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The socialist alternative in the US elections

Mel Mason (DR)

The following article is from the center pages of the October 19 issue of *The Militant*, the weekly newspaper that reflects the views of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, an organization in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International.

Laura GARZA

Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez, the Socialist Workers Party candidates for US president and vice-president, have been traveling around the country — and the world — telling the truth about the source of the problems facing working people today and the solutions the socialist campaign puts forward for working people to consider.

Mason and Gonzalez are leading a slate of 53 local socialist candidates in 26 states, all of whom are explaining that the November elections will not put an end to the US war in Central America and the Caribbean or solve the other problems facing unionists, family farmers, Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, women and all working people.

The socialist candidates champion independent political struggles by the oppressed and exploited — from strikes by Arizona copper miners, Toledo auto workers, and West Virginia coal miners, to the struggles by Blacks in Miami and elsewhere against cop brutality.

War at home and abroad

How do the socialist candidates view what's going on in the world?

They say that the US government is today waging a war against working people on two fronts: at home and abroad.

The government is waging this war on behalf of one class — a tiny handful of bankers and big businessmen — in order to defend the employers and increase their profits.

The center of the employers' war against working people abroad is in Central America. Washington is preparing for a major war there as it continues the fight to keep the pro-imperialist landowners and generals in power in El Salvador, and to overthrow a popular government in Nicaragua.

More US military bases are being built in Honduras, which borders both El Salvador and Nicaragua. Thousands of US troops are on permanent military "maneuvers" in the region. US forces have been directly involved in combat on the side of the Salvadoran army and the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries.

The inescapable conclusion that must be drawn from these facts is that US workers and farmers will eventually be forced to kill and be killed in this escalating conflict.

Washington is also on the offensive against liberation struggles in the rest of the world — from its continued military aggression in the Mideast, to backing the racist South African regime's attacks on the oppressed Black majority there, to supporting reactionary regimes in South Korea and the Philippines.

On the domestic front, the employers, backed by their government, are using every weapon at hand to weaken — and where possible, break — our union.

Racist attacks are also increasing. Blows to affirmative action, racist cop brutality and killings, and stepped-up harassment of undocumented workers are all carried out or condoned by the government.

Women's rights are on the chopping block as well. The right to a safe, legal abortion, already denied to impoverished women, is the focus of daily public condemnation by government spokespeople and the Catholic Church hierarchy.

Congressional Democrats and Republicans have joined together to continually cut back social programs of every kind, while they try to convince us that medical care, education, social security, decent housing and child care are privileges rather than basic human rights.

In order to hamper the ability of working people to resist this two-front war, the government is taking steps to undermine our constitutional rights. More strikes are decreed "illegal." Cops are used to attack union picket lines. Our right to travel to and from countries like Cuba and Nicaragua is being restricted, while "anti-terrorism" laws are used to victimize critics of Washington's foreign policy.

Takeback decade

Whether it was under Carter/Mondale or Reagan/Bush, working people have suffered from a decade of takebacks and attacks by the employers and government. That's because the employers' system — the capitalist system — is in crisis.

Governmental power is the most important weapon that the employers have to try to make us pay for the problems their profit drive has caused. The government, which is run by both Democrats and Republicans, acts in the interests of those who control it — the capitalists.

Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez are participating in the 1984 elections with a program and a strategy that take defense of the interests of working people as the starting point.

They have a perspective of fighting to build a new society. This perspective is an important part of our battle today. Mason and Gonzalez say that working people need to replace this government with one that would represent those of us who produce society's wealth — workers and farmers. A government of workers and farmers will reorganize society to make human needs — not private profit — the national priority.

We can gain the power to accomplish this big task by organizing ourselves to fight together with all those who would benefit from replacing this system — workers, farmers, Blacks, Latinos, women.

By taking political power out of the hands of the ruling rich, we can replace their capitalist system with a socialist one. We can build a society where the resources and technology of this country will be put at the service of humanity around the world. It will be a society where workers and farmers will decide to make the elimination of war, hunger and poverty all over the globe a priority — and a reality.

Two Americas

Both the Democrats and Republicans try to disguise the fact that they defend the employers' interests in this two-front war by saying they represent "all Americans." They tell us we shouldn't decide things based on our interests as workers, but rather as "Americans."

To this end, both parties held flag-waving conventions whose theme was "our" country's problems can be solved by helping "our" industry and "our" interests abroad. To do this, the message went, means upping the billion dollar war budget to defend "our" national security while continuing to cut away at *our* union, *our* living standards and *our* democratic rights.

Mason and Gonzalez have been using their campaign to cut through this phony

rhetoric about there being any common interests between US workers and our bosses. They say there are two distinct Americas. One is the America of the Rockefellers, DuPonts and Mellons, which exploits the workers of the entire hemisphere, and oppresses all of Latin America.

"Then there's *our* America," says Mason. "It includes the workers and farmers of both continents, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba and Nicaragua. It includes the rebels in El Salvador, and it included the revolutionary government of Grenada led by Maurice Bishop, whose overthrow was followed by the criminal US invasion and occupation of that island."

International working-class solidarity

Mason and Gonzalez have used their campaign to promote international working-class solidarity against the employers and their political representatives.

Mason went to Ireland in May to join protests there against Reagan's visit and to express his opposition to the British military occupation of Ireland's six northern counties.

In Britain, Mason spoke with striking coal miners and participated in protests against the deployment in Britain of US nuclear missiles.

Gonzalez visited the Dominican Republic in June and spoke out against the austerity measures imposed on the Dominican workers and peasants by the Wall Street-dominated International Monetary Fund.

In Puerto Rico, Washington's colony in the Caribbean, Gonzalez expressed her strong support for independence for the island. Puerto Rico provides cheap labor and a strategic military foothold for US employers.

Gonzalez, whose family is from Puerto Rico, has protested the US grand jury witch-hunt and jailing of activists who support Puerto Rico's right to be free and independent.

Mason and Gonzalez visited Canada, and the oppressed, French-speaking nation of Quebec, to learn firsthand about the problems facing working people there and to bring solidarity from US workers.

Nicaragua

Both Mason and Gonzalez have been to Nicaragua, a country which freed itself from a brutal tyranny and US domination through a popular revolution that put in power a workers and farmers government.

Since the Sandinista government came to power five years ago in July, 1979, it has lowered unemployment, distributed land to the peasants, drastically reduced illiteracy, and taken steps to upgrade the status of women, Indians and Blacks. All this has been done in an impoverished country under tremendous US military, economic and political pressure.

Ronald Reagan (DR)

Mason and Gonzalez encourage everyone to visit Nicaragua to see for themselves what's happening there.

In Cuba, the workers and farmers have held economic and political power for more than 25 years. The internationally-recognized gains since then in health care, education, the uprooting of racism and the quality of life have made Cuba a beacon of hope for oppressed peoples everywhere.

It's these examples of what working people ourselves can do when we take over the reins of government — and not some fake Soviet military threat — that make Washington so hostile toward these two countries.

Rulers prepare for new blows

The Reagan Administration tells us that the current economic upturn proves that the austerity measures forced on us by the government and employers have worked.

Mason and Gonzalez say this is a lie. The employment gains that have been made — which still leave millions in the streets — are the results of an upturn in the capitalist business cycle. No matter who had been in the White House for the last four years, there would have been such an upturn. And no matter who is elected, there will be another downturn.

During the upturn itself, however, the employers have utilized the government — which is run by both Democrats and Republicans — to accelerate their efforts to weaken our unions, to push back Blacks, Latinos and women, to restrict our democratic rights, and to escalate the war in Central America and the Caribbean.

This cyclical upturn does not mark the beginning of the end of the problems facing working people. That's because, as far as the employers are concerned, the takeback decade was just the beginning.

The scope of US military intervention in Central America today — while broad — is just the opening shot in what is shaping up to be a regionwide war. So too, the number of concessions that have been forced on the unions so far, the extent of social services that have been cut back, the amount of ground that has been lost on Black and women's equality are also only the beginning of the war here at home.

In order for the ruling class to reverse the international crisis of its system, it must cut much deeper — and it intends to. The only way it can accomplish that is by directly attacking the unions and the hard-won gains that Blacks, Latinos and women did make in the last three decades. But our side won't give up these things without putting up a massive fight.

This means big battles are shaping up. And the ruling class is preparing for them. Central to their preparations is pushing their reactionary ideas on us, especially through the Democratic and Republican presidential election campaigns.

Reactionary ideas

Reagan/Bush and Mondale/Ferraro alike are trying to outdo each other in pushing flag-waving patriotism, chauvinism against workers from other countries who come here seeking jobs, opposition to women's right to abortion with the false cry of "murder," racist opposition to bilingual education and school desegregation through busing, and to affirmative action, and support for more "Grenada-style" invasions.

The purpose of this ideological campaign is to reverse antiwar sentiments and progressive attitudes about women and Blacks that have grown up among working people through the struggles of these oppressed groups for their rights. Every bit of progress made in reversing these attitudes makes it that much easier for the employers to divide working people, weaken us in the face of the employer offensive, and dragoon us into war.

Our class must prepare

How can *our* class best defend itself and its allies today, while preparing for what's coming down the road?

The officials of the trade unions, the leaders of organizations like the National Organization for Women, the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) all say that getting Reagan out of the White House and voting for Mon-

dale and Ferraro is the most important thing we can do today.

Mason and Gonzalez disagree.

It's true that Reagan is an open reactionary who is committed to using the government to drive down the rights, living standards and expectations of US workers and to give the employing class free rein to exploit the country's — and the world's — natural and human resources.

But the buck doesn't stop there. Many of these policies were begun under the Democratic Carter/Mondale administration. And it's a *bipartisan* Congress that has been central to helping move ahead the employers' war in Central America and at home. Mason and Gonzalez say it makes no sense to depend on people like this to improve the situation of working people — even a little bit.

The socialist candidates say that politics doesn't equal voting in elections. In fact, relying on elections to bring change is an obstacle to fighting the employers' attacks.

Who is elected, in fact, doesn't decide anything. What Washington will do in Central America is not governed by whether Reagan or Mondale is elected. It's determined by the need to protect the enormous economic and political interests that wealthy US families have in that region; the struggles waged by the people of Latin America and other countries against those interests; and the response of US working people to the escalation of US intervention.

Whether Blacks move forward or are pushed backward is not determined by whether a Democrat or a Republican is in the White House. It's determined by how hard the employers' cops, courts and legislatures push, and how Blacks and their allies respond.

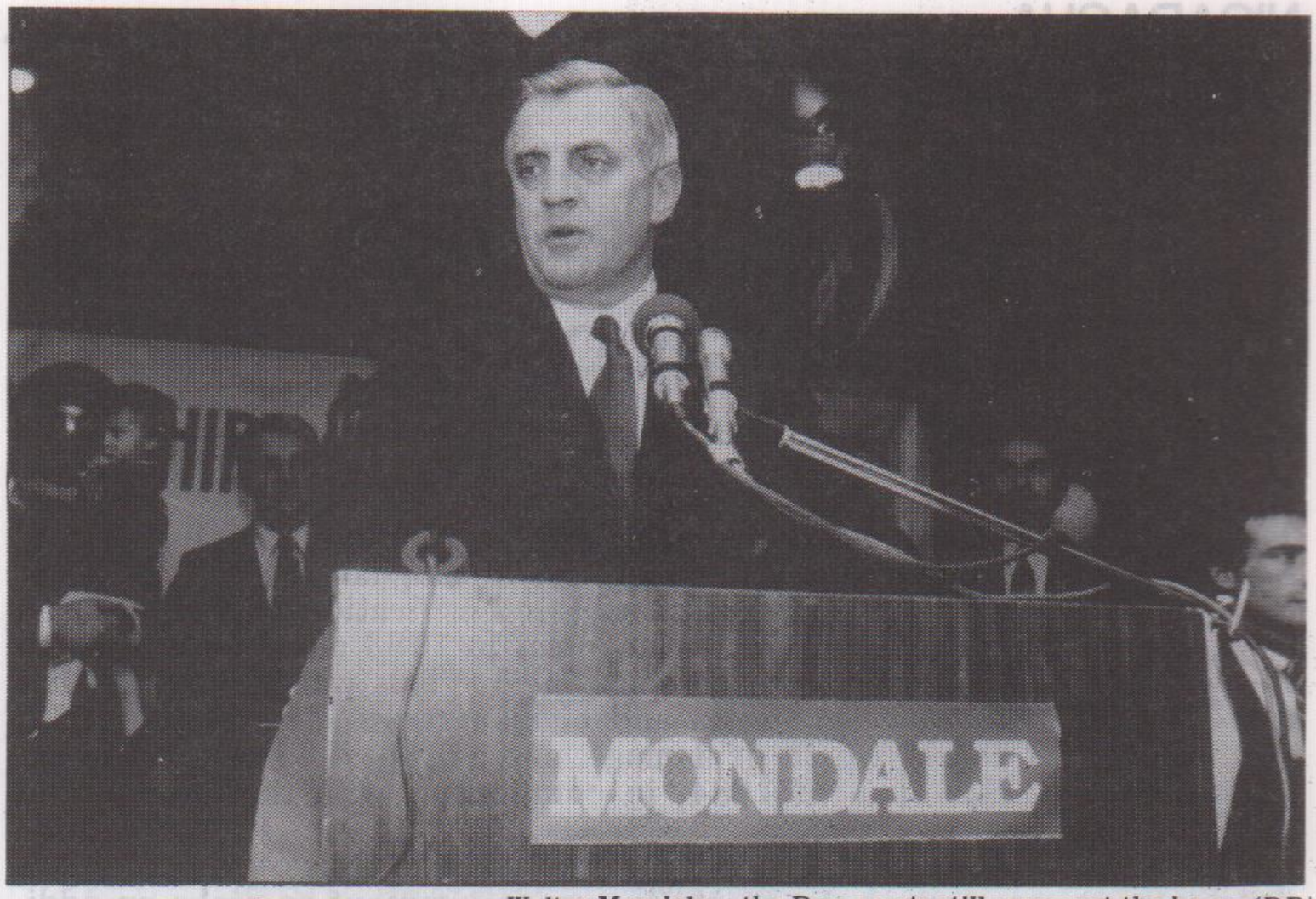
And electing Mondale will do nothing to prevent the owners of General Motors from going ahead with their plans to lay off tens of thousands of auto workers.

Relying on voting is not simply ineffective. It actually hurts us. Instead of banding together and fighting for what we need, we vote for and rely on our class enemy.

That is why Mason and Gonzalez disagree with Jesse Jackson and other liberals that our problems can be solved by actively supporting these parties and working within them; by simply reforming a few things but keeping the basic system intact.

No matter who joins these parties, or votes for them, or runs for office on their ticket, the Democrats and Republicans represent the bosses.

The candidacy of Geraldine Ferraro is a good illustration of this. The fact that the Democrats chose her to run for vice-president reflects the fact that women have fought for and won some important gains. But Ferraro is running to represent and administer the very system that oppresses women. She is running on the ticket of a party which supports the US war in Central America, that helps bust unions and that votes to deny government funding for abortions. That is why Mason and Gonzalez say that her candidacy does not advance the fight for women's rights.



Walter Mondale....the Democrats still represent the bosses(DR)

Break from capitalist politics

The socialist campaign is about making a break from capitalist politics, from the fakery of there being common interests of all "Americans" regardless of class, and from the two ruling parties.

Mason and Gonzalez say working people need to march, rally and actively protest the prowar, anti-labor, racist and sexist policies of the employers and their government. We need to turn our unions into fighting instruments that defend our working conditions and living standards and that champion the demands of Blacks, Latinos, women and all working people.

It is possible now, through unity, solidarity and determined struggle, to win more than might seem possible at first glance. To help lead these day-to-day struggles, and to chart a working-class political course, we need our own mass political party to represent us. The socialist candidates urge the formation of a labor party, based on a fighting trade-union movement.

A labor party will be a party of our class that can help lead labor battles, that will champion the interests of Blacks, Latinos and women. It will be a mass party of workers and their allies that will help lead the fight that must be waged against the new Vietnam-style war in Central America.

A mass independent Black political party will also be a tool in the fight for the interests of all working people. A party that fights to defend Blacks on the job, against police brutality, and against Washington's racist foreign policy will advance the struggles of all workers and inspire and hasten the formation of a labor party.

Mason and Gonzalez are using the socialist campaign to participate in politics in a realistic way.

To oppose the US war in Central America, they explain the facts about US intervention and participate in actions to protest the war.

To defend our unions, they urge active solidarity with embattled workers. They oppose all anti-labor laws and legislation, including the racist Simpson-Mazzoli Bill, Roybal Bill and all other anti-immigrant legislation.

They support abortion rights, child care and affirmative action. They back farmers fighting against foreclosures.

They speak with fellow workers in the mines, mills, unemployment lines, factories and at union meetings about how we can organize ourselves as part of the same class facing similar attacks as workers elsewhere.

Join the SWP! Join the YSA!

The most effective way to do this today is to join the Socialist Workers Party or the Young Socialist Alliance.

The SWP and YSA participate in struggles as they arise, always with the aim of spreading an important conviction among people: the need to chart a course toward workers and farmers taking control of this country so we can begin to deal with our problems and transform the world.

The SWP and YSA are part of the great battle going on in the world today between those who want to go forward and make changes — like in Cuba and Nicaragua — and those who want to hold off progress and maintain the status quo of hunger, oppression, exploitation and inequality.

This battle will not be won overnight. But it has already begun and you can decide to be a part of it now. ■

Democratic elections in a war economy

The summer of 1984 clearly revealed the economic and political consequences of the imperialist attacks on the Nicaraguan revolution. Over the last few years we have seen a growing intensification of losses caused by the activities of the *contras*. War losses in 1983 alone amounted to 77 per cent of the losses incurred since 1981. This war of attrition has caused 7,000 deaths in Sandinista and civilian ranks since March 1982, 400 million US dollars worth of damage, and a drop of 35 per cent in exports since the beginning of 1984, in comparison with the same period in 1983. (1)

This aggression, openly aimed at undermining the basis of the country's development, has forced the revolutionary government to make an additional defence effort. The share of military spending in the budget has risen from 18 per cent in 1982 to 20 per cent in 1983, and the forecast for 1984 is around the 25 per cent mark. (2)

At the economic level, as in other aspects of social life, Sandinista policy has had to be subordinated to the need of militarily defending the revolution and its gains. Comandante Jaime Wheelock expressed the orientation when he announced on May 1, 1984, that a real 'war economy' was necessary.

In the context of this difficult economic situation, under fire from the *contra* attacks and lies in the international bourgeois press, the Sandinista revolution is continuing its advances. The elections on November 4, 1984, like the electoral campaign that preceded them, will have provided the opportunity for intense debate and politicisation for the Nicaraguan people.

Claude DEVILLIERS

The priority given to setting up an effective defence system has made it necessary to orient all productive capacity towards this end. The example most frequently given at the moment is that some textile factories in the country over the past period have devoted their capacities to producing clothing for the front-line fighters. This policy has succeeded in encouraging the supply of basic products to the rural regions most affected by aggression. The middle classes, with an income above the national average, are thus those whose standard of living is most affected by the restrictions on consumption that this policy has brought about.

The adoption of these policies is also linked to the problems of the present difficult economic situation in Nicaragua. The revolution inherited a capitalist economy of very limited development, mainly dependent on agro-exports for external revenue. Beyond the 50,000 deaths, the hundred thousand wounded, the almost total absence of currency reserves and the huge foreign debts, we should also note other aspects of the heritage left by the Somoza regime and the civil war: a significant drop in the area of land cultivated, from 630,000 hectares to 275,000 between 1977 and 1979; a drop of 33 per cent in the Gross Domestic Product in the same period; damages estimated at .5 billion dollars; and a devastated economic apparatus.

The government's assumption of control over a section of the economy; a relative increase in investment, the total of which, as a percentage of GDP, shows a rise of 3 per cent for 1980-83 by comparison with the years 1975-77; and the agrarian reform, led to an increase in agricultural production, as well as a fundamental change in the structure of property and the balance of production. Thus, there was an increase in the cultivation of basic products such as beans, sorghum and rice.

But the extension and transformation of the structure of solvent demand on the one hand and, on the other, the depreciation in the value of exports on the international market, of the order of 33 per cent in fixed prices between 1978 and 1979, have produced a contradictory situation.

While there have been increases in production in many agricultural sectors, with that of some products sometimes even reaching levels above that of 1977, for example in sugar, pasta, oil, milk, soap, coffee; for others there has been a stagnation of production: maize, cotton, livestock. At the same time, the relative dearth of these foodstuffs is feeding the growth of the black market and speculation, since the rate of progress in production has remained below that of the increase of solvent demand.

Moreover, while the level of exports has regained that of the Somoza years, the financial returns have been seriously affected by the drop in prices on the international market. 'Exports, which were of the order of 636 million dollars in 1977, then dropped to 450 million in 1980, and have not been able to grow since, amounting to only 415 million in 1983,' stated a report on state management from the Ministry for Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA). (3)

Nevertheless, the nationalised agricultural sector of the Public Property Zone (APP) has, since 1979, increased its production in most areas, as have the small and medium peasants, except for the production of maize and cotton. This is the great success of the agrarian reform, that it could succeed in bringing about both a change in ownership and an increase in production. On the other hand, the big private sector, which represents about 32 per cent of the total value of agricultural production, has still, according to the MIDINRA report, 'adopted a distrustful attitude'.

For example, the private coffee plantations have been retained, without any significant improvement in cultivation methods or increase in the area cultivated — a clear indication of a refusal to invest. There is an identical phenomenon in the behaviour of the private industrial sector. At least part of the aid given by the state to the private sector is not being reinvested in the productive cycle.

This not only poses problems for re-organising the trading circuit, in view of the relative scarcity of certain products. It also creates problems for state control over the surplus arising from the profits of the private sector. Moreover, it gives rise to the difficulties encountered in planning the activity of the small- and medium-peasant sectors.

Economic problems

In addition, the Sandinista government has always stressed to the workers the importance of thinking in terms of an effective wage that takes into account all the social gains for the working population. The impossibility of continuing to ensure all these social gains, because of the effects of imperialist aggression and commercial speculation, necessitated a vigorous intervention in this field. This is what the government has done, by proposing measures that primarily conflict with the interests of the social layers linked to the bourgeoisie, whose standard of living mainly rests on the consumption of imported manufactured products, and by organising a mobilisation of the masses around these objectives, in the context of what is called the war economy.

1. *Le Monde*, Paris, October 4, 1984.
2. *Pensamiento Propio*, Managua, July 15, 1984.
3. *Revolucion y Desarrollo*, review of the Ministry for Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA), Managua, No 1, April/May/June 1984.

Insofar as there exists, on the one hand, a scarcity of all products other than basic necessities, and, on the other, social layers who still have an income making it possible for them to consume more than the minimum national average, there is room for speculation. In addition to its harmful effects on the masses' standard of living, this contributes to an influx into the capital and the informal small trading sector and the black market. Above and beyond the social problems caused by this rural exodus, which arise even while there is a lack of skilled and unskilled (for harvests) workforce in productive activity, this phenomenon also indicates that there exists a clandestine labour market that the state has not been able to get under control.

The implementation of the recent economic decisions has led the Nicaraguan authorities to deal directly with those involved in speculation, the social base of the 'internal front' of the counter-revolution.

War economy and consumer defence law

The defence of the revolution today thus involves a combined struggle by the government and the Nicaraguan masses against speculators. This is also the purpose of the Consumer Defence Law promulgated on August 1, 1984. According to the provisions of this law, the distribution of eight basic products — oil, sugar, soap, rice, sorghum, maize, beans, salt — is under public control, in order to guarantee supplies for the whole population at a constant price, wherever it is bought.

Up until now, sale of these products went through two networks, one private and the other public. The former continued to prosper, mainly in Managua. From the wholesalers, who have the means to stock up with goods and provoke artificial shortages, to the thousands of street sellers, this private commercial sector remained more or less untouched by the establishment of nationalised distribution points where these products could be had at a subsidised price.

At every level, from the agricultural production centres to the selling points, the goods were misappropriated in order to swell the private distribution circuits. This situation is made worse by the fact that the private sector controls all road freight transport.

The government's policy of subsidies for basic products succeeded in making official selling prices lower than those paid to agricultural producers. Thus, it gave those parasitic trading sectors an opportunity to enrich themsleves illegally at the expense of the consumers.

Private shopkeepers have had no hesitation, in fact, in getting their supplies from the national shops at low prices, to stock up and create a shortage, so that they could then resell at a higher price.

Public control over the selling and distribution of the eight basic products will now be implemented through fixing selling prices applicable throughout the country, sales through the public networks alone or in agreed selling points, a ban on linking the purchase of a taxed product to that of a non-taxed one, and a special licensing for goods-transport vehicles. The mechanism for agreeing on selling points is linked to the agreement given by the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS). In exchange for their commitment to respect the prices, the retailers will be supplied by the national marketing enterprises.

It is clear that the employees in the Ministry of Internal Commerce (MICOIN) have not sufficient means at their disposal to see to it that the provisions in the Consumer Defence Law are respected. The corner stone of this measure rests on the ability of the CDS to mobilise at the grass roots in order to promote a real price control and an effective struggle against speculation. On Friday August 3, Comandante Daniel Ortega, Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) presidential candidate, in a radio broadcast entitled *Face the People*, stressed the fact that, 'the organised people are the fundamental force for the application of the Consumer Defence Law'.

The CDS were called on to wage a 'war to the death' against speculators. The emphasis put on the war against speculation this summer was also expressed at the social level in the struggle against the 'internal front' of reactionaries that are organising and profiting from it.

On June 23, Comandante Tomas Borge stated that 'the internal front's project is to attempt to create a social base for the overall plans of the counter-revolution. It attempts to base itself on the discontent of certain sectors. This is not a question simply of economic sabotage and military attacks, but also using political and ideological weapons to attack the country.' (4)

Eastern market in Managua (DR)

A political response on this terrain was delivered by the FSLN. An ideological campaign was organised to expose and criticise the errors and incompetence of some government employees. Daniel Nunez, FSLN candidate for the Constituent Assembly and president of the national Union of Farmers and Livestock Raisers (UNAG), publicly stated, according to the account published in *Barricada* on September 17, that 'the struggle is not only against Reagan, but also against certain government employees who are blocking the growth of productive activity in the country'. The debate in this case focused on the fixing of a price, considered too low, for the purchase of beans from the producers.

Nicaragua has, nevertheless, despite its difficulties, been able to ensure minimum supplies for the whole population. Just to look at the health record and note the drop in infant mortality shows that the historic deficiencies, particularly in protein-rich foods, have been overcome. The importance of this fact should be registered, in order to better understand the character of the rationing measures introduced now.

But severe blows are being struck at the Nicaraguan economy and the well-being of its inhabitants by the actions of the reactionary forces. The imperialist blockade has led to a serious decline in the imports for consumption. Although not vital products for the survival of the population, shoes and clothing, for example, are no less essential goods. There are now very steep price rises on such items.

Most estimates agree in considering that the standard of living for the mass of the people has stabilised in the last few years, as far as the basic products that make up the 'shopping basket' are concerned. On the other hand, if a greater

4. Telex *Envio*, Managua, July 1984.

range of goods is taken into account, there has been a significant fall in the standard of living each year since 1982: by 12.9 per cent in 1982 and 25.4 per cent in 1983. (5) The price rises in the months before the Consumer Defence Law were particularly large, indicating a quicker rate than previously: 24.8 per cent in 1982 and 30.9 per cent in 1983.

This aggravation of the problems in production and food supplies, under the impact of the imperialist blockade and aggression, also reveals the contradictions inherent in the development of the mixed economy and state control over the economy and production. An article in the review *Pensamiento Propio* noted in relation to this that, 'One can state that the country is experiencing the reality of a mixed economy in transition, where rationality and democratic planning are not always completely accepted; where laws of the market and value strongly dependent on the world capitalist economy still predominate.' (6)

The evolving character of the situation of a mixed economy is clearly recognised by the FSLN. For example, Bayardo Arce, coordinator of the political commission of the FSLN national leadership, recalled that the FSLN had overestimated the weight of former dictator Somoza's property in the economy and his scope of control and were only going to nationalise his holdings.

Replying to a question on the development of the FSLN's original economic programme, Bayardo Arce explained, 'When we conceived this [original FSLN] project we only had Somoza's statistics. We had incomplete information on the national reality...To give just one example, we thought that Somoza was the master of 50 per cent of Nicaragua. We thought that, with what we were going to confiscate, we would have enough to meet the needs of the population...We had to make readjustments.' (7)

Thus, the Sandinista leadership had to take the necessary measures by nationalising the holdings of Somoza's accomplices, or of those capitalists who adopted a favourable attitude towards the counterrevolution or organised tax frauds. Despite that, the Sandinista leadership finds itself today still confronting a difficult problem in planning the economy.

The organisation of agricultural production, an essential condition of directing the economy towards satisfying the needs of the mass of people, is not limited simply to controlling the big private sector that is still in operation. There are also the problems linked to the management of the APP sector (lack of trained personnel, of technical means, limited weight of the agricultural waged staff) and planning in the small- and medium-agricultural producers sector.

The situation of agriculture in Nicaragua is very complex. It is not reducible to simply the dichotomy between one sector of big private producers, specialising in export products that bring in foreign currency, and another sector of small and medium producers working for the local market.

Thus, the small and medium tillers produce 42 per cent of the total value of coffee production, 27 per cent for that of cotton and 95 per cent for that of sesame [export crops]. On the other hand, the big entrepreneurs are also active in producing goods for the internal market, controlling 36 per cent of the total value of rice production and 34 per cent of that of sorghum. This is the reason why the Sandinista government has given very particular attention to the progress of the agrarian reform, and the organisation of the small and medium producers in cooperatives.

Difficulties in planning

The problems of planning and management in the reformed agricultural sector are looked at in an article in the review *Revolucion y Desarrollo*, where, among the socio-political and institutional obstacles to the development of the agricultural sector, the following factors were noted:

'The insufficient development of workers' management and the need for a greater definition of how to apply it, despite the growth of unionisation; the absence, among technicians, of a political consciousness in their professional work;...the lack of definition in concrete terms of the Workers and Peasants Alliance, particularly as regards income differentials, the guarantee of supplies for the peasants, the relationship between the price of manufactured goods and that of foodstuffs, the socio-political activities that develop solidarity between the two sectors;...the difficulty for the revolution as a whole to take charge of the peasant sector, because of its dispersed nature, its technological precariousness and its ideological vulnerability, which has a direct impact on our political work.' (8)

This approach denotes an acute appreciation of the complex economic problems which the revolution has to face, and which come back to the inherent difficulties and slow progress inherent in any process of transition to socialism in a dominated economy that is, what is more, subject to imperialist aggression.

By continuing its march forward, the Nicaraguan revolution is nevertheless demonstrating what sort of solution it seeks to the difficulties that its faces. It is continuing with the agrarian reform at an increasing pace. It is directly confronting the speculators, that is, significant sectors of the bourgeoisie. And, among the masses, it is waging a political battle against the main bourgeois political parties, which are the transmission belts for the imperialist offensive within the country.

The progress made in the agrarian reform through the distribution of land to the peasants is a good example of the government's orientation, as the statistics from the beginning of 1984 testify. The poorest peasants, whose cultivated land is less than 7 hectares, owned 2 per cent of the land in 1978. Today they own 6 per cent, 1.8 per cent individually and 4 per cent in agricultural cooperatives. (9) Peasants with farms of less than 35 hectares have gone from 15 to 26 per cent of land surface cultivated, 8.6 per cent privately owned and 17.7 per cent in cooperatives.

Thus, the reformed agricultural sector represents in all 38 per cent of the land, 19.3 per cent for the APP, 10 per cent in service cooperatives (CCS) and 8.7 in Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives (CAS). Property titles for 11 per cent of the agricultural land of the country have been given to 31,000 peasant families, a total of 26 per cent of small agricultural producers.

During this period, the owners of holdings of more than 350 hectares, who did own more than 36.1 per cent of land, now hold less than 11.3 per cent. The owners of more than 150 hectares of worked land, who possessed more than 50 per cent of the land in 1978, now have no more than 23.8 per cent.

The rate of the agrarian reform is also an interesting indicator, because it continues to accelerate. In the first fourteen months of the agrarian reform, the rate of granting property titles was 647 titles per month, and the area of land involved was on average 15 hectares per family.

During the first five months of 1984, more than 1,600 families received land, of around 30 hectares per family. The plan is that at the end of the year, 60,000 families will have benefited from the agrarian reform and will be installed on a surface of 1.4 million hectares.

Access to credit and technical aid for the small- and medium-agricultural producers has also evolved, demonstrating the policy that the Sandinista government intends to follow in the control of the economy and bank loans. The small producers, who only had access to 4 per cent of credit before the revolution, received in 1982, through their participation in CCS and CAS, 22.5 per cent of the total credit allocated. This freed many families from exploitation by usurers and pawnbrokers of all sorts.

These measures have gone hand in hand with an increase in the organisation of agricultural workers and small and middle producers. Some 45 per cent of fulltime agricultural workers are today organised in the unions of the Association of Rural Workers (ATC), and 54 per cent of agricultural producers are organised in cooperatives.

In 1983 the UNAG organised 75,228 members, gathered in 1,756 groupings, including production, service and credit

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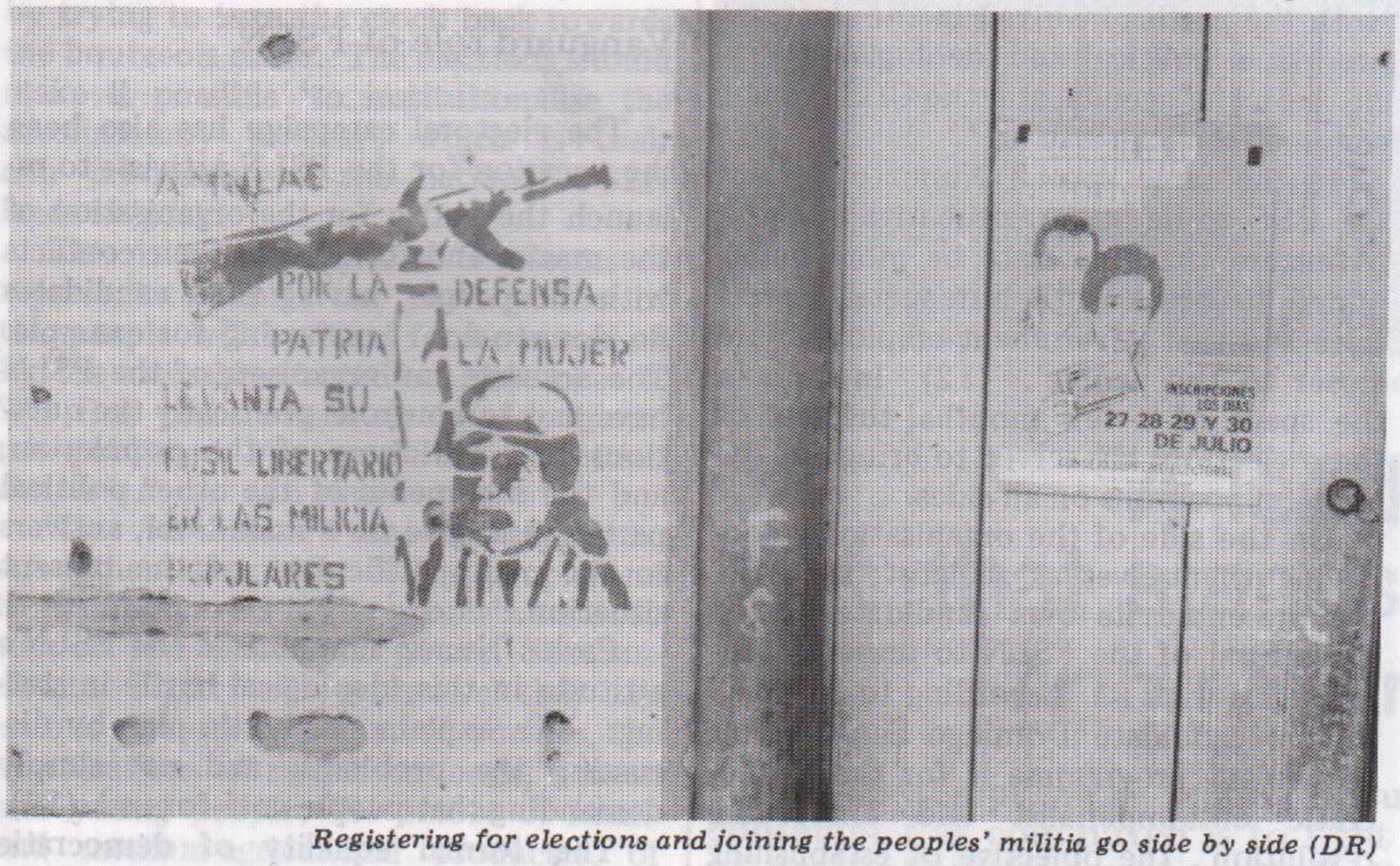
5. Rate of variation in real wages, *Pensamiento Propio*, May/June 1984.
6. Idem, July 1984.
7. Idem, April 1984.
8. *Revolucion y Desarrollo*, No 1, MIDINRA report on state management.
9. All the figures that follow are from the article in *Revolucion y Desarrollo* already cited.

cooperatives, and also groups of 20 to 60 peasants called Unions of Producers at the Base. (10)

A document of the MIDINRA recognises, however, the delay in establishing forms of workers' control over the administration of state enterprises and, on this point, made it clear: ' Workers' management in the administration of enterprises has advanced slowly. However, through the reactivation assemblies and the consultative councils, we have succeeded in creating the conditions for workers' management in 40 per cent of these APP enterprises and for 55 per cent of workers.' (11)



Registering for elections and joining the peoples' militia go side by side (DR)

This speeding up of the agrarian reform, like the political battle for the next elections, takes place in the context of a radicalisation of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua.

There is a crucial political battle going on around the elections for a National Constituent Assembly of 90 members, a president and a vice-president. There are candidates from seven political parties confronting each other. These include three bourgeois formations — the Conservative Democratic Party (PCD), the Social Christian People's Party (PPSC) and the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) —, two Stalinist parties — the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and the Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCN) —, one organisation from the Maoist tradition, the People's Action Movement (Marxist Leninist) (MAP-ML); and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

The timetable of measures planned to organise these elections has been entirely respected: adoption of the electoral law, Nicaraguan citizens registering on the electoral lists, presenting of candidates by parties taking part, and then the start of the election campaign itself.

It is not without importance to note that the electoral law adopted in July by the Council of State guarantees more democratic rights than those granted in the 'Western democracies'. The right to vote is given to all those of 16 or over, a measure decided by the Council of State following a debate in the Council in which the Sandinista Youth played an active role, mobilising its troops in favour of the vote at 16.

Representation will be proportional, allowing every party that gets more than 15,000 votes to have at least one representative in the National Constituent Assembly.

All the parties standing have a right to the same subsidy, a sum which will make it possible for small parties to wage a national campaign. The possibility of receiving funds from abroad is allowed for, on the one condition that these come through the central bank.

Finally, it should be remembered that, in line with the legislation on parties dating from August 1983, the freedom to constitute parties 'able to claim political power' is recognised, on the simple condition that they do not take up arms against the revolution.

The FSLN has thus, in a country at war, decided to implement legislation that guarantees, organises and stimulates political pluralism in a context of waging a political battle to mobilise the masses, as the present course of the electoral campaign illustrates.

Registering on the electoral rolls, which took place between July 27 and 30, was one of the first highpoints in the FSLN's capacity to mobilise the immense majority of the Nicaraguan masses. In a country that had never before in its history had either a census or previous registering on the voter rolls for the elections staged by Somoza, almost the whole population of voting age (94.8 per cent) has registered. The total figure of 1,380,000 was reached, while the Sandinistas target was 1,250,000 citizens. There were 4,150 registration offices in the country as a whole.

The intimidation operations organised by the *contras* on this occasion did not detract from the success of the initiative undertaken. This would be enough to testify to the vitality of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua, and the difficulties encountered by the *contras* in launching offensives coordinated on a large scale.

This first stage of the electoral process was a big success for the FSLN, which even its most determined opponents, starting with the bourgeois daily newspaper *La Prensa*, were forced to recognise. It was then, at the point when parties presented their candidates, that the bourgeois pro-imperialist formations launched their campaign to discredit the electoral process in international public opinion.

The CIA and the right-wing parties did not need any elaborate opinion polls to foresee that these elections would show the more or less avowed supporters of imperialism to be very much in a minority. But the parties of the right, organised in the National Democratic Coordination Ramiro Sacasa (CDN) — that is, the Social Christian Party, the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) — had, up till July 1984, left it doubtful whether they would participate in the elections.

In December 1983, with the blessing of the employers' organisation COSEP, they published a platform of 9 points, in which they particularly demanded the opening of a national dialogue among all Nicaraguans, including the armed mercenaries of the *contras* and their leaders.

The CDN's other demands concerned the lifting of the state of emergency and a complete separation of the FSLN from the state apparatus. Whether this was a political programme for the election campaign or as a precondition for participation in the elections was artfully left unclear.

The CDN's intentions were left all the more vague inasmuch as its component parties were themselves uncertain and divided about the line of conduct to follow. A boycott of the elections, strongly advised by Washington, involved identifying the CDN with the armed counter-revolution and grave risks for these parties. For the mini-apparatuses of these dwarf parties, active primarily in the towns, this was a difficult choice, insofar as it could mean a break with the slender advantages that the black market still affords the bourgeois and petty bourgeois layers represented in them.

Moreover, this situation explains why the imperialists imposed a common figurehead onto these parties, in the person of Arturo Cruz, former member of the governmental junta in 1980 and 1981, Nicaraguan ambassador to Washington in 1982 and, since then, once again an employee of an international bank in Washington.

Arturo Cruz was not slow to announce his candidature by telephoning from Washington to his friends in the CDN. Arriving at Managua airport, he openly outlined his policies: the 9-point platform of the Coordination constituted a precondition for the elections. In short, Arturo Cruz was acting as a provocateur, whose objective was not to win influence among a significant section of Nicaraguan

10. *Pensamiento Propio*, July/August 1983.
11. Report on state management by MIDINRA, in *Revolucion y Desarrollo* already cited.

opinion, but to make a direct appeal to international public opinion.

Faced with these demands, the Sandinistas once more pointed out that the idea of dialogue with the *contras* was inacceptable and non-negotiable, although they decided to put back the deadline for the registering of candidates, from July 25 to August 5, and then to September 30. In doing this they helped to sow divisions among their opponents. One faction of the Centre for Trade-Union Unity (UCS), a member of the Coordination, split, refusing to ratify the boycott and calling on the CUS to break its links with COSEP. The Social Christian Party, which has a certain social base, is riven with debates.

It is of course of prime importance for the American imperialists to do all they can to discredit the Nicaraguan elections, but the sympathetic coverage given to the Cruz operation by the big Western press is out of all proportion to its impact on Nicaraguan reality, even among bourgeois and petty bourgeois layers. The electoral campaign among the seven parties that have entered the lists is not a fake debate. On the contrary, it is a real political battle between formations that represent distinct and sometimes contradictory social interest, and which have drawn up conflicting programmes.

Broad political battle

The election campaign has made possible an increased politicisation on a broader scale among the popular masses, which is undeniably a factor in the advance of the revolutionary process. Over the last few months there have been increased possibilities for expression and political debates. There have also been, therefore, increased opportunities for the FSLN to consolidate and politicise its social base, to combat the arguments of the bourgeois opposition, which has openly appeared as allied with the *contras* from the point at which it refused to participate in the elections. But the electoral debate has also been the occasion for a confrontation with the arguments of the bourgeois parties that are standing in the elections and have experienced a rightwards radicalisation in their positions.

The complete absence of the member organisations of the CDN from the electoral terrain has in fact left the field open to the authentic bourgeois parties, the PCD — a split from the old Conservative Party tradition, which generated a few anti-Somozists —, the PPSC and the PLI. The leader of this latter party, a member of the Patriotic Revolutionary Front (FPR) until 1983, a grouping of organisations that support the revolutionary process, was minister of labour up till December. His distancing from, if not his break with, the FSLN, is therefore recent. In an interview published in April 1984 he stated, 'The polarisation that exists today should be broken.'

The dynamic of the confrontation with the programme of the FSLN, and the desire to capture the votes that would have gone to the CDN, has now led the PLI to shift to the right. In particular it has issued openly anti-communist propaganda. For its part, the PPSC, taking advantage of the political platform that the elections offer, has also put forward proposals that would completely strip the CDS of any function of self-organisation of the masses and make them formal but powerless structures at a local level.

The FSLN reacted vigorously by calling on the CDS to be more active in the ideological debate in the electoral campaign. The revolutionary comandante Carlos Nunez, for example, stated that, 'with the parties involved in the electoral process, a political and ideological struggle is on the agenda, and the CDS are not excused from this battle.'

In the same speech Nunez called on the CDS to be 'more combative in order to ensure that the state be more determined to break with bureaucratic practices and that government employees are closer to the people'. (12) In fact, in the space of a few months, the test of these elections has served to bring out the political positions on all sides.

On the side of the organisations identifying themselves as socialist; the PSN has presented its own candidates, given the refusal of the FSLN to present common lists with it. According to its presidential candidate Domingo Sanchez, his immediate programme is for the 'democratic anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution', the objective of establishing socialism being for another stage of the revolution. (13)

Flowing from this orientation is a critique of the FSLN, and a search for tactical alliances with openly bourgeois formations in the name of defending democratic rights. This was the case during the discussions on the electoral law. And it is the case now in protesting the energetic activity of the base units of the FSLN in the campaign.

As for the PCN, which considers the FSLN to be outside the workers' movement, it goes even further in its attempts to form a common front for 'democratic rights'. The MAP-ML, which seems to have broken with the conception of revolution by stages, publicly denounces the concessions made to the bourgeois parties. Its present policy is defined as aiming to speed up the revolutionary process, by an appeal to 'transform the electoral struggle into a victorious class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, imperialism and revisionism'. (14)

Even though these three organisations are numerically very weak, they are representative as currents with a history and a real influence in limited sections of the working class, particularly through their three union confederations which, with the Sandinista confederation (CST) are part of the National Trade-Union Coordination (CNT) There again, the open differences between these currents whose programme refers to socialism cannot be reduced to simply a decorative exercise.

To the question asking if the ideological debate was going to 'include the mass organisations and the parties to the left of the Sandinista Front such as the Communist Party and the People's Action Movement', the secretary of the Council of State replied: 'Yes, of course. This space should be opened up. We, in the Sandinista Front, think that our positions are correct, and we have to discuss them with the people to see if they also think they are correct. Our organisations must use this occasion to increase the number of members and militants, and also to grow ideologically.' (15)

Vanguard role of FSLN

The electoral campaign has also been the occasion for the FSLN activists to relaunch the battle for the organisation of the masses and to increase their contacts with the people, having their candidates do door-to-door convassing for example. The activists and organisers of the FSLN have had to confront politically the questions and criticisms of the population, and the arguments of the other political parties, and give, at a mass level, answers to the many difficulties of the present situation.

Carlos Nunez summarised the FSLN's attitude in this ideological battle in stating: 'We explain our battle plan by discussing the problems, and not simply demanding that people vote for us.' (16)

The formal equality of democratic rights granted to all parties does not detract from the specific character of the FSLN as the recognised vanguard of the victorious struggle against Somoza, and of the revolutionary process that has been unfolding in Nicaragua for the last five years. This characteristic alone would be enough to distinguish the FSLN from every other electoral current.

But it should also be borne in mind that political parties in Nicaragua structure only a very small part of political life in the country. The bourgeois formations are mainly the successors to rump parties, whose organisation revolved more around questions of family and clan than clearly-defined political projects. As for the small organisations of the workers' movement, they had to exist for decades under the dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty.

The FSLN, as it led the mass movement that overthrew Somoza, occupies a political space that no other political current can claim. The fact that the FSLN has for five years stimulated the advance of the revolutionary process has led to the birth of a powerful mass movement through a network of organisations identifying themselves as Sandinista.

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12. *Barricada*, September 15, 1984.
13. *Nuevo Diario*, August 2, 1984.
14. Election manifesto of MAP-ML, distributed in Managua.
15. *Pensamiento Propio*, February/March 1984.
16. *Barricada*, September 10, 1984.

Political and social life is not reducible to the recognised parties. The existence of a mass movement, almost completely led by the FSLN, and through which the process of self-organisation of the toiling masses is being expressed, should also be taken into account.

The national leadership of the FSLN is using the elections that it decided to hold to raise the level of political consciousness among the masses still more. It is not simply making Yankee imperialism the target, but also deliberately seeking a political confrontation with all the other currents, in particular those that want to block the revolutionary process by trying to turn the clock back towards the bourgeois order. The elections should make it possible 'to institutionalise the revolutionary process', which is their aim according to the national FSLN leadership.

This is not to say that the forms of representation and the participation of the people will be fixed for once and all by the assembly elected on November 4. The first point of the electoral programme published by the FSLN was titled *People's Power* and stated:

'The Sandinista Front undertakes to strengthen the power of the people and to maintain arms in the people's hands to support and defend this power. The Sandinista Front will guarantee that the unions of workers and rural workers, the organisations of neighbourhoods, women and young people, the unions of small- and medium-agricultural producers, of tradespeople and small industrialists, of journalists, of technicians and specialists, of intellectuals and artists, of religious groups, remain the unquenchable source of revolutionary power.' The future assembly, within which the FSLN will have a majority, and will have legislative and constitutional powers, and will act on the basis of these principles.'

The November 4 elections are the FSLN's response to the present stage of the revolutionary process. They will lead to a new phase in the transition that Nicaraguan society is presently experiencing, while the question of state power was successfully resolved five years ago. The celebration on July 19, 1984, of the fifth anniversary of the revolution's triumph, was the first public demonstration organised by the FSLN since its candidates were named. It drew 300,000 people, although only the inhabitants of the Managua region, which has a population of only about a million, were asked to attend. This example confirms that the FSLN's capacity to mobilise has remained intact, despite the increasing difficulties weighing on the country.

It is also a reminder that, at a time when Nicaragua is facing an increasingly clear danger of direct imperialist intervention, and given the distrust with which the bourgeois press internationally is treating the elections, it is a vital task for the international solidarity movement to throw all its forces into the defence of the Nicaraguan revolution. ■

Arthur Scargill addresses Labour Party conference (DR)

"A leadership that stands and fights"

Arthur Scargill speaks

'If it's contempt we're talking about, then I plead guilty. But the only contempt I've committed is to fight for my class.' These were the words of Arthur Scargill, president of the British National Union of Mineworkers — NUM, when served with a high court writ [instruction] during Labour Party conference at the beginning of October. The writ ordered Scargill to appear in court charged with contempt of a previous order which ruled that the miners' strike must not be described as 'official'. Two strike-breaking miners had brought the original action which claimed that the rules of the union had been broken by the refusal to call a ballot. The union leadership claimed that a delegate conference was sufficient to make the strike official.

The miners have made it plain that they will not be starved into submission. The use of the courts is a sign of the weakness of the government and the establishment.

Arthur Scargill and the miners' union are now threatened with massive fines for continuing to disobey the court ruling and declaring the strike official. If the money is not paid, the union's assets will be seized.

This is a crucial time for the seven-month-old strike and now, more than ever, the backing of the entire labour movement will be needed to prevent the seizure of the union's assets and the attack on trade-union rights which it signifies.

Arthur Scargill spoke to a Labour Briefing (1) fringe meeting at Labour Party conference, shortly after the writ had been served, expressing the defiance and determination of the union and its supporters around the country. Here we reprint a major part of his speech.

Chairman, colleagues,

I must confess that last night must have been a worrying time for some people, listening to that worker Lord Denning [a now-retired leading judge] giving forth on television when he said: 'It will have to be the use of the law against these trade unionists.'

And of course we've got a whole series of unelected judges dispensing not justice but class law against our people who are involved in a struggle to maintain jobs, and to maintain the communities in which they live.

There's been a gauntlet thrown down. That gauntlet is being picked up. The miners' union has been told after seven months of official strike action that the strike is no longer legal or official. What utter nonsense!

In 1981 there was an unofficial strike of the miners' union and the president of the union was Joe Gormley. There was

1. *Labour Briefing* is a journal in the Labour Party which organises sections of the left wing. It is sponsored by, among others, *Socialist Action*, a revolutionary Marxist newspaper.

no action at that time, no suggestion that there should have been a ballot.

I understand from reports on the media that the High Court today has been hearing an action brought against the National Union of Mineworkers, and the NUM President, seeking the sequestration of the union's funds and seeking to commit the president of the NUM to Pentonville prison.

We're also advised by reports in the media that the case has been adjourned allegedly in order that the union and its president can reconsider the position. In order to get clarity that we were aware of the decision of the High Court I thought we'd made our position clear. But if there's any ambiguity or any doubt on the part of the BBC or ITV [the main television stations], then in order to dispel it let's specifically state the union's position.

The national executive committee of the NUM meeting on Monday October 1, 1984 were told that a writ had been issued against the NUM. Following a full discussion the national executive committee unamimously agreed the following steps.

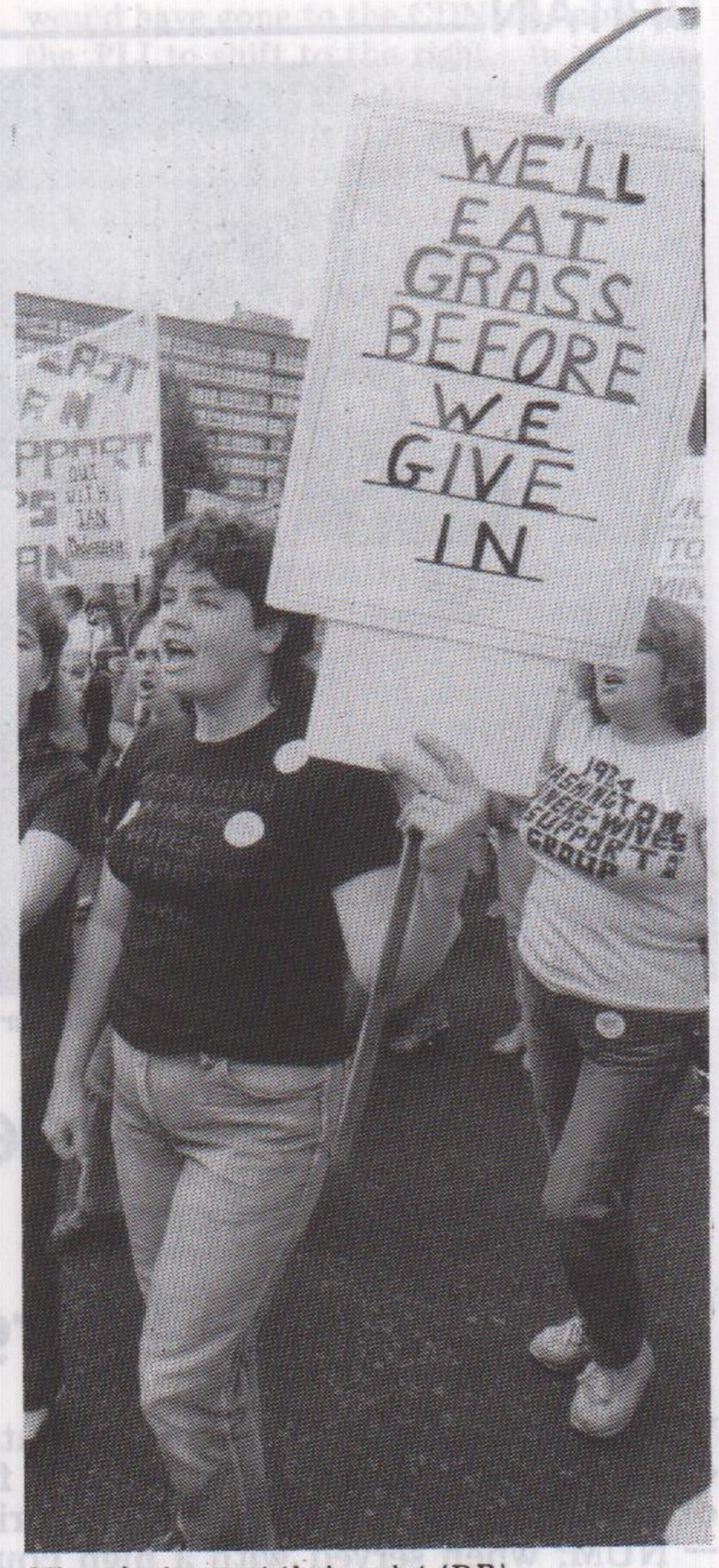
One, to fully endorse and support the views and comments expressed by the national president during the interview on Channel 4 news on Friday, September 28. (2)

Two, irrespective of the High Court decision, the executive unanimously reaffirmed its determination to continue to deal with the mineworkers' internal affairs in accordance with the rules and constitution of the NUM — as befits an independent and free trade union.

Three, to reaffirm as official the strike action in the British coalfields, including Yorkshire and Derbyshire, which has been sanctioned in accordance with national Rule No 41 by a national delegate conference — the governing body of our union which gives instructions to all members of the national executive including the national officials, the president, the general secretary and the vice president.

I want to make it clear the NUM will continue to do all in its power to win support for the miners' official strike in order to force the Coal Board back to the negotiating table. This dispute can only be resolved provided the pit closure programme announced by the National Coal Board [NCB] on March 6, is withdrawn, pits currently threatened with closure are kept open, and the Coal Board honours the Plan for Coal signed by the government, the National Coal Board and the trade unions. (3) They must withdraw their insistence that pits should be closed on economic grounds, which is a clear violation of the Plan for Coal.

I'm not someone who wishes to go to Pentonville prison. I'm not someone who relishes the thought of being committed in that way. But I want to make it absolutely clear that if the choice facing me — and I would hope facing any other responsible trade-union leader — is to be committed by a high court to Pentonville or any other jail for standing by this trade union or our class, or alternatively having to live with the imprisonment of one's mind for betraying one's class, then there is no choice as far as I'm concerned. I stand by my class.



Miners' wives put their point (DR)

There seems to be a blind spot on the part of the judiciary, the government and the Coal Board. The miners' union did not go out on strike on Friday, we've been on strike for seven months. We've suffered appalling hardship during the space of that time. We've come too far, we've suffered too much, for there to be any compromise.

On the basis of the NCB official figures of the 43,141 miners made redundant over the past two years, only 72 (only two per cent) have found alternative work. It's nonsense to suggest that miners would be in a position to have an alternative job, particularly with four and a half million people unemployed.

The figures show quite clearly that for one miner to be made redundant, with all the factors to be taken into consideration, such as the redundancy payments scheme, the loss of tax, the state benefits, the unemployment benefit for his son or daughter who cannot have a job, the total cost at the end of seven years is over £91,000. To keep that person employed, to keep that job available for his son or his daughter as well, would only cost £48,000.

It doesn't make economic sense, let alone social, political or moral sense, to create redundancy in this or any other industry.

The cost of the strike described by Neil Kinnock [leader of the Labour Party] in his speech on Tuesday as approximately £2 billion, has been made to look infinitesimal according to the study by Andrew Glyn for the NUM. By September, irrespective of what Nigel Lawson [finance minister] has said, £3.5 billion has been the cost to the British taxpayers of this damaging and costly dispute. There has been £2.3 billion or more in lost production. Fifty four million tons of coal have been lost in the space of this dispute.

The Coal Board claim they wanted to take only four million tons of capacity out of this industry. They wanted to bring supply in line with demand — the capitalists' maxim of the market concept.

Even if one were to accept this approach, rather than the social and sensible one of the NUM, even on *that* basis the current dispute with the Board, and the fact that they are now prolonging it — with the government aiding and abetting them — does not make sense.

They've got 14 times the capacity reduction that they themselves claim they required. They themselves suggested they wanted a total coal output by 1989 of 497 million tons. That programme would have included pit closure, a programme of about 70 pits and 70,000 jobs.

The Coal Board themselves now concede that due to five million tons of lost production, the maximum coal output that they can achieve in the next five years, by 1989, is no longer 497 million tons. It is only 480 million tons. And *that* can only be achieved with not one single pit closure on any count.

We are entitled to ask therefore why have the government and the NCB still determined to press ahead with their proposals announced in March of this year? I'll tell you why. It is not about closing a few pits, it goes to the very heart of the economic philosophy of this government.

You can either choose the balance sheet mentality of this government — of producing a political and economic solution that considers profits rather than people — or you can accept the social and sensible approach from the NUM and the labour and trade-union movement that puts at the very centre of its argument the benefit of human beings rather than statistics in the balance sheet of the Coal Board or the balance sheet mentality of Ian MacGregor [chairperson of the Coal Board].

They can tell us there is insufficient money for investment, but then they

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2. It was in this television news programme that Scargill reasserted that the strike was official in defiance of the high court ruling issued that day.
3. The Plan for Coal was drawn up first in 1974 and revised in 1977. It was an agreement between the unions, the National Coal Board and the government to radically increase coal production.

should stop the cruise and Trident missiles programme.

This fellow MacGregor, he really takes the biscuit. I remember during the negotiations, one Saturday evening, Mick McGahey [Scottish NUM leader], Peter Heathfield [NUM General Secretary] and I thought we were on our way to settlement. We'd reached a point where we thought seriously that the Board were going to concede, and we adjourned for the night.

We began to drink a cup of tea in the Coal Board office. Mick McGahey says to MacGregor: 'I went to the Soviet Union in 1954 and the pits had been devastated, but development was their aim, and the people were regarded as the most important thing. Today the industry has been developed in a most unbelievable way.'

MacGregor says: 'You known, Michael, I was there in 1956, and I agree with you. Those Russians have done a great job. Not as well as I would have liked, but pretty good, pretty good.'

Peter Heathfield then says: 'I'll tell you what, I went to China. The Chinese have got coal where previously there were only paddy fields. Terrific. Marvellous.'

And MacGregor says: 'You know, Peter, I too have been to China. And those Chinese are doing better than those Russians.'

And I thought, I'm not going to be left out of this. 'Do you know the country I think's the best I've seen? Cuba. Do you know,' I said, 'I've visited the mines in Cuba, in the Oriente province, and to compare those mines today, under the socialist system, with the divisions and the problems they had under the private owners before the revolution was fantastic. Did you ever see them?'

There was then what's called a pregnant pause. And finally it wasn't 'Michael' or 'Peter'. 'Mr Scargill I was the owner,' says MacGregor. And he said: 'Your friend Castro, Fidel Castro, took them off me.'

McGahey says: 'That's buggered it.' And MacGregor changed his mind next day.

What kind of a head of the National Coal Board is it who has no concept of the British labour and trade-union movement? A man who, in the USA, was head of a mining company which was quite openly in association with the development of mines that employed non-union labour. I have no doubt that this will be the kind of policy and philosophy which he will attempt to pursue here in Britain today.

The miners' union today are fighting for their jobs. They're fighting for their communities. They're fighting for a way of life, for a culture.

Someone said to me 'do you believe the resolve of miners is beginning to weaken?' But there is one phenomenon over all others which in this dispute has made mineworkers absolutely determined to win. The involvement of women.

I went to a meeting in South Wales, and in the course of that meeting one woman got up and said: 'We want to make it clear no matter what anyone says it's no longer a question of whether the miners feel that this or that can be negotiated. You're not negotiating for the future of your pits, you're negotiating for the future of our livelihood, our communities. No compromise. You'll not resolve this until the Board withdraw their pit closure programme.'

I don't know what's going to happen. I do know that since the announcement of the writ being issued on Monday there has been the full meeting of the NUM executive committee. It declared that its intention is to continue to declare this strike official.

And the Yorkshire area NUM council have also unanimously agreed that the strike must continue to be declared official. They too are refusing to accept a decision of the High Court....

Make no mistake, this national executive of the NUM is not prepared to betray its members. Often in the past workers and trade-union members have pointed to leaders and said: 'They sold us out. They betrayed us. They said one thing before they were elected and another thing once they got their nice job as a full-time trade-union leader.'

When I campaigned for the job of national president of my union I made clear that if the members of the NUM wanted a president who was intent on becoming a lord, then don't vote for me. I said it was more important not to prostitute one's principles, or to compromise the policies of the national conference of my union than to have a seat in the House of Lords. I gave a pledge that throughout my trade-union career I would do everything I could to take forward the aims and aspirations of the members of my union....

We are facing a crunch. We are facing a governi ent that is becoming increasingly fearfu nd angry. And the twin effects of anger and fear are showing themselves in the wild hysteria of their attacks upon our class and in their attacks upon this union.

It's no accident that thousands of police have been drafted in from all over to turn our villages into places where people can't enter without a passport. If people don't understand, they should go and have a look.

We've had public service buses turned back on the public highway because 10 miners pickets have been on board. We've had football teams turned back because they might have been pickets in disguise. We've had people arrested while they were travelling to court. Civil liberties and human rights are systematically being dismantled.

Those of us who do not take warning at what is taking place will do so at our peril. They've come today for the National Union of Mineworkers, and they'll come tomorrow for the rest of the movement.

We are going to resist with all the power we can muster. And if that means that we have to suffer, if I am sent to jail, that is something we will have to accept. We will accept the consequences of our actions because it is more important to stand by one's class, and to stand by one's members, than to cave in and accept the decisions either of an unelected judge, or the diktat of a government that can't even spell the word democracy.

Over the next period we're going to be involved in possibly the most major confrontation that we have witnessed. We're now facing the full might of the judiciary. We've got so many writs we could paper two rooms the size of this one with them.

We've got the South Wales area that's had all their funds sequestrated. We've got an action against the South Wales NUM, North Wales area, Durham area, Yorkshire area, Lancashire area. We've had actions pursued against the Scottish miners. And no doubt writs to come against all the other sections that are involved in this historic dispute.

There are two options available. We can either accept the imposition of the organised might of the state. Or we can stand firmly by the policies not merely of our union but the policies of the Trade Union Congress, and the policies of this party.

Let me remind you that the TUC are on record demanding that there should be no loss of jobs. This party is on record arguing against redundancies. The TUC is on record arguing against the anti-trade-union legislation in all its forms. And so is our party.

Now is the time to turn those words into deeds.

I speak not for myself. I am not speaking for the executive of the miners' union. I believe that I'm speaking for the entire trade-union and labour movement when I say that there is an obligation on each and every one of you to stand up and be counted.

Time and time again people have said we need leadership. If we had proper leadership, we could win. Well, you've got leadership. Leadership that is prepared to stand and fight, whatever the consequences. Comrades, given that leadership, we too have the right to demand your support.

Given that support we are invincible. ■

Papandreou talks peace, but steps up arms race

Having risen to power on a wave of anger against Washington and Nato, the backers of the hated dictatorship of the colonels, the PASOK government of Andreas Papandreou has distinguished itself by statements denouncing Reagan's step-up of the arms race and his threats aimed at the Soviet Union.

The following article from the September issue of *Ergatike Pale*, the paper of the Greek section of the Fourth International, indicates that PASOK's nationalism has another side besides the conflict with Nato, one that makes the whole operation fundamentally contradictory.

It is not clear yet exactly what arms deal the Greek government has made. But *Ergatike Pale* points up some of the main lines of PASOK's armament policy. The article has been somewhat abridged.

The celebrated "buy" of the century seems finally about to be concluded. The government says that negotiations will be concluded before October 1 for the purchase of the Mirage-2000, F-16 and F-18 warplanes.

This deal involves not only airplanes. A whole superarmament program is being set in motion. As the deputy minister of defense, Antoni Drosogiannis has said, "the arms program covers all three services, and so, following the decision to buy these ultramodern aircraft, it is now the turn of the land forces and the navy."

"Therefore," he went on to say, "orders will be placed this year for tanks, military helicopters, warships and anti-aircraft weapons — mainly missiles."

Drosogiannis continued: "The extent of the modernization of the land forces and the navy will depend on the total expenditure for arms approved by the Ministry of the Economy. You see, the price of independence is extremely high, and such choices have definite effects on our national economy. Thus, despite everything, these programs cannot be integrated into our five-year program for economic development."

What this program of new superarmament of the land forces and the navy involves is not yet known (nor do we believe that it will be in its full extent). Nonetheless, military circles indicate that a hundred to two hundred tanks will be bought (M-60s, Leopard-2s and AMXs, each of which costs hundreds of millions of drachmas). (1)

For the first time, about eight military helicopters are to be purchased (Cobras and Apaches), each of which costs about 120 million drachmas. Also to be purchased are warships, in two stages. The first calls for buying five, and the second, ten. Each of these will cost about 100 million dollars. To all of this, you have to add the missiles that are soon to be bought — 300 Super Sidewinders (air-to-air missiles) about a thousand Mavericks (air-to-ground missiles), for a total cost of 31 million dollars.

Virtually the only industries that are blooming in Greece are those that produce arms. The contributions these industries have made to capital are enormous. First of all the Hellenike Biomekhania Oplon (EBO — the Greek Arms Industry) made a clear profit of 1,116 million drachmas in 1983. It should be noted, moreover, that about 71% of EBO's total sales are exports and they bring in about 80% of its net profit.

In fact, the EBO is not the only military industry. There is also the Pyrkal, the Hellenike Aeroporike Biomechania (Greek Airplane Industry), and Stagier, which makes heavy vehicles and tanks. And this is not counting the subsidiary concerns.

Incredible as it may seem, Greece has a higher level of military spending than any country in Nato in comparison with the Gross National Product (7.1%). It is higher even than that of the USA, Great Britain, France and Turkey.

Table 1

Military Appropriations as a % of GNP

Greece	7.1
US	6.9
Britain	5.6
France	4.2
Turkey	4.9

Moreover, Greece is first in another respect. It has the highest percentage of its working population in the armed services.

Table 2

Total Number in the Armed Services as % of the Economically Active Population

Greece	5.7
US	2.9
Britain	2.1
France	3.1
Turkey	4.6

As can easily be imagined, these arms purchases amount to billions of dollars. The total seems to be around 15 billion. The PASOK government has not given any official figures. There have only been "leaks," which continually lead to revising the estimate upward.

We have gone from reports that talked about 1.5 billion dollars to reach the estimated figure of 15 billion today, if that is the real figure. What the PASOK government is trying to do is (1) fool public opinion and (2) get it used to the "buy of the century" gradually through "leaks."

Billions of dollars are being spent recklessly for superarmament that has absolutely no value. At the same time, the government claims that every extra drachma the workers demand in raises endangers the national economy and upsets the government's incomes policy.

Perhaps some comparisons will give a better idea of the extent of this swindle. The aircraft alone cost 1.2 trillion drachmas, while the estimated cost of building the subway is 30 billion drachmas and the estimated cost of building the projected metallurgical complex in Chalkis for producing molybdenum, zinc, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, and so forth is 25 billion drachmas. For the cost of one airplane we could build a whole modern hospital.

A "jet-assisted" economy?

The premier and the various ministers in his government have continually stressed that these arms purchases are well planned and regulated. "We are the only government that has pushed aside the middlemen," trumpeted government spokesperson Demetrio Maroudas. 'We are the only government that has integrated arms spending into a five-year plan for development," his boss, Papandreou, declared.

From on high, they continually insult our intelligence. So, to top it all off, we learn that "with this buy of the century, all Greece will become a giant workshop...the F-16s and Mirage -2000s will boost the Greek economy to takeoff velocity. We are supposedly going to make enormous profits from the "compensatory contributions of various companies," as well as investment, increased exports, the importing of new technologies and so on. On the other hand, we will be paying for this in installments at least up to 2012. Moreover, they are, as one minister said recently, paying more for these new arms than the "rent for the American bases."

However, there is yet another trap in this matter. Premier Andreas Papandreou has said: "We cannot achieve democracy or socialism while we are under constant threat [from the Turks]."

Such statements and others like them are dropping freely from official lips.

1. About 6,700 million dollars.

This point, being obvious, has no significance in itself. But it serves to justify certain things.

The government and its various scribes have set out to convince us that although we have to pay the steep price of 15 billion dollars for all these weapons systems, at least it will enable us to rest easy for twenty years at a minimum. Nothing is more false than this.

First of all, even if one assumes that by buying all these weapons Greece is today gaining superiority over Turkey, nothing prevents the latter from turning the tables by buying more up-to-date weapons themselves. If that happens, then Greece will have to buy still more weapons. Secondly, all the weapons the Greek government is buying, and this is especially true for some of the most recent ones, have an offensive character and by no means a defensive one.

Moreover, as has been explained — very cautiously to be sure — by various scribblers at the service of PASOK, the present-day rule of military strategy (and not just in Greece) is not defensive war or the occupation of land (which seems to be more or less impossible in our case) but long-term destruction of the enemy's economy.

Thirdly, it is not at all true that we can "rest easy" with so many weapons of such types in the hands of the military. Moreover, it is not just this that is disturbing but the strength that is thereby acquired by the main repressive force of the bourgeois state and the ability it gains to make itself physically independent. It is not just the experience of this country not so long ago that makes us nervous on this score. The class war itself makes this dangerous, as history has shown.

Some circles are not oriented especially toward PASOK or the right but are concerned more generally with the interests of the bourgeoisie. They are discussing a full "modernization" of the army and the problem of the army's human material. What these people are saying is much more far reaching.

Such weapons cannot be used by just anyone, they say, they need specially trained men serving for many years, at least five. That is, this new armament requires an army that would include larger numbers of professional and semi-professional soldiers.

In this connection, it is worth quoting a few sections from the article by Ch. K. Bousbourelis, which was published in *To Vema* [the "serious" rightist daily] on August 26:

"We are going to have to free ourselves from certain hangups and rhetoric about Praetorian Guards and such things. Because technological advances demand many more professional noncommissioned officers and five-year volunteer soldiers than in the past. The airforce, the navy and various units of the army will have to be made up primarily of long-service volunteers. How to attract the youth to the military profession is something that the specialists are going to have to study.

"We will have to accept the fact also that we are threatened and that we will have to prepare from a tender age to defend ourselves. We must also accept the fact that girls, who are developing an independent identity, will have to replace their brothers in the backup services, in the public services and in communications."

Mr. Bousbourelis is swept along by the daring of his thought. "We will need to do a lot of planning and a lot of work, and a lot of study to arrive at a system where boys and girls will get three weeks training and then only the boys will get special training of three months at age 18 with two-week refresher courses every year in the same unit, with the same officers and the same comrades up to age 35, so that these units can be operational within five hours."

This sort of thing is clear enough without comment. We might only remark that Bousbourelis is the sort that might be expected to express aversion for totalitarianism and militarist societies on every opportunity, and especially this year, the year of Orwell.

Reject PASOK's chauvinism

The PASOK government has made no bones about the fact that its plan will demand a lot of sacrifices, that we will have to accept a reduction of our standard of living to pay for all these new weapons systems. This means still more austerity for the working people, so that billions of dollars can be burned on the altar of war.

No, we reject this logic. We state categorically that there is nothing to separate us from the Turkish working people. Every drachma that goes into weapons both here and there not only helps to poison the relations between our two peoples but condemns them to economic backwardness, poverty and destitution.

We do not see this rivalry, this race for military superiority, leading to economic development. The reverse will be the result.

At the beginning, the hysterical chauvinism of the PASOK was only words. Now it is starting to take on material expression — continual arming, continual changes in the structures of the army that reinforce its militaristic features. What does this government of arms, above everything else, hold in store for us?

It is important, moreover, to expose the Papandreou government's false pretences of being for policies to promote peace, as exemplified by Papandreou's various initiatives on the Pershing II and Cruise, for the abolition of atomic weapons, for a Nuclear-Free Balkans, and so forth.

There is no greater hypocrisy than to make proposals for disarmament and at the same time to plunge yourself into a mad arms race. Not only is the difference between nuclear and conventional weapons only a quantitative one, but conventional weapons can be adapted for nuclear war in a short time and vice versa. We reject the attempts to make an absolute distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons. Because they do this, we consider the reformists of the two Communist parties accomplices of PASOK and Papandreou.

Moreover, the policy of the reformist CPs is not only criminal in this respect. Basically they are caught up in a logic that does not differ much from the PASOK in that they accept the view of Turkey as the aggressor.

The CP (Interior) can always be heard saying that there must be "open negotiations." In every other respect, it accepts not only the ideological and political basis of the government's arming but its tactical aspect also, namely that it is necessary to modernize the armed forces.

It is true that the CP (Exterior) has taken a different position, and that at least verbally it has come out in opposition to the "buy of the century." But it is also true that their verbal opposition is severly undermined and put in question by its acceptance of the ideological and political cover used by the Greek bourgeoisie and the PASOK government, that is, the idea of Turkey's "aggressiveness," of "Turkish expansionism."

The workers and the popular masses have to fight against giving up one drachma for military spending, to abolish all military appropriations, and in their place to start up a program of public works, schools, hospitals and housing for working people.

We have to combat every sort of chauvinist hysteria and the militarism that the bourgeoisie and PASOK want to impose on the entire society. Against this, we have to develop a profound internationalist solidarity between the workers of Greece and Turkey as the basic condition for freeing them from the economic morass in which they are trapped, from the poverty and destitution to which their ruling classes have condemned them. We must also do this to defend their lives, because there is a real danger of a military clash.

We have to fight every form of militarism as a real threat to democratic, trade-union and civil liberties of the workers and as a source of totalitarianism.

We have to develop a spirit of real antimilitarism, especially among the workers. We have to help build a movement both inside of and outside of the army. We have to strive to extend soldiers committees for democratic and trade-union freedoms in the army.

We have to show that it is not a wicked, expansionist Turkey that creates the threat of war, but the capitalist system itself and the ruling classes of both Greece and Turkey. We Greek workers must fight for unilateral disarmament, for internationalist solidarity among the exploited masses of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, for socialism. ■

WEST GERMANY

Balance sheet of the fight for the 35-hour week

Hans Mayr, chairperson of the Executive Board of IG Metall, talked about a "brilliant historic achievement" by his union. "The door leading to the 35-hour week has been broken down." Wolfram Thiele, president of the Engineering Industry Association (Gesamtmetall) was quick to contradict him: "No, this agreement is not the gateway to the 35-hour week but the exit from a general shortening of the workweek."

Heiner Geissler, a minister in the ruling right-wing coalition of liberals and Christian Democrats rushed to back up his industrialist friend, summing up the results of the struggle for the unions as "barren and harmful." Along with showing satisfaction that their right-wing comrade, Georg Leber, was able to end the strike with his compromise proposal, Social Democratic politicians have also let it be known that they hope that, despite mass unemployment and a reactionary austerity policy, it will be possible to achieve a new and lasting understanding between unions and the bosses in the tradition of West German "social partnership."

The section of the "left," that did not want to know about this struggle, and when it did get underway, contrary to expectations, saw it as "predestined" for failure, now consider that their dire predictions have been confirmed. For example, the former factory-council member, who belonged to the "Plakat" group at Daimler Benz in Stuttgart, which was expelled from the IG Metall, Willy Hoss, who now sits in the national parliament as a deputy for the Greens, said: "The strike produced zero result. The workers were called upon to make a lot of useless sacrifices."

What is the real balance sheet of the strikes for the 35-hour week? There is no simple answer. Unquestionably, the West German unions have risen out of the torpor in which they seemed to have sunk in recent years. But all of their weaknesses were also highlighted. To be sure, the unions managed to force the bosses and the government to retreat, to accept a reduction of the workweek below forty hours (38 hours in the steel industry). Nonetheless, the bosses are satisfied with the compromise proposal made by the former chairperson of the building workers union (Industriegewerkschaft Bau, Steine, Erden), Georg Leber. In fact, it puts an end to a regular workday and workweek for all and transfers a part of the unions' negotiating power to the factory councils, which work within narrow legal limits and which in many big concerns are involved in "loyal collaboration" with the management, more concerned about the welfare of the factory as such than the objectives of the union.*

Peter BARTELHEIMER

There is no question but that the strike action waged by the IG Metall and the IG Druck und Papier (IG Dru-Pa, the printers' union) for a shorter workweek was the most important official strike action in West Germany since the 1950s. It was the first big strike in general since the steelworkers' strike for the 35-hour week in the winter of 1978-1979. Throughout the country, it involved a million and a half persons if you add up the number of strikers, workers locked out, and workers laid off because of plant shutdowns. Lasting more than six weeks (13 weeks in the printing industry), it was the longest strike since the 114-day-long defensive strike by IG Metall in Schleswig Holstein in 1956-1957.

For the first time, IG Metall conducted a strike in two districts simultaneously. For the first time, two member organizations of the German Confederation of Unions (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) fought a concerted struggle for a common goal, and were supported by other industrial unions. For the first time since the end of 1982, when the right coalition that ousted the Social Democrats from government proclaimed a social and political "Turn" modelled on the policies of Reagan and Thatcher, the unions have put up a fight against this government, which in the conflict intervened directly on the side of the bosses.

In the course of the strike, two clearly distinct phases can be distinguished, which were separated by the biggest political mobilization of this struggle, the demonstration of 200,000 workers in Bonn on May 28. In the first phase, as a result of the confrontation course of the bosses and the government, the struggle was extended and sharpened day by day. In the second phase, the union leaderships' attempts to limit the conflict threatened to push the unions into a dangerous defeat. This peril was avoided, but the chance for a solid and clear victory was also lost.

In March, the bosses and the government were still certain that the IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa leaderships had overreached themselves in raising the demand for a 35-hour week with no cut in pay. These unions were believed to have been too much weakened by more than ten years of employment running into the millions and an open split in the DGB to undertake a strike for such a goal.

The capitalists and their political friends relied on the results of an opinion poll they carried out, which showed that a majority of union members considered the 35-hour week as an unrealistic goal. This determined the way they dealt with the union representatives. "Not a minute less than forty hours," was the shout that came from Gesamtmetall. This was immediately echoed by the cabinet. "Absurd, crazy, stupid," was Chancellor Kohl's comment on the demand. "It would make even a chicken laugh," sneered the economics minister at the time, Count Lambsdorff.

On March 12, warning strikes began in the engineering industry throughout the country. Nearly 300,000 engineering workers took part in the April 5 and 6 days of action in northern and southern Germany. While the IG Metall leadership dragged out the warning strikes, wait-

ing for two sterile central discussions with Gesamtmetall to produce something (in the engineering industry as in most others, the real negotiations are conducted regionally), the small IG Dru-Pa, with 140,000 members took the leadership of the movement. On April 12, it began one-day strikes, holding strike referenda at the same time in the individual plants.

(In the fall of 1983, the IG Dru-Pa Congress changed the union statutes enabling the individual factory organizations to call strikes, even without a strike vote, and to hold strike votes just in the shops concerned, rather than having to do it in all the shops in the industry at the same time.) The printers' union upset the expectations of the capitalists that there would not be a strike. Up to May 3, IG Dru-Pa members in nearly 200 shops voted overall by 81% for a strike.

A "flexible strike tactic"

In the following weeks, the IG Dru-Pa leadership applied a "flexible strike tactic." Every day, new printing plants went on one-day strikes, and later for longer periods. This was designed to prevent a countrywide lockout by the bosses, of the type that pushed the union to the brink of bankruptcy in the last printers' strikes in 1976 and 1978. In fact, the West German unions are obliged by their statutes to pay strike pay equivalent to 70% of net wages to striking *and* locked-out workers. (1) And the small and weak IG Dru-Pa could not manage a general strike. Indeed, even the biggest and richest union IG Metall, with its 2.5 million members, could only pay the cost of a general strike for one week.

At the beginning of May, the leadership of IG Metall held strike votes in two bargaining districts —Nordwuerttemberg/Nordbaden (Stuttgart region) and Hessen (Frankfurt region). In both districts, more than 80% of the membership voted to strike. The IG Metall also opted for a strike tactic that involved only a small number of its members in the struggle, but in ways designed to have the maximum economic effect.

On May 14, in the Stuttgart area, around 13,000 workers in 14 plants downed tools. Strikes were focused on stopping production of important parts for the auto industry. When IG Dru-Pa was calling 10,000 workers out on strike every day, at first without the agreement of the IG Metall leadership, the Daimler Benz main plant in Sindelfingen near Stuttgart went on strike May 16. On May 21, for the first time in 33 years, there was a strike in the Hessen engineering industry, including the Ruesselsheimer works of the Opel concern. On May 23, the DGB in Baden Wuerttemberg called on all the membership to stage a solidarity strike for a few hours. The spector of a general strike began to be invoked in the pages of the press.

While the solidarity strike in the Stuttgart area got only weak support because of lack of preparation, the bosses and the government were trying to make the regional selective strikes by the IG Metall into a countrywide general strike. To this end, they used the weapon of the lockout, which nowhere else has been so massively employed as in West Germany, where it was used in a new and unprecedented way.

Officially, Gesamtmetall locked out workers only in the struck regions, and even there "only" 90,000 workers (and no white-collar workers) in plants with over 2,000 personnel. At the same time, however, in an action that had been clearly planned in advance, all the auto plants in the Federal Republic and most of the parts plants announced shutdowns. The management explained that the IG Metall strike in the Stuttgart area had made it economically unviable to keep their personnel at work.

At the direction of the federal government, the president of the Unemployment Insurance, Franke, announced that the local Labor Offices could not pay the workers concerned the benefits provided for such cases, because the Unemployment Insurance system had to remain "neutral" with respect to the indirect effects of the strike.

The IG Metall suddenly found itself trapped by its own strike tactic. On the first day of the strikes, the Springer combine's *Bild Zeitung* already ran the headline, "Another 500,000 Unemployed Soon? Germany Without Cars!" As the strikes progressed, there came to be 65,000 strikers, as against 120,000 officially locked-out workers and nearly 375,000 workers laid off by "cold lockouts." According to the union statutes, the victims of the plant shutdowns had no claim for compensation from the union, but the Labor Offices did not pay either.

The bosses hoped that these workers would direct their anger and anxiety about being able to survive against their own organization and thereby force the IG Metall to its knees. At the same time, the engineering industrialists gained the initiative. They decided in what plants and in what divisions work would go on and where production would be brought to a halt.

Thus, for example, in the auto industry, and often with the agreement of the IG Metall factory councillors, work on the new fall models was continued day and night in the research and development divisions. Profitable and particularly sensitive divisions, such as sales, marketing and administration also continued working.

In July, under the pressure of the workers, the IG Dru-Pa widened the action, insofar as its strike tactic allowed. But at the same time, in July, IG Metall was not able to come up with an answer to the lockout. The strike became stalled. After this, the relationship of forces did not shift decisively in favor of the union.

It was not the strike front in the factories that was responsible for this impasse. On this front at the end of May and during June the struggle took more and more effective and more and more radical forms. In many plants, the factory councils and workers tried to put up effective resistance to the lockout.

An example is in the plant that makes filters for the auto industry, Filter-Knecht in Lorch (Wuerttemberg). There, as soon as it became clear that the management intended to send 80% of the workers home on May 28, the factory council worked out a twenty-point plan for continuing production. On Monday morning, the workers marched determinedly into the plant and tried to begin work. The management shut off the machines. The workers declared the plant occupied.

Two days later, the Filter-Knecht workers were preparing an enthusiastic reception for two representatives of the striking British miners. The next week, the occupation in Lorch was ended after a long weekend, because the IG Metall leadership made it clear that they disapproved of the action. In a whole series of factories, especially in the Stuttgart area, locked out workers went into their factories, demonstrated on the shop floor and "visited" their workplaces.

When Gesamtmetall announced further lockouts for June 18, occupations were in the air. The predominantly Turkish and Kurdish workforce at the Esslinger works of the SEL electrical goods company got the jump on the lockout by going on strike spontaneously on June 15 without the approval of the strike leadership.

Factory occupations

The workforce at Werner & Pfleiderer in Dinkelsbuehl near Stuttgart went into work on June 18 with blankets and mattresses and prepared for a long stay. Their action was a thundering success. Out of fear of a factory occupation, the management backed off its decision to stage a lockout that very day. In many other factories, the local union officials prepared for occupations that did not come off only because of the negative attitude of the Frankfurt IG Metall tops. At the same time, union members and officials in other districts, especially Nordrhein-Westfalen and Hamburg, were demanding that the IG Metall leadership

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1. In my article in the May 21 issue of *International Viewpoint* on the 35-hour-week fight, the translator misinterpreted the source of the obligation to get a 75% majority for the strike. It is not the law that imposes this but the union statutes. Thus, the union congress can alter this requirement. On the basis of the most recent experience, active trade unionists are discussing in particular the following changes:
   — In the future to declare a strike 75% of the votes cast should be enough (instead of 75% of the entire membership as previously).
   — Strike votes and strikes should be possible in the future in individual plants.
   — The decision on accepting a settlement or continuing a strike should be able to be adopted by a simple majority (up until now the agreement of 25% of the membership has been sufficient, whether or not they were involved in the strike, to get a settlement accepted and a strike ended.)

hold strike votes, so that they could respond to the factory shutdowns with their own forms of struggle.

After the success of the March on Bonn, which was IG Metall's attempt on May 28 to respond to the government's support for Gesamtmetall's lockout tactic, the conditions for extending the strike were more favorable than ever. In the Bonner Hofgarten, 200,000 workers at the biggest union demonstration in the history of West Germany, demanded at the top of their lungs that Chancellor Kohl himself accept early retirement, which was what the regime was offering the workers as an alternative to the 35-hour week. (According to a law passed shortly before the start of the strike, the government was to give financial backing to a plan for retirement at age 58 with 65% of the last gross wage.)

To general enthusiasm, the DGB chairperson Ernst Breit declared in Bonn that a countrywide solidarity strike was possible. The initiative of the workers in the engineering industry showed the way for an effective fightback against the lockout — holding strike referenda in all regions hit by shutdowns, striking partially shutdown plants, factory occupations.

However, in this phase of the struggle, the IG Metall leadership dug its heels in against any such actions. Even the strike in the Sindelfingen Daimler-Benz works ran up against the disapproval of the leadership. Further "spontaneous" action was forbidden.

While Gesamtmetall was threatening to break off all negotiations and the threat loomed of a "breakdown of collective bargaining" in the engineering industry, the IG Metall chairperson, Hans Mayr, was preparing a compromise solution behind the scenes. He called the SPD politician Georg Leber back from his vacation in Italy and proposed him as a political mediator.

The deal that Leber made was accepted by the IG Metall, and at the beginning of July also applied to the printing industry. It called for a 38.5-hour week with "flexible work hours." Despite indignation among the strikers, more than 50% of the IG Metall membership voted in the referendum for accepting this settlement. On July 3 in Stuttgart, and a few days later in Frankfurt, the strikers went back to work.

The result is far less favorable for the unions than might appear at first glance. It is positive that after March 1, 1985, the workweek will be lowered below forty hours and that at that time also all workers will get a compensatory wage increase of 3.9%. On the negative side, the IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa have to make do with a wage increase of 3.3% on July 1, 1984, and a further 2% raise on March 1, 1985.

Particularly negative was the acceptance of the principle that henceforth in the engineering industry the workweek is to be reckoned as an average. As long as the average workweek for the workforce in a factory is 38.5 hours, a part of the workers might work 37 hours, another

Duisburg steel workers say 'No compromise'. (DR)

part 40 hours, and others somewhere in between. This divisive rule was avoided in the printing industry.

Moreover, the worktime of the individual workers can be apportioned irregularly over days and weeks. The limits of this "flexibility" are still a bone of contention between the unions and the bosses. The rule is only that the individual worktime has to average out to the official workweek over two months. The bosses interpret this as meaning that a worker might work 32 hours for two weeks, 36 hours for two weeks more, and then 41 to 45 hours, depending on the rhythm of production. Overtime and the extension of shift work were not limited by the contract.

Another negative feature is that no restrictions were placed on part-time work, which mainly involves women but also men in increasing numbers. In the future, more and more workers will be consigned to these insecure working conditions.

Finally, the reduction of working hours is to be implemented plant by plant on the basis of free-wheeling negotiations between the factory councils and the managements. It is left to each plant to decide whether the workday will be reduced by 18 minutes, as a lot of plants have already suggested, whether the workday is to be reduced to seven hours on Friday and every second Thursday, as a lot of active trade unionists propose, or whether the workers will get additional days off, or whether the workweek will be cut across the board to 38.5 hours for every one with no distinction, as the union demands.

Thus, it will depend on how the reduction is implemented in the plants whether the goal of the 35-hour week by the end of 1986, when the present contract runs out, will be a credible one and a live issue in the factories.

Above all, the settlement of a 38.5 hour average workweek failed to achieve the declared goal of the struggle, to create new jobs by a drastic reduction of the workweek and thereby to reduce the pressure of unemployment on the unions. And this is despite the fact that if the strike had been widened as late as June, the bosses and the government could have been forced to accept at least a plan for introducing the 35-hour week in stages. In this respect, the leaderships of IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier proved

to be trapped by their own logic, in that they measured the union's fighting strength not by the mobilization of its members but by its strike fund.

Above all, however, the decision not to widen the struggle was a political one. The IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa leaderships showed that while they were ready for a fight, they were not prepared to challenge the political and economic relationship of forces. Because extending the struggle involved the risk of a general confrontation with capital and a governmental crisis. And all the leading union officials shrank from this.

Moreover, looking at the material results is not sufficient to answer the question of whether the strike was "worth it." The material results show a defeat in the fight for the 35-hour week but a partial success for the union movement. In 1984, a year of important struggles for the workers movement in Western Europe, IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier were the first unions to take up the fight for an offensive — in essence anticapitalist — demand, and they won a partial success in a direct confrontation with a reactionary government directly tied to capital. Above all, this fight was not "in vain" and did not result in a "defeat" because it set the entire West German union movement in motion, because it posed a question for thousands and tens of thousands of activists that will be decisive for the coming struggles, and because the experience of struggle achieved in this campaign favors a militant turn in trade-union policy.

A political strike

The strike has shown that it is primarily the split in the ranks of the workers themselves and the lack of experience in waging trade-union and political battles that enabled the bosses and the government to pursue their austerity policy and their anti-union offensive. The DGB, as an umbrella organization, is split. A section of its member unions accepted the offer by the bosses and the government of early retirement at age 58. And *at the very time* that IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa were striking, they reaffirmed the forty-hour week up till 1988.

Indeed, even in the engineering and printing industries a lot of union members still have to be convinced through further actions and struggles of the justification for offensive demands incompatible with the market economy, such as a radical reduction of the workweek.

The use of the means of trade-union struggle against the government is no longer taboo. This was a political strike, and it was understood by those who took part in it in the factories as a struggle against the Kohl cabinet. The government was forced to retreat and proved to be weak. It faced a series of defeats throughout May and June. On May 24, in the face of general protest, it had to withdraw a bill that would have given immunity to politicians and big businesses involved in illegal contributions to political parties and tax fraud.

On June 6, Chancellor Kohl suddenly declared that shortening the workweek should not be a taboo. And at the same time, his minister of labor, Bluem, convinced Gesamtmetall not to go ahead with the extension of the lockout to districts where there were no strikes that it had already decided on. At the end of July, Count Lambsdorff, who as minister of the economy had steered the course toward confrontation with the unions, had to resign, because he was charged with corruption in office.

'Solidarity is our strength' say supporters of the 35-hour week (DR)

At the end of June, under the pressure of pro-union court rulings, the government went back on the decision that the Unemployment Insurance Office would not pay benefits to workers affected by shutdowns. And at the beginning of July, Labor Minister Bluem got the recalcitrant printing bosses to accept the compromise proposal made by the Social Democrat Georg Leber for their industry as well.

More recently again the government has backed away from its initial confrontation course with the unions. While it had been declaring since the start of the year that it would not grant public workers either higher wages or shorter working hours in 1984 and 1985, on September 25, at the beginning of bargaining with the public workers' union, it has already shown itself prepared to negotiate in limited areas. (The unions are demanding 5% more in wages and ten more days off per year as a "bridge" to the 35-hour week.) (2)

In this situation, it was above all the restraint of the union leaders and of both parliamentary opposition parties — the SPD and the Greens — that saved the government from a bigger defeat. Both parties had declared solidarity with the unions' fight. But they behaved in practice as if this were an entirely nonpolitical conflict.

In the negotiations between the SPD and the Greens over support for an SPD minority government in the Hessen state parliament, the questions of the strike, lockout and shorter working hours played no role. Behind the scenes, the SPD pressed the unions to end the strike before the European elections, because it was afraid that its position of support for the strikers would cost it votes.

In Hessen and Hamburg, the SPD state governments refused to take legal measures against the lockout (which is forbidden in the constitutions of these states). And in the states and towns ruled by the SPD, the party was as hostile to granting the 35-hour week to public employees as the bourgeois parties. So, the demand that the SPD and the Greens commit themselves to introduce jointly a law introducing the 35-hour week as the foundation of red-green parliamentary majorities in the towns, states and later also in the national parliament is assuming a greater importance.

The experience achieved in this struggle has convinced a broad layer of active members and officials of the unions of the need for fundamental changes in the way of functioning of the unions. Such changes are seen to be necessary especially in the forms of struggle, the question of the strike funds, and the attitude of union members and the shop stewards they elect to the factory councils.

2. In the public workers' unions a dispute has been going on for a year whether the demand for the 35-hour week or one for early retirement should be put in the contract negotiations. The biggest public workers union, the OeTV, has been and remains split on this question. In April, at a conference of this union on worktime, the 35-hour week was given preference. But at the union congress in June, no clear position was taken. The demand for 10 more days off that was raised after the end of the strike in the printing and engineering industries represents a compromise in the union. It amounts to a 38.5-hour week in the industry, and is presented as a bridge to the 35-hour week. But it does not mean any shortening of the workday, and thus leaves the question of the orientation of further struggle for cutting worktime open. The discussion in the OeTV has had no influence on the policy of IG Metall.

Before the strike, factory occupations were not generally discussed in IG Metall. Relevant experience was limited to a few workforces that in recent years tried to use this method to prevent the closing down of their plants. Today, more and more workers are convinced that lockouts can be combated most effectively by occupations. A court decision that ruled that it was legal for workers locked out during a strike to make their way onto the shop floor should favor further discussion on this subject. Under discussion also is the demand that in the event of a lockout the strike should be continued until the bosses agree to pay back wages.

In the printing industry, where thanks to strike breakers and the most modern layout and printing techniques a lot of newspapers could be printed despite the strike and delivered under police guard despite massive blockades at the doors, today active trade unionists are discussing the need to stay in the plant during strikes or to make the machines inoperable.

The problem of strike pay

Under the impact of the strike of the British miners, who have held out for more than a half year without union strike pay, a lot of activists are challenging the previous practice of paying workers involved in struggles out of the union coffers. "You have to get out of this strike-pay trap," Joe Holmes, representative of the British NUM advised at a conference of militant trade unionists that met in Frankfurt on September 28 to draw a common balance sheet of the struggle. "Strike pay kills any movement. Without strike pay, there is more autonomy in the districts and regions for independent actions and less bureaucratic control."

Without the obligation to compensate locked-out workers for lost wages, the unions could have held up against even mass lockouts without being forced to their knees. Instead of handing out strike pay in the previous amounts, the unions' local and central fighting funds should support striking and locked-out workers in accordance with their needs and rely on the solidarity of all union members and the public. Unless they change their statutes accordingly, the unions will not be in a position in the future to wage countrywide strikes. The unions have a future only as fighting organizations, not as societies for insuring against the effects of strikes.

The need to implement the new worktime settlement at the plant level brings the conflict between active union members and the social-partnership-minded factory councils to a head. Already at the start of this year, many factory councils had refused to campaign for the union's demand of a 35-hour week. During the strike, the factory councils in many big plants either stood aside or stabbed their union in the back. Instead of fighting against the plant shutdowns that were carried out as a result of the strike, they often made a deal with management to take the time that production was halted out of yearly vacations.

The factory council chairperson in Munich, Golda, called on the IG Metall to which he belongs during the strike in letters sent to all the workers to end the struggle. Moreover, he arbitrarily reduced contributions to the union to three German marks a month. In the wake of the strike, when the auto companies were trying to make up for the lost production, the factory councils at Daimler Benz, Porsche, and other works agreed to massive overtime and special shifts up to Christmas, so that the immediate result of the strike for a lot of workers was not a 35-hour week but a fifty-hour one. (Everywhere the factory councils acted in accordance with the IG Metall's demand to refuse overtime or to accept it only in return for additional time off, the companies have had to hire more workers after the strike.)

Democratization of the unions and a reinforcement of their fighting strength in the factories can only be achieved if regular membership meetings are held in the plants and if the shop stewards elected by the membership are able to exercise effective control over the union's representatives on the factory councils and the local and central union leadership.

In the struggle for the 35-hour week, trade-union activists supporting the most various political currents came closer together. In neighborhood initiative committees and local work clubs, they worked closely together both before and during the strike — engineering workers, printers and public workers. Many of them remained together after the strike as well. They are organizing solidarity for the British miners and for the public workers who are now bargaining with the government on their wage and worktime demands.

About 140 of these activists from all over the country met on September 22-23 in Frankfurt, at the invitation of the information bulletin *Info 35* to exchange experiences and work out a common strategy for getting the new contracts applied at the plant level. This was already the fourth such countrywide conference of active trade-union members. But it was broader than all the previous gatherings. Jakob Moneta, former editor in chief of the engineering union's magazine *Metall* and a leading member of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM, West German section of the Fourth International) caught the mood when he said: "We need organized collaboration, a work group for fighting unions."

In fact, under the blows of massive unemployment and the austerity policy, the broad masses of union members cannot be led into battle by "spontaneous" initiatives of some active officials. Only if the union as a whole can be transformed into a fighting organization, only if socialist consciousness penetrates into the union leaderships, will it be possible to wage victorious struggles in 1986 for the 35-hour week, for the nationalization of key industries and for forms of workers' control.

The GIM went into this strike as the only countrywide organization that fought in an effective and determined way for the 35-hour week and for widening the struggle. Its newspaper, *Was Tun*, published 12 weekly editions with a circulation running between 12,000 and 20,000 copies. It was read by many active officials and discussed in the workplaces. The trade-union activists of the GIM stand today in the first ranks of the workers who are together drawing the lessons of this struggle and who will advance militant positions in the discussions within the unions.

**A detailed account of the strike and a balance sheet was published in German six weeks after the end of the conflict. See Peter Bartelheimer and Jakob Moneta, "Das kann doch nicht alles gewesen sein... Der Kampf fuer 35 Stunden," Frankfurt 1984, 160 pages, DM 10,80. It can be ordered from ISP-Verlag, Postfach 11 10 17, D-6000 Frankfurt/Main, Federal Republic of Germany.* ■

Demonstration against youth unemployment (DR)

Fighters for the 35-hour week exchange experiences

The following are excerpts from reports given at the conference of Info 35, *a publication of a united front for the 35-hour week, held in Frankfurt on September 22-23. The first is from the report of Holger Lange from the Bosch Reutlingen plant, organized by IG Metall, the German engineering union. The second is from the report by Peter Koch, from a printing plant in Stuttgart organized by the printers' union, IG Druck und Papier.*

■ During the fourth week of the strike, the IG Metall negotiating committee made three compromise proposals. There was widespread outrage among the pickets. A petition campaign against the compromise offers was started up. On July 6, about twenty pickets went to the Collective Bargaining Board and delivered the petitions.

For the delivery of the petitions, a banner was made, "The Bosch Reutlingen Strikers Are Fighting For The 35-Hour Week With No Cut In Pay — No Rotten Compromise!" There was criticism of the leadership. Why wasn't the strike extended? Had it misjudged the problem of cold lockouts [that is, layoff of workers supposedly because the strike prevented the delivery of parts or materials needed to do their jobs]? Had it failed to take into consideration the Franke Decree [whereby workers laid off in "cold lockouts" would not get any benefits]?

For June 26, the day that Georg Leber's compromise proposal was presented, the IG Metall district leadership mobilized for a DGB [National Labor Confederation] rally in Stuttgart. The active pickets went to the podium and sang a song parody called "No Rotten Compromise!" They also went to visit the negotiations in Ludwigsburg and again to the Collective Bargaining Board. The first reaction of the Collective Bargaining Board members was that we were out of line, that there was no danger of a rotten compromise. The local strike leadership was supposed to calm us Bosch pickets down.

The next day the Leber Compromise appeared as a recommendation for a settlement. Twenty to thirty pickets went to the Collective Bargaining Commission. Pickets from other factories also assembled there. The district leader, Ernest Eisenmann, wanted the pickets out of there. The pickets stayed, the session had to be interrupted. We gained the "success" that the strike lasted another day and IG Metall had to pay out 20 million German marks more for the "longest labor conflict."

On Monday, July 2, the second strike referendum got underway. The active pickets distributed a leaflet calling for a "no" vote. There was a 56% vote against the proposed settlement. ▪

■ Another important question is whether the strike should be just for union functionaries or actively involve the union ranks. In this respect, I think, there is an important difference between the printers' union and IG Metall. We could not match the sort of numbers that Hoger [from Bosch Reutlingen] mentioned. We had maybe ten pickets, who had to block the plant from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 in the evening for three weeks. We could not have done that. In our case, all the workers, with a few exceptions — people who got excuses from the plant strike leadership — did picket duty day in and day out in three-hour shifts. Every day there was a strike assembly. We only managed to hold out because we could discuss all the problems.

A second important experience was that we did not get all the workers to go to the DGB rallies in Stuttgart's Marktplatz, but we organized two car caravans, in which everyone took part and after which everyone was enthusiastic. Once we went to a rally, and the other time to the Printing Association [the employers' group]. Moreover, we organized pretty good strike festivals and, of course, soccer games.

For future strike tactics, there is a big problem. In Stuttgart, we were not able to shut down entirely any of the big printing plants that were struck. Production continued at between 20% and 50-60% of capacity, with nonunion members, leadmen and foremen. In all cases, all the management people were originally skilled workers in the printing industry who would still do the work.

Moreover, it is scarcely possible to stop a small shop for long with its own workers. You can't keep it up. Every day three management personnel stand at the door and try to talk to the strikers one by one. There is an enormous pressure and sometimes you have to pay more attention to your pickets than to the strike breakers, because they cave in on you if they talk two hours with the boss.

We started from the estimation that we could not keep the plant blocked, and we limited ourselves to having the pickets argue a quarter of an hour or a half hour with the workers coming in, but we finally had to let them go in. For strike tactics, this means that you have to consider what else you can do. At a workers-struggle seminar with the printers' unions the [French] CGT and IG Druck und Papier, the proposal was made to leave the plant "and take important parts with you."

The support from other unions was very good. We had very good support from the other unions on the first strike day and we had to go out. There were, however, especially for the central leadership, very big organizational problems, since the plant strike leadership was in command and the "outsider" workers often did not know what they should do. It is very important that the workers from the plant itself be distinguished and that they give clear directions and discuss in detail how the "outside" workers are to be deployed.

In fact, the strike breakers can only work over the local people. The others can form chains and take on other tasks like that. The plant strike leadership needs to have a clear line on this.

In conclusion, I would like to report that in our shop, where we had had no shop stewards, as a result of the strike 13 shop stewards were appointed, and they are to be confirmed by a vote next month. That is a very positive result.

On the negative side, we should note that the workers in our plant have "relaxed" too much. Attacks are coming down now. For example, a printer is to be laid off. And we have done very little to oppose it. We have not been able to achieve active forms of defense, an assembly of the personnel or a work stoppage, but only circulate a petition.

This layoff has unfortunately gone through with little resistance because there is a very widespread mood that now we should have some peace and quiet for a while. ▪

The workers movement and the capitalist offensive

We publish below an article and an interview with Yokoyama Yoshio of the journal *Kikan Rodo Undo* (a quarterly publication of the workers movement) who is also an activist in Rodo Joho, a class-struggle tendency in the Japanese trade-union movement. He is a leader of the Sohyo union in the oil industry's General Sekiku KK company.

The article originally appeared in the English-language Japanese review *AMPO* (vol. 16, Nos 1 and 2, 1984). Here he sets out the current changes in workers' conditions and the crisis of the trade-union movement which ensued. The interview was given in Tokyo at the end of July 1984, and it complements the article, explaining more fully the developments within the workers movement. For several years now a process of fusion of the main unions has been underway, which represents a shift to the right (see *IV*, No 7, 21 May 1982). The leadership of Sohyo (the General Council of Unions), which is basically made up of the Socialist Party, is increasingly prepared to accept the plan of capitalist rationalisation being imposed by the government and the bosses.

A partial fusion of unions has already taken place in the private sector with the formation in December 1982, of the Zenmin Rokyo (National Trade Union Liaison Council in the Private Sector). In the next two years the unification of the unions will be implemented in the public sector and at the national level.

YOKOYAMA Yoshio

Some fifteen years ago, the overriding concern of Japanese business corporations was how they could handle young workers. The rapid economic growth period in the 1960s caused a keen shortage of young labor force, and employers had to deal with them carefully as a precious source of profits. "Golden eggs" (probably meaning golden-egg-laying chickens) was how junior high graduates joining the industry were referred to. Society as a whole was dynamically developing, and young people were quite active, by taking part in political and social struggles on the issues such as the Vietnam War, the reversion of [the American base in] Okinawa and environmental pollution. Radical campus struggles spread all over the country. The challenge for corporate management was how the workplace could be kept in quarantine from this radical influence and how young workers could be brainwashed by corporate ideology and turned into collaborators of productivity campaigns.

By now young workers are no longer a corporate manager's headache. In the past decade, a new generation of youngsters has been arriving, taking the place of the "angry young men" of the late 1960s. They are the product of a thorough and systematic imposition of capacity and achievement-oriented control of highschool and college students, a system that spurs competition and keeps them disunited. The split of the New Left forces and their failure to produce viable political lines made young people weary of politics while many of the steadfast young radicals in the workplace were purged by corporate management. Thus, the late 1960s revolt of the young was brought to an end.

While management are not so much worried about young people, they are about aged workers. Corporate labor control measures are now being shifted more and more to the 40-50 age group who are taking the brunt of all the contradictions of Japanese capitalism generated in the wake of its stall in the first oil crunch period.

Not that aged workers have risen up in rebellion, nor have they organized their own movement. At the moment, their threat to corporate systems is only potential. But sensing the danger of their someday becoming "angry old men," management are taking preemptive measures. Workers of more than 50 years of age are invited to join special programs so that they can accept retirement with psychological preparedness. Usually, the participants attend a short course of two or three days, with orientation sessions on the art of spiritual enrichment, on life-style, the cost of living and pension systems. Such "preparatory" courses have been devised as a shock therapy, according to their designers. They say that aged workers, hard-working all their life and dependent upon the company psychologically, would otherwise avoid thinking about their post-retirement life and when the retirement time comes might be shocked and disoriented. The courses, they claim, are meant to present the pre-retirement workers with the stern reality of the life awaiting them, and thus psychologically smoothen the process of transition.

It was those aged workers who, loyal to the company, enabled the Japanese economy to grow fast and allowed Japanese capitalism, in the subsequent years of economic stagnation, to develop relatively excellent economic performance through their hard work and endurance. But the years have long gone since each worker's wish to raise his living standard coincided with the corporate requirement of high productivity. In other words, the situation no longer exists where the individual worker's wage can rise and his intra-firm position go up as his company expands limitlessly. After the Japanese economy entered a low growth orbit, big companies concentrated on the so-called "body-slimming" rationalization targeted against aged workers. They were arbitrarily and freely transferred to new jobs or else eked out of their original firms to take up odd jobs in subsidiary companies. The rationalization drives in the past decade hit the workers so suddenly and violently that they had no time to think and translate their disappointment into organized counter-attack against the corporate system. Over so many years they had been collaborating with management in productivity increasing drives assuming that they would be rewarded, but the reward given was very different from what they imagined. Especially in shipbuilding and other heavy industrial sectors, the "body-slimming" took the most drastic forms. Mass dismissals hypocritically called "voluntary retirement" were rampantly carried out. In company towns where major factories operate, aged workers were told to leave and work, for example, for poulterers, tailors, or even funeral agencies in the towns. By imposing old workers on these dependent small business, the big corporations in fact got rid of their "fat" and thus could tide over the crisis.

A bosses' system

The current phase follows this surgical operation period. Big corporations are now setting out to apply a mid- and long-term countermeasures to handle the problems of aged workers.

The prevailing wage system at large Japanese corporations and government offices is still that of the seniority wage. While big enterprises are recently trying to modify this age-linked wage escalation system by introduction of job-linked and capacity-oriented factors, they have not totally altered the basics of this peculiar wage system under which an old worker of 60 years is paid four or five times the initial pay of fresh recruits (who are paid 120,000 yen or so). This is a wage system very convenient to management since the company can give a certain annual wage increase to individual workers without increasing the firm's total wage cost (because high-paid aged workers are retiring every year to be re-

placed by low-paid new recruits). Also under this system, the retiring workers are paid a severance allowance equivalent to approximately 50 times their monthly pay. This serves to effectively bind the workers to the company. Thus, big enterprise workers and government employees were able to design their life-cycle pattern up to retirement. The seniority wage system coupled with the "life-time" employment practice served to enlist workers' loyalty to the enterprise.

But this wage system, especially the severance pay practice, is now turned into a burden for big corporations now that the period of economic prosperity is gone and the age composition of Japanese society is changing. Already, the average age expectancy of the Japanese has reached 75.1 years for males and 80.4 years for females, the second highest figures in the world. At the outset of the coming century, persons eligible for pensions over the age of 65 years are expected to reach 17.4 per cent of the total population. It should, of course, be noted that the government and big business are deliberately exaggerating the problems of the aging of society to justify tax increase but, even so, there is no denying that the actual demographic situation is such as compels workers to think more seriously about their post-retirement livelihood.

In the logic of big business, this situation requires special precautionary measures. Big companies are afraid that the more the workers have to worry about their post-retirement life, the less they will think about the company. That would lead to lower work morale. Thus, in some companies, workers are told to leave before their regular retirement age. The company says that since old workers have to pick up other, lower paid jobs after retirement anyway, it would be beneficial for them to quit while they still have competitive work capacity, move to other firms, and start their second life earlier. This would of course help economize on the company's severance pay costs. The retirement preparation program is thus purported to persuade the aged workers to work hard and with high morale if they choose to stay until retirement, or to leave earlier to help abate the firm's wage costs.

The union of Toshiba Co. (a leading electrical firm) offers a legal counselling service for its members. The most frequent cases being handled in the service are divorce. After divorce, they deal mainly with troubles pertaining to usurious consumers' credits (*sarakin*). Consumers' credit trouble is not confined to Toshiba. Statistics show that one out of 10 workers borrow from *sarakin* usurers who demand exhorbitant interest rates. Loans of all kinds choke the necks of aged workers for they started their working life on the assumption that economic prosperity would last for ever. Big companies provide low-interest housing loans to their employees to the amount of 10 million or 15 million yen. But a house costs a minimum of 25 million yen even if it is located in a distant suburb — a two hour commute each way. The differential has to be met by borrowing from other sources. Workers often drew housing loans assuming their wage would rise 10 per cent annually, but as the wage growth has been far lower in recent years, many spend a quarter of their monthly income on loan repayments. In the meantime, a working family has to spend approximately 10 million yen on education until their child graduates from college. Usually, the working family manages to meet this enormous expenditure with the fringe income brought in by the wife. There are thus many workers going to *sarakin* usurers for easy cash but who then get trapped. Others go to *sarakin* for cash for gambling and nightlife amusements, and are doomed. *Sarakin* firms mushroom and flourish as major city banks that have substantial surplus liquidity because of low equipment investment are willing to lend lavishly to them. *Sarakin* make available, without mortgage, small lots of money (200,000 — 500,000 yen) and take 70 — 100 per cent interest per annum. Money borrowed for amusement is often difficult to repay, and quickly the debts snowball. The victim borrows from another *sarakin* to return to the original lender, and the borrower soon finds himself in enormous debt — five million or ten million is not rare. This, as is reported in the press almost every day, frequently leads to the collapse of families in tragic ways — suicides, divorce or crimes.

Workers in debt

In fact divorce is often linked to debts. (Even sham divorces to separate the husband's *sarakin* debts from the wife are reported). In other cases of divorce, wives who first go to work part-time to complement the small income of their husbands begin to seek independence and then divorce. In such cases, the husband, a company man body and soul, doesn't understand a word when one day his wife declares she is leaving.

Inside the company, computerization is carried out at a rapid pace involving both factories and offices. The introduction of productive robots and office automation creates a labor surplus, and aged workers are the first victims of this process. They are given desks by the side of the window and given no significant tasks. They are treated as "expletives" scornfully called the "window-side tribe" or "landings tribe."

The situation is worse for aged workers in medium and small enterprises who are paid 30 per cent less wages than their big enterprise counter-parts. As small firms frequently go bankrupt, they are more likely to lose their jobs and generally their livelihood is more precarious than big firm employees. (However, big enterprise workers have seen a sharper decline in their living standards in recent years than small enterprise workers). Among other things, most of the small enterprise workers are not unionized.

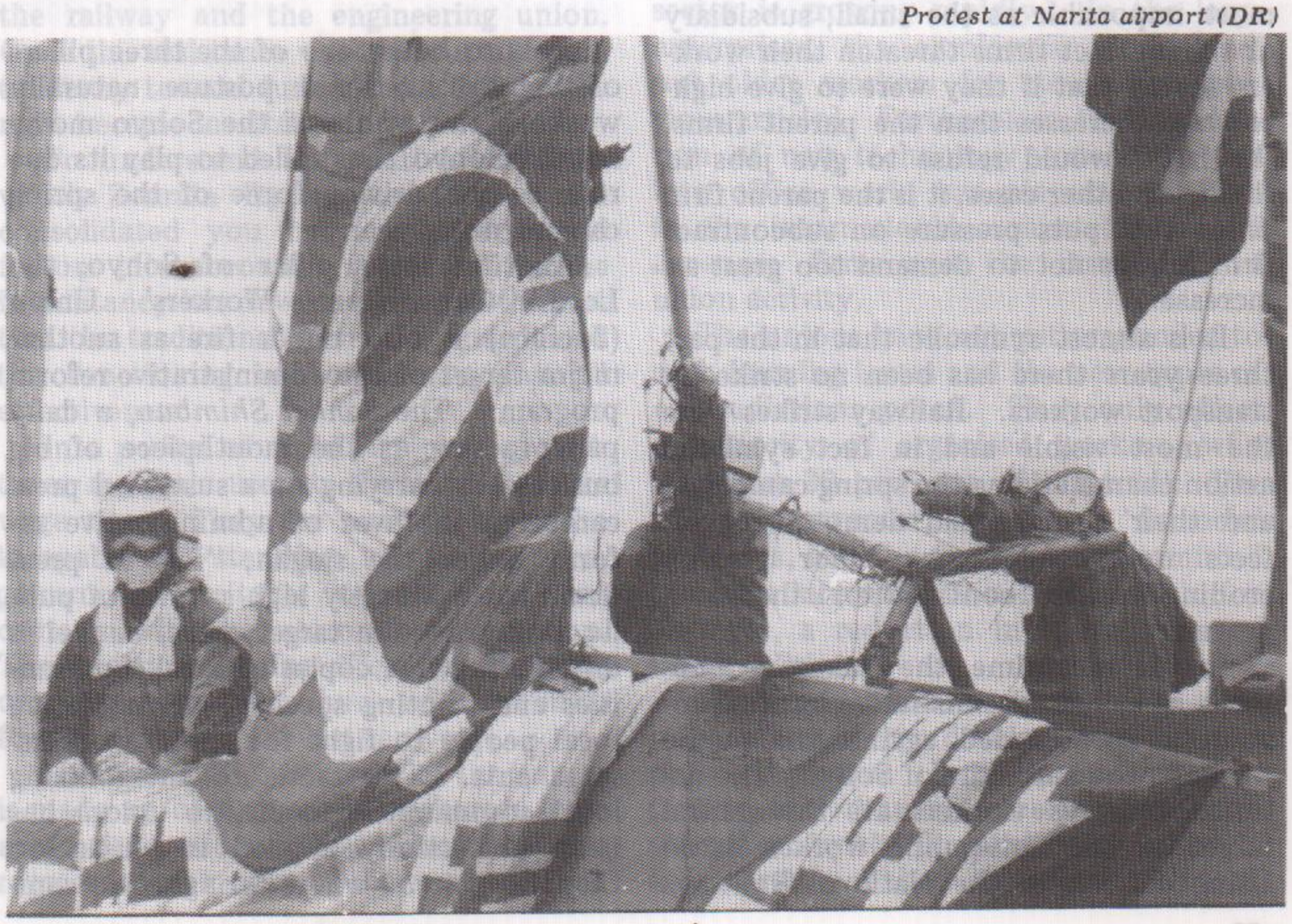
Last year, the rate of organization of Japanese workers went below the 30 per cent level. This had been long predicted; yet when it came, people realized anew the gravity of the situation.

It is noted that 70 per cent of the workers in large companies are organized while only 20 per cent of small firm employees are unionized. This clearly indicates that the Japanese trade union movement reflects the interests of but a small, special sector of labor.

The declining rate of unionization resulted partly from the structural shift of the labor force from big corporations and government offices to the small business sector but mainly from the loss of popularity and dynamism of the existing union movement.

This year's spring labor campaign was wound up after obtaining a wage increase of 5 per cent as against 7 per cent de-

Protest at Narita airport (DR)



manded by the General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo). The newly founded National Liaison Council of Private Sector Trade Unions (Zenmin Rokyo) demanded a 6 per cent wage increase as its constituent Federation of Steel Workers' Unions, echoing steel capital's inclination, insisted that wage increase demands should be modest. The wage increase given was exactly the same as obtained in the spring campaign of last year, but the Employers' Association of Japan (Nikkeiren) declared that the wage raise rate was too high as it was above the productivity increase rate. The Sohyo Chairman officially regretted that the unions had been unable to win more, but Nikkeiren's statement was politically worded. Last year, Nikkeiren declared, after the spring campaign, that business was quite satisfied by the "collaboration of union leaders" in keeping the wage increase rate low. This declaration of capital's victory embarassed the union leadership, who protested against Nikkeiren over the careless wording. Considering this, Nikkeiren this year saved labor's face by expressing dissatisfaction. In fact, Japanese labor's annual spring offenisve has experienced defeats consecutively now for 10 years, the actual wage increase rate always remaining lower than even the business-set wage increase ceilings. Sohyo first emphasized the number of consecutive defeats in order to encourage workers to fight back next time, but recently has stopped enumeration realizing that it would spread only a sense of defeat.

Formerly, a pioneer union, the steel union for instance, would win a certain wage increase rate first, which then was emulated by other unions. The "standard" rate won by the pioneer union thus used to be considered as the minimum level of wage increase and, actually, many unions, including small firm unions, did obtain by militant struggles even larger gains than the pioneer unions or their parent firm unions had achieved. But in recent years, emulation has become almost impossible as the small, subsidiary or subcontract firms threaten their workers saying that if they were to give higher wage increases than the parent firms, the latter would refuse to give jobs to them. In other cases, it is the parent firm union that puts pressure on subcontract firm unions not to demand too great an increase.

It is almost symbolic that in the past three years there has been no strike by transport workers. Railway strikes were the most visible and in fact symbolic action characterizing the spring campaign, and their absence had demoralizing effects upon the entire labor [force] eroding workers' confidence in their own power.

In the meantime, the Nakasone Cabinet's so-called administrative reform program is spearheaded against the public workers, the hard core of Sohyo. The national railways workers are the central target of the anti-public worker drive. Using deficits of the National Railways Corporation as a pretext, loss-generating local services are mercilessly abolished and railway workers being retrenched. But in spite of this frontal attack from management, the Engine Drivers' Union (Doro), one of the two major unions at the National Railways once known for its outstanding militancy, has made an aboutface by pledging to collaborate with management to protect the interests of the corporation. Thus, Doro issued a "declaration for safe transportation of cargoes" as a gesture to collaborate with rationalization, and has gone so far as to urge the workers to increase labor intensity. The other major union, or the National Railways Workers' Union (Kokuro), fails to mobilize the whole organization to resist rampant attacks by management on the workers' established rights like the right to take a bath during work time and the right to free pass, though its chapters here and there put up resistance. Nor have Kokuro and Doro openly organized a counter-offensive against the Government's scheme of cutting the corporation up into several private companies. The average age of the national railway workers is as high as 38 years, and not many young workers will be recruited in the future. Because of this age composition, their mutual assistance pension fund will be drained soon. For this reason, the national railways unions are hoping that their pension scheme [will] be consolidated with the much lucrative pension fund of the Telephone and Telegraphic Corporation Union (Zendentsu), a union comprising much more young workers. It is said that the national railways workers cannot openly defy the rationalization program because they know that such consolidation can be done only with the support of the government. Here too, the threat of aging society is effectively used to intimidate [the]workers' movement.

Unions in crisis

Kokuro being one of the three pillars of Sohyo, its timid posture naturally weakens the whole of the Sohyo movement. Sohyo thus failed to play its due role as the driving force of the spring campaign this year.

Another main pillar of Sohyo, the Local Government Workers' Union (Jochiro) is also under fire as another major target of the administrative reform program. The *Sankei Shimbun*, a daily paper acting as the mouthpiece of big business, is carrying on a sustained press campaign in favor of administrative reform under the slogan, "Let us press down the extremely high salaries of public workers." In target areas, Sankei is distributing free copies to local communities and printing special issues, agitating local people to fight for public workers' wage cuts. This tactic of antagonizing local communities to Jichiro unions has been successfully applied in Musashino City in Tokyo, where an agitative campaign against the municipal workers' union led to anti-union mobilization of local inhabitants. They stormed the city hall demanding that the high wages be cut, and under their pressure, the mayor imposed wage cuts on the union. Deprivation [of] contractual union rights by demagogic media-agitated masses ominously borders on fascist practice. Anti-union sentiments of the masses were fanned relatively easily because the severance pay for small enterprise workers, who are many among the local people, are paid but 10 per cent of the Jichiro union's severence pay level. Wage cuts for Jichiro unionists of course do not mean any wage increase for unorganized, underpaid small enterprise workers. If they had had proper worker consciousness, they would not have been misled by the starkly demagogic press campaign. Nor would the Jichiro union at Musashino have flinched if it had had a clear class principle. But the union in fact vacillated when protest came from local communities, and made a compromise.

Lack of [a] principled attitude and failure to react in class interests on the part of the established unions generally undermine workers' trust of trade unionism, and eventually causes the decline of the rate of organization. *Kumiai*, or workers' union, thus seems to have ceased to be an attractive title to the masses of unorganized workers.

Realizing that *Kumiai* with all its associated bad images no longer appeals to working masses, the Edogawa trade-union council in the eastern district of Tokyo has recently cast away its traditional appelation and decided to call it "Edogawa Yunion" (phonetical transciption of the English word union) in its recent organizing campaign. Its style of work also has been modified with more emphasis on workers' mutual help. Similarly, the Tokyo South District chapter of the General Workers' Union has made its organization accessible to the unorganized by opening a counselling office named "labor center." Though a similar counselling service earlier offered by the union in the name of *kumiai* attracted but few workers, this Labor Center has proved popular, drawing many individual unorganized workers with unimaginably diverse grievances affecting their daily life — huge debts to *sarakin*, shop-floor grievances, weak health, firm bankruptcies, unfair treatments, divorces, etc. Only a few of these grievances will lead to the organization of unions, but at least, these new approaches have indicated clearly enough that workers, terribly isolated and forlorn, do need to organize into a viable movement of their own.

The image of *kumiai* has been soiled and *kumiai* discredited simply because big unionism has repeatedly and systematically betrayed workers' interests. It openly collaborates with management in total disregard of workers' interests and purges sincere and militant activists [by] itself harshly calling them "saboteurs." But such big unions in the private sector are

the main current of trade unionism, and now gathered under Zenmin Rokyo are building up their numerical strength. When this is the image *kumiai* projects, the vast masses of workers with all their real and serious grievances are turned off and even scared by *kumiai.*

In the current process of labor reorganization, this type of unionism is contaminating even the once militant public workers' unions. The Postal Workers' Union (Zentei) for years was recognized by the public as a "labor rights zealot" for its militant struggles on behalf of the rights of its members. Its work slowdown tactic often caused huge stockpiles of undelivered mails. But this union in the past couple of years has changed its policy drastically in favor of collaborationism. The Postal Ministry, facing competition [from] the fast-growing private parcel services, came out with work intensification and rationalization plans, and the union has accepted them one after another. Rank-and-file postal workers are losing their trust in the union: the Zentei organization has ceased to grow and the union finances are becoming tight. Zentei was fighting for many years against the splinter collaborationist union (Zenyusei), but now Zentei is forced to talk with its adversary for organizational unification simply to maintain itself. The worker unity on the shopfloor has been seriously undermined. Private parcel service firms exploit this situation. When they hear about some Zentei worker suffering from *sarakin* loans, the private agency immediately approaches him offering to settle all his debts on his behalf and invites him to join. The private parcel service needs expert delivery men. The Self-Defense Forces also are keen on recruiting soldiers from among *sarakin* victim postal workers in order to fill in their always thin ranks. For this purpose, SDF offers special *sarakin* counselling service for postal workers, staffing it with expert lawyers.

Probably, the Japanese trade-union movement is in a period of historical ebb. While the regime and big business are able to meet the changing requirements of the times with such new slogans as "an era of low economic growth" and "countermeasures for an aging society," neither has the trade-union movement nor the Socialist Party been able to map out their desired future alternative for society. The failure to do so leads them straight to capitulation to the existing reality. By accepting what exists — strong armed forces despite the constitutional ban, presence in the Japanese territory of US nuclear warheads in spite of non-nuclear pledges, the military alliance with the United States despite the growing danger of war it implies, and ultimately the fact that the union movement is miserably weak, do the main current big unions justify what they do (or do not do). All this "realism" is ostensibly for their survival, and if this easy way may help for some time, it will soon totally undermine their position. As the current reorganization of labor is motivated by this type of "realism," the union movement will never be able to make itself a movement of the working masses themselves.

But there is the other side of this same process. With the changing composition of the labor force, the time is coming when big business corporations' grip on labor is being weakened. In the public sector where the union leadership abruptly switched to the line of "defending the competitiveness of public corporations," rank-and-file workers are beginning to whisper to each other that something drastic should be done to rectify the renegade line. Totally ignored are the most serious grievances of 35 million medium and small business workers and part-time workers. The only way to revive a trade-union movement in Japan is listen to their voices, raise their complaints to articulate demands, and organize them into a new union movement addressing the felt needs of these workers.

We should not be sitting idly leaving the military and parcel forwarders to organize workers in [such a] plight. We should not allow management to freely design the future fate of retiring workers. We must intervene in all these processes and out of them create a vigorous movement of Japanese workers themselves. ■

The recomposition of the workers movement

Question. The right-wing fusion of unions in the private sector has now been carried through. It is also underway in the public sector. The class-struggle current around the journal Rodo Joho *(Workers Information), fought against this fusion because it went hand in hand with the Sohyo bureaucracy lining up behind a policy of capitalist rationalisation of businesses and services. What stage has the Japanese workers movement reached today?*

Yokoyama Yoshio. It is now nearly two years since the united union in the private sector, Zenmin Rokyo, was set up. During these two years the reorganisation of the unions in this sector has been extremely rapid. There was resistance to this policy of unification because its effect was to weaken the unions. But within a year this resistance was defeated. The battles were concentrated in the main Sohyo unions in the private sector; the railway and the engineering union. Once this resistance was broken, a general tendency toward fusion and a drift to the right became inevitable.

To understand the relative ease with which Zenmin Ryoko was formed and consolidated you have to take several factors into account. A general decline in militancy has developed due to the fact that the traditional forms of struggle and the functioning of Sohyo have lost all effectiveness.

In a period of rapid economic growth these methods used to be able to ensure wage rises. They are now shown to be incapable of standing up to the programme of capitalist rationalisation that came in with the international recession. The traditional spring offensives (Shunto) on wage agreements have achieved little for the unions in the last ten years.

More generally, the base of the unions is made up of permanent workers in large enterprises and service industries, who represent a minority of the working class. The unions have not seriously tried to organise new layers of workers such as temporary workers, workers in the small- and medium-sized firms, etc. Nor have they responded to the new problems posed by the economic crisis, that of older workers or of the consequences of technological innovation, robots and office automation.

Among the small- and medium-sized enterprises, 1,800 to 1,900 closures are being announced every month. In a certain number of cases the workers have been able to resist rationalisation and closure. But this is only in exceptional circumstances. The majority of workers, because of the lack of tradition and organisation in this sector, have not been able to mount a serious fightback, even when their firms faced bankruptcy.

Only 20 per cent of women who work are unionised. Yet they represent a large proportion of part-time workers, and this sector is growing rapidly. In the large enterprises, the employers are singling out older workers for attack [see previous article]. Furthermore, the introduction of new technology, extending now into office work, has played a big role in the international competetiveness of Japanese firms and the disruption of union activity.

The unions have not yet responded to such burning issues and the new types of contradictions posed. They only affect a minority of organised workers, who represent 30 per cent of the total. The unions, moreover, face huge financial problems, and the fusions have permitted a certain internal rationalisation with, for example, a reduction in the number of union fulltimers.

The trade-union movement has also been affected by developments in the political parties. It is especially important to underline here the impact of the sharp turn by the Socialist Party, which is very directly linked to Sohyo. One of

the issues around which Sohyo played a progressive role, in the recent period, was the mobilisation against militarism and war. Sohyo helped to consolidate the desire for peace among the Japanese people. The SP played a leading role in Sohyo in this area. But recently it took a major turn to the right.

Essentially, the SP wants to enter a coalition government with the Democratic Socialist Party and the Komei (1) and without the Communist Party. So, to achieve this, it is trimming its policies to suit the right-wing parties. As a result, the political axis around which workers could be mobilised within the anti-war movement is now weakened.

Q. And what is happening in the public sector?

A. Following the formation of the Zenmin Rokyo in December 1982, the workers movement in the public sector is now the focus of the reorganisation process. Sohyo also has the bulk of its members here, that is, 3 million out of a total of 4.5 million in the confederation.

Three unions in particular have been targets of the offensive by the government and the bourgeois press: the National Railway Workers' Union (Kokuro), the Local Government Workers' Union (Jichiro) and the National Education Union.

On the railways the attack was made in the name of reducing the financial losses on the service. The government was seeking to rationalise, denationalise and dismantle this sector.

In the case of the municipalities, under the banner of 'administrative reform' — that is, cutting salaries and degrading work conditions — the government got the media to whip up public opinion against 'ineffecient' civil servants. And they are doing the same with teachers and workers in education, diverting the dissatisfaction of many parents with the exam system, etc. to them. These attacks by the government have had an effect.

All sectors of the economy are effected. The public sector is under violent attack. In the large firms the system of employment for life for permanent workers and of pay rises based on seniority is being progressively eroded. Women and workers in small and medium-sized companies are most directly hit by this.

Since the Second World War, big changes in industrial and foreign policy by the regime (as in the 1960s) have always provoked huge workers struggles. Today, for the first time, similar economic and political upheavals have occured without any popular response. This is because of the wrong policies and the passivity of the Sohyo leadership.

In the wake of this paralysis of Sohyo, the government is systematically discussing rationalisation and work reorganisation with right-wing trade-union leaders. Basically, they are hoping to consolidate a new 'sphere of joint prosperity' in the Asian Pacific region or, more precisely, an integrated regional

economy dominated by Japan.

They envisage an active role for the unions in line with this project, in helping to ensure the competitiveness of Japanese firms in the trade war with the West. This has been accepted in principle by the leadership of Zenmin Rokyo and the left have been unable to mobilise mass opposition to such a perspective.

As for the rightward fusion of the unions, a committee will be set up in 1985 for unification in the public sector, and by 1987 the overall fusion of the public and private sectors should have been achieved.

Q. What is the situation of Rodo Joho and more generally of the left within the trade-union movement?

A. At the time of the formation of Zenmin Rokyo several opposition currents existed within the union:

— Rodo Joho, which is composed of the far left, the traditionally combative unions within Sohyo and the small independent unions, etc.

— the Caucus of United Unions (Toitsu Rosokon) led by the Communist Party. This group in fact has been functioning a long time as an opposition within Sohyo, even though it has only recently been formally constituted.

— three ex-leaders of Sohyo launched an appeal for the unification of the left tendencies against the shift to the right by the union leadership and they have formed the Workers Institute (Roken). Roken is mostly based among the middle layer of Sohyo activists. Its supporters hope to be able to draw together about a thousand of them on a regular basis.

Rodo Joho and Roken have set up the National Work Liaison Council — Zenkoku Rosoren — which plays an important role in giving a common organisational framework to union militants. But at the moment there are only about 10,000 people organised within this framework.

Although many workers may look to Rosoren or Roken with varying expectations, it is often difficult to get them to join an organisation led by the left. And this more particularly so when these organisations have not yet defined their objectives very clearly.

It was relatively easy to make a bloc against the policies of Zenmin Rokyo. But it is much more difficult to work out a positive line for joint action. One possibility is to take up the areas of work that the Sohyo leadership abandoned such as the anti-war mobilisations against nuclear missiles, the organisation of the non-unionised, etc.

There is a further difficulty connected with Sohyo's prominence on a national level. Sohyo members will be wary of dual commitments (to Sohyo or Roken and Rosoren) or of changes at the centre of the national union. The real test of the processes in motion will be when Sohyo disappears into the unified union 'of the right'. Then the left will need to define itself more clearly. Before that I don't think we can expect big changes in the Japanese trade-union movement.

Q. And what is the responsibility of trade unionists and worker militants in relation to the anti-imperialist struggle in East Asia?

A. Zenmin Rokyo wants to defend the 'national interest' of Japan, that is, the interests of Japanese capitalism in the region and in relation to international competition. Any left, class-struggle wing must base itself on international solidarity and the fight against imperialism.

Some say that the situation in Japan will only change under the impact of external factors. This was the case in the past with the Mongol invasions and the arrival of American gunboats in the middle of the last century and in the Second World War. In the workers movement itself there are similar examples.

International solidarity and the anti-imperialist movement can play a big role through exchange of experiences and pressure from the outside. An example to note is the impact of the action of Western trade unionists in exposing the working conditions in Japan, or the political impact of the fight for national liberation in the Philippines and the struggle for democratic rights in South Korea.

The traditional ideology of the workers movement for peace and democracy has lost its central role and must be replaced by new principles of international class solidarity. In order to clarify these principles it is important to understand the link between the peace movement and democracy in Japan (and our conditions of existence here) and the repression to which the peoples of Asia are subjected. ■

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1. The SP is the main political formation of the left in Japan. The CP broke with Moscow at the beginning of the 1960s during the Sino-Soviet split and then with Peking at the time of the cultural revolution (1966-1969). It thus became one of the first, more or less, independent communist parties. The DSP (Democratic Socialist Party) is an ultra-right split off from the SP, linked to the leadership of the union confederation, Domei, which often plays the bosses' game. The Komei (Party for a 'Just Government') is a relatively recent formation linked originally to a Buddhist sect.

AROUND THE WORLD

Caribbean anti-imperialists meet

Thursday, July 19, was the anniversary of the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution. On July 17, 18, 19, this year it was therefore most appropriate that a Caribbean-wide conference of solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles was held in Martinique.

Altogether one hundred and fifty people representing 15 different organisations came together at the initiative of the Martinique Committee of Solidarity with the peoples of the Caribbean and Central America. Organisations present were: the Liga Internacionalista de los Trabajadores (International Workers League) of Puerto Rico; the Revolutionary Marxist League of Jamaica; the Socialist Workers Party of the USA; the Popular Committee for the Independence of Dominica; the Progressive Labour Party, a split-off from the Saint Lucia Labour Party and various groups from Guadeloupe and Martinique including the Revolutionary Socialist Group (GRS), the Antilles section of the Fourth International.

Among the many organisations which sent greetings to the conference but were not able to attend was the Maurice Bishop Foundation of Grenada and individuals of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement. George Louison and Kenrick Radix (surviving members of the Bishop government) wrote that they were not able to attend because they could not get visas.

The conference was marked by a feeling of unity in the fight against imperialism. Everyone was united in the following decisions:

— the need to support and popularise the Cuban and Central American revolutions against American intervention.

— a resolution denouncing the French government for using Martinique and Guadeloupe as an imperialist stronghold in the Caribbean and calling for the release of political prisoners in Guadeloupe.

— against the US role in Puerto Rico and for self determination.

— to give practical support to the peoples of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in their fight against the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in those countries.

The participants in the conference also discussed the lessons of the events in Grenada. A full resolution on this issue was not adopted wholesale by the delegations, some of whom wanted more time to think about it. The resolution applauded the record of the government in power since March 1979, denounced the actions of Coard and his supporters and condemned violence between anti-imperialist currents. It affirmed the need for freedom of discussion and decision-making in the mass organisations. The conference did, however, agree on practical measures of solidarity such as:

— for the withdrawal of foreign troops; for the restoration of trade-union rights and social programmes.

— to support the demand for the airport at Point Saline to be called Maurice Bishop Airport.

— for an end to restrictions on the rights of former Bishop supporters to move around freely.

The overwhelming feeling for unity was expressed in many of the practical proposals for coordination at the end. Firstly, there was a proposal that despite ideological differences, the organisations should unite against French, American and British imperialism. In order to break the isolation imposed on them by these powers the different organisations present would try to increase mutual contact and circulate information, etc.

Secondly, delegates agreed to try to organise a Caribbean solidarity trip to Nicaragua.

They further agreed to look at the possibilities of a common journal of debates and exchange of views and information and to set up a coordinating committee to coordinate and prepare anti-imperialist activities and support those struggles going on. ■

4,000 people hear Ernest Mandel in Brazil

Between August 13 and 17 this year, Ernest Mandel visited Brazil at the invitation of the revolutionary Marxist newspaper *Em Tempo*. During his visit, public meetings were organised in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, the four main industrial centres of the country. Many workers and trade unionists attended these meetings, in which Mandel spoke of the mass struggles that are taking place today throughout the world; the resistance to austerity and the wardrive in Europe; the Central American revolution; the struggle of the Polish workers; and the rise of the mass movement in Southern Africa. The discussions following these contributions ranged over the conceptions of the Fourth International on the construction of parties and of a mass revolutionary international.

All the meetings were organised by *Em Tempo* in collaboration with other forces from the workers' and popular movements. In Rio de Janeiro the local section of the Workers Party (PT) was involved in the organisation of the meeting. While in Rio de Janeiro, Mandel made a report on the economic crisis at an international conference of university economists. The union of Brazilian economists jointly organised the meetings in Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte. In Sao Paulo, the economics department of the Catholic university, together with the comrades of *Em Tempo*, organised a meeting that drew a thousand people. In all, four thousand people attended the five reports made by Ernest Mandel on his first visit to Brazil. ■

New Inprecor for the Southern Cone

Since last May, our comrades of the Socialist Workers Party of Uruguay (PST-U) have been publishing, in collaboration with Brazilian comrades a monthly journal, *Inprecor*, for the Southern Cone. Alongside articles from *International Viewpoint* and our French-language sister publication *Inprecor*, emphasis is given to articles concerning the situation in the Southern Cone countries. The contents of No 3/4 of July-August, include a balance sheet of the Workers Party in Brazil; an analysis of the democratic struggle and dialogue in Uruguay; an article by the Peruvian PRT on the third assembly of the United Left; an appeal by the POR-U in Bolivia to Bolivian workers; the appeal of the FSLN to consolidate the workers and peasants alliance; an article on the popular rebellion against the IMF in the Dominican Republic.

This publication will make it possible for the positions and documents published in the press of the International to become more widely known, more quickly in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay. The extensive coverage on the Southern Cone countries will also allow us in turn to improve our coverage of this region in *International Viewpoint*. ■

The importance of the October peace demonstration

The peace demonstrations in West Germany from September 19 to October 20 have been the first test of the staying power of the antimissile movement since the start of deployment in the decisive country in Europe for the new imperialist arms buildup.

The results indicate that the peace movement has gone into a difficult phase but is maintaining its basic strength. In fact, the movement has polarized between those who favor retreat, turning toward demands for restraint of the arms buildup rather than disarmament and shying away from any challenge to Nato, and the main actvist forces that are for continuing the campaign against the arms buildup and linking it with opposition to Reagan's war drive in Central America and austerity. (See the article on the Perugia conference of European peace activists in *IV*, No 61, 15 October 1984).

At the same time, in view of the failure of the peace movement to stop the first phase of deployment, except in Denmark, some forces have been more attracted to direct action, civil disobedience. In its October 11 issue, *Was Tun*, the paper of the German section of the Fourth International, pointed out that this provided an excuse for liberals and leaders of the SPD left wing to distance themselves from the movement.

Thus the demonstration against Nato at Fulda on September 29 drew 50,000 people, less than hoped for but as much or more than the mass antinuclear rallies that some years ago opened the new epoch of mass demonstrations in West Germany. Furthermore, this was mainly a regional action in a generally quite conservative area.

The October 20 antimissile demonstrations brought out about 300,000. The following is the editorial from the issue of *Was Tun* preceding the actions.

The Kohl government is trying to take advantage of the peace movement's crisis of orientation and the difficulties it is having in mobilizing not just against the missiles but also against Nato and the latter's recent military maneuvers to split the movement. Whether the peace movement can meet this challenge also depends on how it responds to the defeat it has suffered. An attempt to minimize it would lead as much into a blind alley as the defeatist mood that has been spreading among the radical forces in the peace movement.

The fact is that the bulk of the planned deployment of the Pershing II missiles and the deployment of the Cruise missiles is still ahead of us and not behind us. The fact is that deployment has been slowed for political reasons. For example, it has leaked out that the West German government has asked the American government to refrain from further deployment of the missiles. The fact is also that the West German government cannot take on the peace movement directly, because despite the latter's initial partial defeats, it still has the majority of the population behind it.

That fact alone represents the success of last year's mass demonstrations. However, that is not enough. This is not because our demands were not radical enough, but because the only way to stop the deployment of the missiles is to stay the hand of the government run by Reagan's missile-loving crony, Kohl.

It is this goal that the peace movement must work for with its own means — by showing through massive protest actions and demonstrations where the majority stands and that it is not going to accept the arrogant policy of the minority around this missile government, by focusing attention more strongly on the preparations for deployment of the Cruise missiles, which are planned to be deployed in 1985, by systematically making the missiles an issue in all the coming elections.

The threat of a military invasion of Central America by the US imperialists is creating a situation where the movement has to see the achievement of its demands more clearly in connection with the international class struggle.

Solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of Central America against imperialist aggression is no substitute for fighting against the missiles. But it is a test of whether we can oppose the war policy of imperialism in an area where war is no longer merely a menace but actually being waged.

We must make sure that the big rallies on October 20 in Bonn, Hamburg and Stuttgart, and the countrywide Nicaragua demonstration on November 3 are truly massive. This will be the strongest answer to all those who are writing premature obituaries for the peace movement. ■

German youth say no to Cruise missiles!