to any reforms within their own religion and oppose any 'humanisation' of religion. How many communal organisations have taken up the cause against the dowry? None. It is true that Hindu organisations take up the demand for the abolition of the Muslim personal law but only because, according to them, Muslims will soon outnumber Hindus through practising polygamy. (9) Of course, we should support any organisation which opposes polygamy on the grounds that it is exploitative of women. But not one communalist organisation does this.

There are a number of Hindu communalist organisations operating in India. Organisations like RSS, Shiv Sena, Vishva Hindu Parishad, Maratha Mahasangh, Hindu Mahasangh, Patit Pawan, to name but a few. All these organisations call for India to become a 'Hindu Rashtra' (state). They want only second class citizenship accorded to religious minorities. They also demand a uniform civil code. We should, of course, support a civil code which gives equal rights to women but not on the grounds of the threat posed by the existence of the minorities. All these organisations are opposed to democracy in any form whatsoever. What is more, all of them believe that the rigid caste system should be maintained. Not one communalist organisation even pays lip service to support the dalits (Untouchables), even after major caste violence. These organisations work in close collaboration with each other and it is very clear just whom they represent.

Among the Muslim communalist organisations the Jamiat-e-Islami, as men-

tioned earlier, used to be against any political participation of Muslims in India. But since the 1970s, they have changed their position. They believe that a genuine Muslim society can be formed only when the government is in the hands of the Muslims. They believe in solidarity of Muslims on the basis of Islam and they call for support to Pakistan in case of any conflict between it and India. The Muslim League, on the other hand, participated from the beginning in elections and gave major emphasis to gaining concessions for the Muslims in India. Again, all these Muslim communal organisations are against any reforms within their religion and are against democracy.

There is an increasing trend toward revivalism in India and the membership, as well as the activities of all the communalist organisations, are growing rapidly. All these organisations are openly communalist in their approach but are still allowed complete freedom in society. They play havoc with the feelings and lives of people. And in all the riots the major sufferers are the Muslims, the dalits, the Adivasis, women and the working class.

There is nothing much to choose between Hindu communalism and Muslim communalism. Both have to be vehemently opposed. But in India, Hindu communalism is the major threat. It has the sheer numerical strength to achieve power in India.

Myths of communalism

Many myths about communalism are propagated within the country. The first myth is that Hindus form a homogenous community with all its members having identical political, economic and cultural aims and interests. This is false. Amongst Hindus one may find workers, capitalists, landowners, etc., all of whose interests are not only distinct but even antagonistic. Different sections of Hindus have different sets of political objectives too. The culture of Hindus varies from place to place and caste to caste. Similarly among Muslims, one has Shias and Sunnis and even further divisions among them. Their cultural and religious practices also differ from place to place. It is therefore, totally incorrect to say that either the Hindus or the Muslims form a homogenous community. The workers of the Muslim community have more in common with the workers of the Hindu community than with Hindu or Muslim capitalists. The interest of capitalists are bound up with other capitalists, whether Hindus or Muslims.

Another myth is that the interests of Hindus and Muslims are contradictory and mutually exclusive and so they cannot survive together. First of all, Hindus and Muslims have survived together for centuries. Secondly, why do interests become exclusive or even distinct merely because of religion? What is so fundamental about the relation between human beings and their god which makes human

relations with each other antagonistic? Why should one person's personal belief in a particular god be antagonistic to another person's especially if, ultimately, the gods are supposed to be one and the same? Every person, even a child, has some belief and opinion different from others. If merely difference in belief is the criterion, then by this logic, all persons are antagonistic towards others and so human beings cannot survive in a social environment. In fact, in our society the conflict is between workers and capitalists, agricultural labourers and landowners and even dalits and caste Hindus, not between one religion and another.

The partition

However, it is important to note that although, objectively, different communities on religious lines do not exist, subjectively, they do. What is being suggested is that Hindus and Muslims do feel that they form separate and antagonistic communities. The communalists play on these feelings but the seeds of it are not sown by fanatical propaganda, but lie in the socio-economic factors. Communalism, therefore, has to be fought at both levels — ideologically and by fighting for socio-economic change. The two have to go hand in hand.

It is true that the partition of India occurred along religious lines. It is often said, therefore, that if Pakistan can be a Muslim state, why can't India be a Hindu state? But the partition itself was totally artificial. It divided a nation with at least some homogeneity. Furthermore, although Pakistan today calls itself an Islamic state there is a significant movement in the country, as in Iran, against religious oppression. If one takes the logic of the argument for a Hindu state in India to its conclusion, then why not call for a male, Brahmin, white-skinned state?

It is said that when Pakistan wins a cricket match, the Muslims in Bombay light crackers. This is a common myth, but it is not a widespread phenomenon. Some people may have a moral affinity to the 'other country', they may have relatives and friends there, but whatever their reason it cannot be put down to the Hindu-Muslim divide. What is important is that in spite of the way they are treated and in spite of the riots, these Muslims remain in India. This is natural. They know the country and their interests are tied to the interests of the Indian people. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the role of Hindu communalism in alienating the Muslim population. As more and more communal riots take place and as more and more Muslims lose their lives and property, they are bound to feel alien in their own country. This is especially so when the state increasingly comes out openly in favour of Hindu communalism. In such circum-

9. Special dispensations have made polygamy legal for Indian Muslims only.

stances, the Muslims in India are bound to start seeking an identity for themselves in Pakistan.

In 1981, a few hundred Hindus in the state of Tamil Nadu, especially in Meenakshipuram, were converted to the Muslim religion. The press blew this up in order to stir communalist feelings. Hindu revivalists declared that Hinduism was in danger.

In fact, this incident was not very significant. Meenakshipuram is not the whole of India. One hundred conversions here will not have a devastating effect. The people in Meenakshipuram converted themselves so as to find a way out of the totally exploitative and dehumanising caste system. The communalist Hindus (led by Mr M. G. Ramachandran) claimed that Gulf money was the root of all these conversions. In spite of various investigations, no trace of Gulf money could be found. In the districts where the conversions took place, however, the caste system is very rigid; lower caste people are not even allowed into an upper caste teashop. Dalits are allowed into Muslim-owned teashops, however. In fact, the investigations showed that it was not the poor who were converted, but a section of the newly education population who had made certain economic advancement. In many ways, these people achieved social, though not economic, improvements through their conversions. They were accepted into the Islamic community.

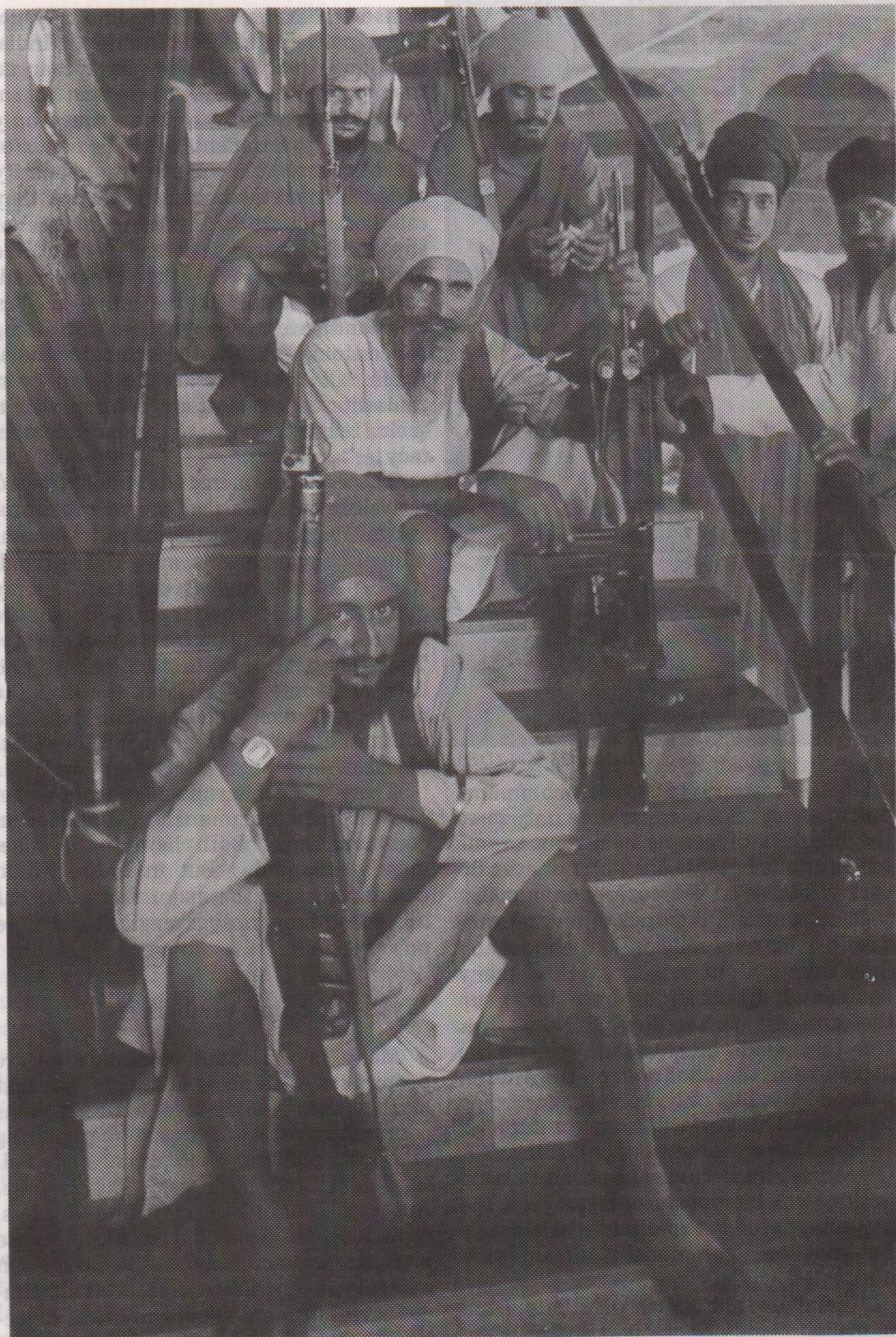
A programme to fight communalism

Sometimes, conversions can be used as a threat to get concessions from the caste Hindus and the government. After these conversions in Meenakshipuram, in other areas where there was a similar threat the government made improvements in water supplies, house sites, etc.

If Hindus want to put an end to conversions, then caste exploitation has to stop. It is also true that a large number of Muslims have been brought into the Hindu fold in recent years. Such converts are immediately fitted into the caste system and given some status. The Vishva Hindu Parishad, which has issued a ban on all conversions, justifies conversion to the Hindu fold as a process of purification. The Parishad never publicises these conversions.

Of course, one cannot support Muslim organisations which will go to any lengths to convert Hindus, but these organisations only represent a minor section of the population. It is a myth that in this way the Muslims could 'take over India'.

A further myth is that Muslims are becoming economically stronger at the expense of Hindus. This is, to say the least, ridiculous. It may be true that in some places Muslims are increasingly competing with Hindus. But this is not a generalised trend. There is upward mobility of some Muslims but one should not be crazy enough to think that they are a generalised threat to Hindu economic interests.



Sikhs on guard in Golden Temple (DR)

Educationally, Muslims are much more backward than Hindus. In employment, Muslims are not even proportionally represented. It is difficult to get jobs in a Hindu dominated market. The notion that Muslims are taking over is even belied in the population figures — in 1981 they formed a minimal 13 per cent of the total population which is a very slight increase from twenty or thirty years ago.

As mentioned above, there is an increasing trend towards riots all over India. This gives the lie to the theory that Muslims are riot prone since these riots occur all over. Jammu and Kashmir states have a majority Muslim population and they have the least riots. Srinagar, with an 85 per cent Muslim population has virtually no riots, while other towns with a smaller number of Muslims do have riots.

The conclusions to be reached from the above analysis are quite obvious. In the words of one writer, Asgar Ali

Engineer, 'Communalism in India, ever since the struggle for independence from British rule began, has been the art of realising secular ends through religious means by the elites of both communities.'

We strongly believe that the fight against communalism cannot wait till the D-day of the revolution. Nor will we wait until the riots occur to propagate genuine secularism. It has to begin now in every sphere of life. We must, therefore, demand:

- an end to any public demonstration of religious expressions.
- an end to all state aid to religious institutions.
- immediate scanning of existing curriculum in schools and colleges and deletion of communal references.
- no day, other than a day of national importance, should be a holiday. Holidays or festivals such as Diwali, Id, Christmas, etc. should be stopped. ■

The release of Nicky Kelly

Nicky Kelly, a political prisoner in the South of Ireland, was released from Portlaoise Prison on July 17, 1984 after spending four years in jail. The non-jury Special Criminal Court, which was activated in 1972 to try people politically affiliated to the anti-imperialist movement, sentenced Kelly to a twelve year term. The Dublin government's Minister for Justice, Michael Noonan, stated that Kelly had been prematurely released for 'humanitarian' reasons.

In fact the Release Nicky Kelly Campaign has been a thorn in the side of successive governments for the past few years. A huge number of organizations in Ireland, and international civil rights watchdogs like Amnesty International, have questioned the credibility of Kelly's conviction. It is generally accepted that Kelly was an innocent victim of a frame-up. He is still demanding that the state should clear his name. He has consistently claimed that the police tortured him, in this way forcing him to sign a 'voluntary confession' admitting participation in the robbery of about £200,000 from the Cork-Dublin mail train at Sallins, Co. Kildare, in March 1976. The case has major political implications. Kelly's release was widely seen as a victory for the anti-imperialist movement, the left and civil rights campaigners.

In this article there is a brief description of the background to Nicky Kelly's release. It is followed by excerpts from an interview given by Kelly shortly after his release.

Robert ALLEN and John MEEHAN

On March 31, 1976, the Cork-Dublin mail train was robbed of mail bags with an estimated value of £200,000. A week later the Gardai (Southern police) rounded up 39 people, most of them members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), including Nicky Kelly. Between the period of arrests, and the trial of Osgur Breatnach, Brian MacNally, Michael Plunkett and Nicky Kelly (the IRSP 4), it became evident that the state had orchestrated an elaborate frame-up. MacNally, Breatnach and Kelly were sentenced to jail by the Special Criminal Court despite a report published by Amnesty International which substantiated allegations of garda brutality during 1976 and 1977. Kelly jumped bail on the weekend before the verdict was due, and eventually departed to the USA. In May 1980, Breatnach and MacNally were acquitted. The following month Kelly returned and was immediately arrested by the Special Branch. Numerous appeals were turned down in the courts. Nicky Kelly went on a 38-day hunger strike in 1983 and support for his cause mushroomed. He was finally released without any warning last July in a manner which summed up the hypocrisy and pro-imperialist corruption of the Southern state.

At 4:40 p.m. on July 17 the screws told Nicky Kelly to pack his belongings and hustled him out of Portlaoise prison in a hectic rush. There was no time allowed for good-byes to friends, some person-

al property had to be left behind. The screws told Kelly he was being transferred to Shelton Abbey, an 'open prison' or pre-release centre near Arklow Co. Wicklow, Nicky's home town. The news of his release from the jail was broadcast to the world just after 5:00 p.m. But during the journey in a garda car Nicky was handcuffed to a cop. At 6:00 p.m. he was astonished to hear the news in the Irish language from the car radio repeating the news of his release. Immediately Nicky Kelly demanded that the cops stop the car and take off the handcuffs. The minders insisted they were proceeding to Shelton Abbey where the formal release would occur. When Kelly finally made it home to Arklow he was surrounded by supporters and journalists, and was obliged to hold an on-the-spot press conference. News of the release was a major sensation, and received considerable cov-

erage for days. At no time did government ministers agree to be interviewed about the affair.

They had no confidence in people's readiness to believe the story about Noonan's principles. They knew damn well that a statement issued by the Release Nicky Kelly Campaign was telling the truth: The "release is a vindication of (Kelly's) determined stand and a victory for all those who have campaigned on his behalf."

Kelly has no doubts about this. "It was a victory for the struggle. It was an unusual victory in the context of modern power, particularly within the state."

Why did Noonan suddenly release Kelly? Was the Irish Minister for Justice afraid that the man from Wicklow would go on hunger strike again? A move which would have forced the government into a corner to face the glaring, attentive, questioning eyes of the world. It has been suggested that Noonan wanted to divert these eyes and so took the easiest way out.

"I think it was a combination of things," says Kelly. He thinks that "in particular the campaign itself was starting to come good. A lot of things were starting to come together where a lot of good work had been put in. I knew I would never lose, whether I would get out or not was another thing."

Perhaps surprisingly, Kelly has unusual, in the circumstances, generosity towards

To Nicky Kelly, on his release from prison.

The United Secretariat Bureau of the Fourth International sends you its warmest greetings on this occasion.

Your release by the Southern Irish government is a victory for the democratic rights and anti-imperialist movements in Ireland and elsewhere who have worked consistently to win your release. We hope that a similar victory will be won in forcing the government and police to drop their false charges against you and exposing these as a frame up against those who fight for Irish freedom and socialism.

Our comrades in Ireland and elsewhere will continue to work to explain and win support for your case. In the meantime, we wish you a full return to good health after your imprisonment.

Bureau of the United Secretariat
of the Fourth International
Paris, September 14, 1984

the successive governments and their ministers for Justice: Paddy Cooney, Sean Doherty, Jim Mitchell and Michael Noonan.

"Considering they were covering up I can understand their behaviour. I suppose they all had vested interests, protecting the police. They were all, in their own time, using the same methods and the same tactics. I'd say if anything, this case has established that anyway. People didn't even know what the connotations of the 'heavy gang' (1) meant. There is

1. 'Heavy Gang' is a nickname for a group of thug interrogators within the Gardai. It was founded around the time of the Sallins train robbery and its members have since been promoted. This set an important precedent: today stories of police corruption and thugery are ten a penny. They have recently been exposed for bugging the house of a leading bourgeois politician: Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the bourgeois nationalist SDLP in the North and an ally of the main opposition party in the South, Fianna Fail.

also the possibility, as has been suggested in the past, that the Gardai will revolt themselves against any interference or enquiry into their activities.

"I would say certain politicians in the government were pushing this situation. You might say they were finding a very eager police force."

Kelly still intends to fight the cops in the courts. He sees his own case as a link in the chain of repressive laws in the South of Ireland. "Other repressive vehicles of the state, like the Special Criminal Court, which plays the role of a conveyor belt system," must be looked at. "There is a drive for more repressive laws, obviously related to the continuous unemployment. There's a wider spectrum of society who are going to suffer from the laws and this has to be seen as containment. The country seems to be bankrupt, totally bankrupt. It may come to the situation where the IMF may be dictating what our budget should be and the only way to prevent that would be the use of repressive laws. That's probably an over-simplification of it, but that probably makes sense to an extent of what's happening and what might happen in the coming years.

"But I think there's a greater reserve of people who are committed to real political and social change in this country. I get the impression, even when I was inside, that there was a certain amount of enthusiasm which wasn't there in the mid-seventies and possibly everybody was burned out or a bit fed up or cynical at certain situations."

On Thursday September 27 a major social event is being held in Dublin to welcome back Nicky Kelly. It will be addressed by numerous supporters of the campaign, and there will be entertainment from well known traditional musicians. Send messages of support, congratulations and welcome to Nicky Kelly to: The Nicky Kelly Campaign, C/O 11 Grange Terrace, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Kelly is also pursuing his civil action against the state. "At the moment it is being taken first as a preliminary issue — estoppel. (2) It will be held before a judge rather than a jury, it'll decide whether my case can go ahead. I think they will go to any extreme to block it. I think they will see themselves with major difficulties before a jury. Also I would have no objection to a retrial, but that is highly unlikely."

Nicky Kelly is now 33. Living in Arklow, he discovered Seamus Costello and politics. Costello led a split from the Official Republicans (3) in 1974 to form the IRSP. The new party seemed to send a shiver down the government's spine.

"I would say they would have obviously seen Costello as a threat, as a political threat in many ways. I've a terrible lot of respect for him. At the time I knew him, was about him, I didn't really understand him. It's unfortunate. He was

way ahead of a lot of people and particularly of me, as regards political clarity. He was honest, politically honest, and principled and unique in many ways. He was capable of organizing people in a sound political way."

At the time of the Sallins train robbery Nicky Kelly was 26. Eight years later he has the appearance of a man of 45; and last year's hunger strike has had its effects. Since his teens Kelly has asserted his individual right to political and social change. Despite losing eight years of his life, he is still committed.

"In the short term I intend to be very active within a very limited struc-

ture, that being the Nicky Kelly campaign calling for a public enquiry into the Sallins train thing. I hope to put all my energies, at this stage, into that. On the long term I don't know but I'm going to remain politically involved." ■

2. Estoppel is a legal term signifying being precluded from a particular course of action by a previous action of one's own. In this case Kelly's prior 'confession' to the mail robbery is an obstacle to his law suit to get the state to clear his name. — IV.

3. The Officials have now abandoned anti-imperialist policies and are called the Workers Party. They are reformists with a foreign policy sympathetic to Moscow. They are lionised by the bourgeois media because of their hysterical anti-republicanism.



AROUND THE WORLD



First congress of Bloque Socialista in Dominican Republic

The first congress of the Bloque Socialista on June 28/29/30 was one of the high points of the wide-ranging process of unity, struggle and debate in which the Dominican left has been engaged since the mid-1970s. The congress was opened by a report from the general secretary Rafael 'Fafa' Taveras, on the general political situation.

Many representatives of mass and revolutionary movements from throughout the world were present or sent their greetings to the congress. The delegates heard messages from, among others, Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Palestine, as well as the LIT (International Workers League) of Puerto Rico and the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League) of the Dominican Republic, sympathising organisations of the Fourth International. Representatives of the Fourth International took their turn at the congress tribune. Representatives of the Cuban Communist Party and the FSLN of Nicaragua were refused permission to enter the country by the Dominican authorities.

Before the Bloque Socialista congress other important congresses took place, such as that of the PTD (Dominican Workers Party), and the Dominican Communist Party (PCD). These three events testify to the desire for unity expressed in the constitution of the FID (Dominican Left Front) on June 14, 1984 by the PCD, the PTD, the BS, the LCR, the Movement for Socialism and the Patriotic Anti-Imperialist Union.

The Bloque Socialista, the product of a fusion between the Workers Communist Nucleus and the Workers Socialist Movement, came out of a long process of co-ordination that had to overcome many difficulties, and which will have to over-

come many others in the future. This difficult path is intertwined with the struggles of the people and the workers. The BS is not only linked to the present stage of the class struggle but is, in addition and above all, a coming together of the history of revolutionary activity over more than three decades. The internal dynamic of this first congress made it possible to overcome the different origins of the different components and to play a key role in a situation particularly important for the revolutionary forces.

This situation is characterised by a rise in the popular movement, a strengthening of the unity of the revolutionary left, at the same time as the launching of a wave of repression and sharpening of contradictions within the governmental party, all in the context of the gravest economic crisis that the country has known. Moreover, the Dominican Republic is in the region of Central America and the Caribbean, under attack from the imperialists who are confronted with the rise of the popular movement and the strong desire of the revolutionary forces to advance united against the North American imperialists.

In this situation the BS congress characterised the region as the weakest link in the imperialist chain, the internal situation in the country as pre-revolutionary, and talked of the imminence of the revolution. The BS newspaper *Ofensiva* concluded its report of the congress in the July 28 issue by stressing the following tasks:

— achieving the highest possible level of collective work and political agreement within the organisation along the lines decided by the congress to make their political activity more effective;

— adopting a more lively and determined attitude towards fighting for left unity by using all the possibilities that exist in the present situation for building the revolutionary forces;

— increasing the role of the BS in the mass movement by promoting the political education, the organisation and the unity of the masses, which is an on-

going task that will make possible a higher level of organisation and unity in the mass movement.

Ofensiva concluded by these words: 'In this way we will go forward in the certainty that the most important aspect of this pre-revolutionary situation is the sustained advance of the mass movement and its radicalisation.' ■

ORBITUARY

Andoni Arrizabalaga 1941 – 1984

On August 1, comrade Andoni Arrizabalaga met his death in a climbing accident on Mont Blanc du Tacul, at the age of 43.

On October 27, 1969, Andoni was condemned to death by the military tribunal at Burgos, and two of his comrades, natives of Ondarroa in the Basque country like himself, were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. The judgement particularly insisted on the fact that the three had spoken 'in an unknown language', that is, in Euskerra. Andoni's death sentence was later commuted to perpetual imprisonment by the head of state. A general strike broke out in Ondarroa and the industrial zones of Euskadi when this sentence was announced.

Andoni began his political activity in 1969 as a member of ETA. He was arrested for the first time in 1964, tortured and held in Larrinaga prison with almost paralysed hands. After his release, he continued his activity, participating in all the cultural activities and democratic mobilisations against the dictatorship's oppression of the Basque people in the following years. At the same time he began to organise as a militant worker in the Elgoibar enterprise where he worked.

In 1966 he was elected as a union representative. That year, he participated, as a representative of Elgoibar, in the assembly which laid the basis for establishing the workers' commissions of Guipuzcoa.

Andoni was arrested a second time in 1968, after the execution by ETA of the torturer Meliton Manzanas. Once again, he was badly tortured. Provisionally released 5 months later, he was once again arrested and condemned to death in 1969. He was to spend seven years in prison, first at Puerto Santa Maria for two-and-a-half years, then at Segovia, then back in Puerto Santa Maria where he was transferred after an escape scheme was discovered at Segovia in 1975.

It was, therefore, while in prison that he took a position in favour of the ETA-Sixth Assembly, which then evolved towards internationalist positions and joined the Fourth International in 1972, by fusing with the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria. For Andoni, the struggle continued in prison. He took an active part in the organisation of political prisoners and in several hunger strikes. This resistance brought him 450 days, one-and-a-half years, of solitary confinement during his seven years incarceration!

Freed in 1977 after the death of Franco, Andoni Arrizabalaga continued as an active and steadfast member of his organisation, the LCR-LKI, section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state. Modest and self-effacing, Andoni had a great moral authority. He was an example of a generation that had been able to make a bridge between the revolt of young Basques against oppression and the struggle of the workers' movement for socialism. A convinced internationalist, he had to suffer those who, despite his long trials, called him an 'españolista' [i.e., one who ignores the specific struggle of the Basque people for the broader questions in the Spanish state] because he proved able to broaden the national demands to the struggle for social emancipation.

Deeply loved and respected, Andoni's funeral in his native village was marked by the unanimous homage paid to his memory. The houses were covered with ikurinas (the Basque flag). Jose Iriarte, 'Bikila', saluted him in Euskerra on behalf of the LCR-LKI leadership. Jon Echave, former priest and LKI activist, brought the tribute of his prison comrades. Sabino Arana, also an LKI member, who during the 1970s was the most longstanding of the ETA prisoners, read the message of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International before his coffin. The telegram read, 'It was from the depths of his prison that Andoni became our comrade. At first, he was a faceless name, a symbol. He represented the unshakeable resistance to the Franco dictatorship, and was an example of that generation of revolutionary activists whose intransigent struggle against national oppression brought them to proletarian internationalism. An unknown comrade, he nevertheless became dear and familiar to us through the campaigns of solidarity against the repression. His faithfulness to our struggle, when others succumbed to disappointment or disenchantment strengthened the link between us. This is why his loss is felt so deeply by his faraway friends. In their name we not only pay a last internationalist homage to a revolutionary activist, but bear witness to their respect and affection for a comrade.'

Andoni died as he had lived, risking his life. He always said that he had two mountains, two passions, that composed of stones and rocks, and the revolution. ■

Stop the extradition of Basque militants !

On September 23, the Mitterrand government, which was elected in 1981 largely on a wave of revulsion against the undemocratic practices of the right, became the first French government to order the turning over of Basque national liberation fighters to the Madrid authorities.

The Spanish authorities had demanded the extradition of seven Basque nationalists. The Mitterrand government decided to extradite three — Francisco Javier Lujambio Galdeanu, Jose Carlos Garcia Ramirez and Jose Manuel Martinez-Balestegui. It, however, "left them time" to appeal to the constitutional court.

Of the three, two are accused of killing members of the Guardia Nacional, one of assassinating an industrialist. The other four Basques on Madrid's list were ordered deported to Togo. Some 25 Basques have already been deported to Latin America.

The Mitterrand government defended this decision by arguing that there is now democracy in Spain and that the three concerned are accused of violent actions.

In the September 24 issue of the Paris daily *Liberation*, an editorial excoriated the hypocrisy of the "left" government: "When the Swiss federal government refused to extradite the leaders of the FLN during the Algerian war, it was not because it denied that there was real democracy in France, but because the Algerian rebellion, inspired entirely by nationalism, could not be reduced to a mere matter of criminal law."

In a "Letter to the Peoples and Nations of the World," a wide spectrum of Basque cultural and human-rights groups pointed out the following about the situation of the Basque people under the rule of Mitterrand's "socialist" comrade, Felipe Gonzalez.

"Some 60% of the Basque people voted against or abstained on the present constitution. All the Basque political parties, representing 70% of the Basque people, oppose the present settlement on autonomy, or at least the implementation of it. More than 700 persons from the Basque country are in prison [for political reasons]. Thousands of Basques remain in exile....There is one policeman for every 125 inhabitants of the Basque country. In the first six months of 1984, 743 persons have been arrested for political causes...."

"Torture remains standard in the prisons. More than 3,500 cases were reported from January 1981 to July 30, 1984."

In these conditions, the meaning of these threatened extraditions is clear. A worldwide campaign of protests is essential. ■

A new upsurge in the struggle of the oppressed masses

Declaration of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

There have recently been new developments in the struggle of the oppressed in South Africa. In the space of a few weeks we have seen the combination of:

- mobilisations for the boycott of elections to the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' assemblies (these assemblies do not concern the 20 million blacks);
- school strikes and school student demonstrations;
- rebellions in certain townships;
- and now the miners are preparing to go on strike.

All this is taking place in a period marked by the growing number of workers struggles in the workplaces, the strengthening of independent non-racial trade unions and the progress made in their unification.

The most striking proof of the population's resolute opposition to and gut rejection of Apartheid has just been shown — apart from anything else — by the boycott of the racial elections at the end of August 1984. Less than 20% of the 'Coloureds' and less than 10% of the 'Indians' voted in the masquerade organised by P. Botha. The latter is nevertheless pursuing the implementation of his constitutional reforms and has just been designated President of the Republic at the head of a parliament separated into three chambers based on racial criteria. Emboldened by its diplomatic success that has made possible the signing of agreements with Angola and Mozambique and Botha's trip to Europe, the racist regime thought it could peacefully organise a 'facelift' of Apartheid. It has benefited from the support of the Reagan administration and in general of all imperialist governments.

Today, however, it is faced with problems on the domestic front. In fact, these cosmetic reforms are deepening racial discrimination and have not sown any illusions among the South African masses, whose degree of organisation is increasing. The recent mobilisations confirm the central role already being played by the independent trade unions and civic associations. Hundreds of thousands of workers, women and youth are now in these organisations.

Recent struggles have also shown the need for political centralisation: In their own way the United Democratic Front

Increasing militancy of blacks on all fronts (DR)

and the National Forum are seeking to fill this vacuum. This immediately subjects them to repression, in the same way as the underground ANC militants.

One of the most important lessons of recent events is the combination of social, economic and political demands that emerged, as well as the simultaneous entrance into struggle of a wide range of mass movement sectors. School students have demanded the recognition of school student councils and an end to corporal punishment; township dwellers have refused the rent increases; and miners are demanding a wage increase. But all these demands combine with the struggle for democratic and trade-union rights — a struggle that is understood by all these sectors as a central confrontation with the racist regime.

This demonstrates the explosive nature of the situation, the breadth of the accumulated social tensions and the intensity of the national question. This combination of demands shows that the oppressed masses do not want a reform of the regime but the overthrow of Apartheid and exploitation.

The arrests of dozens of leaders and hundreds of demonstrators and the assassination of dozens of blacks in the recent demonstrations show the real face of the 'democratisation' of Apartheid. This is the only response of the racist regime to each and every mobilisation. Consequently it is a necessity for the oppressed masses of South Africa that they receive systematic international support. The workers and democratic movements must give ongoing support to the organisations formed by the black masses of South Africa. And they must organise mobilisations against all types of collaboration of the imperialist and other countries with the South African regime.

We must give the greatest attention to South Africa.

The Fourth International calls on all its sections and members to participate in all the solidarity mobilisations with the oppressed people of South Africa and to defend all their organisations. ■

*United Secretariat of the Fourth International
Paris, September 9, 1984*

