

Labour Focus on **EASTERN EUROPE**

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GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Mass democracy movement
topples Honecker and breaches
the Berlin Wall

SOVIET UNION Boris Kagarlitsky on Market Stalinism and Perestroika

Ukraine
Baltic Republics

The German Question



Michele Lee on CIVIL WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA?
Daniel Singer on SOLIDARITY AND MAZOWIECKI

Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

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Statement of Aims

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe is a completely independent journal whose editorial collective includes various trends of socialist and Marxist opinion. Our purpose is to provide comprehensive analysis of trends and events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, documentation of opposition movements in those societies, and a forum for the developing dialogue between radical democratic and socialist forces East and West.

We are opposed to the "liberation" of Eastern Europe by Western capitalism and the exploitation of the victims of repression in these societies for the Cold War propaganda of those who prop up racist

and fascist dictatorships in other parts of the world. We believe that the division of Europe can only be overcome by a common movement for socialism and democracy. We support the struggles for working-class, democratic and national rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe and call on the labour movement of the West to extend their internationalist solidarity to them.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial views, nor does publication of a document from Eastern Europe imply our agreement with its contents.

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Dawn of the post-wall era

Europe will never be the same again after November 9th, 1989. On this point, there is a broad consensus across all political camps. It is not so much that the Berlin Wall has been breached in itself which has brought about this rare unanimity, it is how it was breached and the international context of the breakthrough. After all, divided Europe managed without the Berlin Wall, which was built in August 1961, right through the heights of the Cold War: if anything, its construction was a symbol not of the division of Europe as such, but of the acceptance of this fact by both sides and of the immutability of the status quo.

But the Wall was brought down again, politically speaking at least (since the actual physical structure is still there), not by some sort of agreement between Washington and Moscow, or even Bonn and East Berlin. It came crashing down as a result of a political revolution in the GDR. The East German politburo quite simply could no longer hope to stay in power while the Wall remained. It was as if the hundreds of thousands, the millions of demonstrators in the streets of Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden had all pushed against the concrete blocks until they mortar cracked. The joyful faces streaming through the border crossing points were not just those of people who had just been granted leave of absence from above, let alone those of refugees: they were the faces of victory.

East Germany is in political turmoil, and when East Germany is in turmoil, the German Question is back on the agenda. Quite a spectacle was offered by the Western press in the first few days of the post-wall era: when the cold war cries of "Freedom at last" had been exposed as hollow by the dignified return of virtually all the East Germans and the total absence of any anti-Sovietism or anti-socialism in the streets of the GDR, the tune changed abruptly. It was now the spectre of German reunification that was raised: will it be all reich on the night, as one British newspaper asked?

The German Question has haunted European politics ever since Germany was divided into four zones of occupation in 1945 and the Cold War split the anti-Hitler alliance and hence Germany. In formal, grammatical terms, it has always been about the reunification of the two

post-war German states, if not the restoration of the German Reich in its frontiers of 1937. But for much of the time the rhetoric had rather a hollow ring about it, as neither of the German regimes nor any of the major world or European powers had any real interest in German unity. Perhaps as a result of the total collapse of the other side, but since that was not to be expected the reality was that the entire edifice of the European post-war order was built around the division of Germany.

Just twenty years, even ten years ago, the present situation would have been unthinkable. For a start, Moscow would almost certainly have crushed any such mass upsurge in the GDR. Today there is little prospect of that, be it as a result of the Soviet Union's internal weakness or by political design. At the same time, a reunited Germany acting with independent vigour as a great central European power between East and West has that much more plausibility today than it had in the days when American hegemony over Western Europe was still unquestioned.

Certainly the demise of the Berlin Wall has come at a time when the future of the established order in both halves of Europe hangs in the balance anyway. Already the debate over the future direction of the West European Community has acquired an entirely new dimension with the mere possibility of Germany's disengagement, while the free marketeers in Hungary, Poland and elsewhere find encouragement in the "Europe of concentric circles" schemes sprouting from the think-tanks of the bourgeoisie.

Exciting times indeed for those with commercial and strategic enterprise, and desperate times for those wedded to the status quo. But what about the Left? It is only just waking up to the realisation that that the goal posts have been moved. Gone are the cosy days when Europeanism was about getting the Social Charter adopted in Brussels, and peace a question of detente between the blocs. Europe is in the process of being reconstructed by forces beyond the control of the parliamentarians and trade union negotiators, and if the Left is going to play any role in shaping its future, some bold thinking beyond the familiar landscapes is required.

The reappearance of the German Question on the political agenda should help concentrate our minds. It is tempting to see this simply as coming to terms with the fact that something which was always supported in principle, namely German reunification, now suddenly appearing as a practical proposition. But the question of a single nation state for both East and West Germans should not be the main issue for the socialist left. National identity and self-determination are all very well, but hardly the essence of socialism. A united Germany, should that indeed be the outcome of the present crisis, would be a capitalist Germany, and it would come as the prelude to the re-absorption of Eastern Europe into the international capitalist market. Do we want that? Do we welcome it?

This is not an abstract question. The capitalist press had such a miserable time this November because the reality in Berlin did not fit its prejudices. So far, the East Germans have shown little appetite for being annexed by the Krupps. A capitalist united Germany is not the inevitable outcome of their revolution against the counterfeit socialism of Ulbricht and Honecker. Not only "objectively", but subjectively, in the conscious will of millions of East Germans, a democratic and prosperous socialist state on German soil provides a real alternative.

The left has become accustomed to viewing the unfolding crisis of Soviet and East European Stalinism with fatalistic resignation. The pull of the free market appeared irresistible, the socialist vision irretrievably discredited, the resurgence of dark forces such as religion and nationalism all-conquering. If this was always too pessimistic, considering the very real resistance of the working class to any substantial marketisation in Poland or the Soviet Union, it is completely untenable with regard to East Germany. This is the true significance of Berlin, 9 November 1989: it has opened in earnest the struggle between capitalism and socialism over the future of Europe.

For four decades, this has been a phoney war between two artificial edifices imposed on Europe by the military relationship of forces that resulted from the Second World War. It is now turning into the real thing as West European capitalism is shedding its dependence on America and Eastern Europe the Stalinist straightjacket. The European left must completely emancipate itself from both to be able to play an independent role in all this. For forty years, social democracy has been wedded to Atlanticism and communism to Stalinism. The socialist left which we need now must be uncompromisingly anti-Atlanticist and anti-Stalinist. In the transition from the post-war to

the post-wall era, the best possible beginning can be made by unflinching solidarity with the struggle of the East German masses for a socialist democracy in the GDR.

But that, in itself, is not enough. A socialist democracy in East Germany could not survive in the long term unless embedded into a socialist Europe. Without that, it would be a short-lived glimpse of the historic possibilities in the current situation, a sort of Paris Commune of the 1990s. And a socialist Europe is more than the sum total of socialist governments in so many individual European states. Most of all, however, and once again the GDR with its 400,000 Red Army troops and close economic relationship with the USSR will not let us forget this point, the Soviet Union must be an integral part of a socialist Europe.

Throughout this century, the relationship between Germany and Russia has been at the heart of European politics. Just as it is inconceivable that a future European order could be lastingly based on the division of Germany, it is inconceivable that the Soviet Union be locked out from it.

The Soviet Union, in any case, needs Europe. It may be many times larger than East Germany, but it cannot solve its social and economic problems in isolation any more than the GDR can. If Gorbachev's slogan of the "common European house" means anything, it is surely that from the military-strategic, economic-technological, ecological and cultural standpoints alike the interests of Europe cannot be divided into two, but form a complementary whole. The only real question is: what kind of Europe?

With every month that passes without perestroika showing the desired economic benefits, the voices demanding either a more radical marketisation of Soviet industry and agriculture – in effect, the reintroduction of capitalism – or a return to an iron bureaucratic dictatorship are growing louder in Moscow. At the same time, the pressure from the West increases, and so do the centrifugal tendencies both in the USSR itself and in what remains of the "socialist camp".

All this could lead to a terrible carnival of reaction, but such a disastrous outcome is not inevitable. The capitalist re-conquest of Eastern Europe has barely begun in earnest, the Stalinists are on the run, and the labour movement remains strongly entrenched in Western Europe. The building blocks for a socialist common house of Europe are there, the important job now is to get broad agreement about its architecture before the construction work can begin.

Günter Minnerup

The October revolution in East Germany



by GÜNTER MINNERUP

Germany had not seen a popular movement like this since the 1918 revolution which ended the First World War. At times, more than half of the entire East German population appeared to be on the streets of Leipzig, Dresden, Halle, Magdeburg and elsewhere in the German Democratic Republic. The huge demonstration of over one million in East Berlin on Saturday, 4 November, was far and away the largest rally that the old imperial capital had ever seen. General Secretary Honecker had already been forced to resign on 18 October, and on 9 November travel restrictions were lifted and the Berlin Wall opened up. The GDR had experienced the first stage in a momentous political revolution, and the people had won.

Between three and four million East Germans streamed across the former Iron Curtain between Thursday night and Sunday. On Monday morning, the vast majority of them were back at work in the GDR. But the revolution was not finished with the celebration of victory in its first great battle. By Monday night, Leipzig – which had been at the vanguard of the democracy movement from its beginnings in September – saw another huge demonstration for free elections. The revolution continues.

Honecker falls

There should be no doubt in anybody's mind that what we have seen in the German Democratic Republic is indeed a revolution. This is no carefully stage-managed reform from above à la Gorbachev. The SED (Socialist Unity Party, the East German Communist Party) leadership had absolutely no intention of emulating perestroika and glasnost in their republic, and this was made crystal-clear as recently as the 7 October, when the Honecker, on the occasion of the GDR's 40th anniversary and in the presence of the Soviet leader himself, presented a cynically self-congratulatory picture of the SED's achievements:

"The GDR commemorates its 40th anniversary as a state with a functioning, efficient socialist system which has turned human rights into reality... The material and cultural standards of living of our people have reached a high level... The citizens of the GDR are justifiably

proud of what they have achieved together through their work and consider their active dedication to the interests of the socialist German state as their personal contribution to the implementation of their own interests. Convincing proof of this are the millions of votes cast in favour of the National Front and of our policy of socialism and peace at the local elections held last May... Everything with the people, through the people and for the people, everything for the good and the happiness of all citizens of our socialist German Democratic Republic."

The SED's chief ideologist, Kurt Hager, had told a West German magazine that "just because your neighbour decides to change his wallpaper does not mean that you are under any obligation to redecorate your flat, too". The German-language Soviet monthly, *Sputnik*, once required reading for party cadres, had been taken off the list of approved publications and thus effectively banned. By contrast, Ceausescu's Romania and Deng's China were praised extravagantly, the latter receiving effusive congratulations on its Tiananmen Square massacre from Egon Krenz, then Central Committee secretary for security.

It is now widely claimed that Gorbachev's visit for the anniversary celebrations provided a turning point, and that it was Gorbachev who forced Honecker's replacement by openly attacking him in front of the entire Politburo behind closed doors. Gorbachev did indeed barely bother to hide his distaste for Honecker's style of leadership during the celebrations, and may well have spoken some strong words in his discussions with the East German leadership. But by then, it was already too late for a managed reform from above. The party had lost the initiative to the popular movement from below.

It all started with the summer exodus of tens of thousands via the now open border between Hungary and Austria and the West German embassies in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw. The news of the Hungarian reforms and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in Hungary had made such an exodus almost inevitable with the onset of the holiday season: for many years, hundreds of thousands of applications for

exit visa had been pending in the in-trays of the bureaucracy, and despair over the Honecker leadership's refusal to endorse the Moscow reform course had recently swelled that figure to, according to estimates of the Protestant church, somewhere between 1 and 1.4 million – out of a population of just over 16 million.

The demonstrations inside the GDR, in turn, were sparked by the regime's reaction to the holiday exodus: the ending of visa-free travel to Czechoslovakia and curtailing of tourist traffic to Hungary. Czechoslovakia was the only country in the world which East Germans had been able to travel to without lengthy visa formalities – Poland having been restricted since the rise of Solidarity in 1980/81 – and GDR citizens were now effectively hemmed in within their own frontiers, at a time when the winds of change were blowing over most of the rest of the "socialist camp". The unrest, coupled with growing dissatisfaction over an economic situation suddenly deteriorating because of the acute labour shortages, spilled over to the streets.

There was no organisation behind the mass upsurge, but the Protestant churches and the milieu of youthful activists which had formed around the churches into the peace and ecology movements provided a natural focus. Suddenly the token protests of this hitherto isolated opposition were joined by thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. The name of the reformist Soviet leader in its popular German short form – "Gorby, Gorby!" was a unifying chant of all the demonstrations, along with demands

for the right to free travel, emigration, democracy and free elections. The overtly political nature of the mass movement was one of its most breathtaking features: conventional wisdom had always assumed that political campaigning was the exclusive domain of the intellectuals, and that the working masses would only become involved under economic slogans once the economic situation had become

dire enough to compel the workers into action. In the event, economic demands were very much in the background, and there were few calls for market reforms. To the dismay of some Western cold warriors, there was little noticeable interest in reunification with the Federal Republic, and the Red Army only figured in appeals for help against Honecker...

The size, determination and discipline of the huge demonstrations left the state security apparatus, which had previously launched some vicious attacks on smaller protests, helpless. Only a slaughter of Tiananmen Square proportions could now have checked the growing democracy movement. Krenz later spread the word that it had been on his instructions that the army and police were held back, but other evidence suggests that local commanders and party leaders were well aware of the risks of repressive intervention and had already decided to ignore any such instructions from Berlin.

The role of the party

A significant proportion of the marchers consisted of members, even local functionaries, of the SED. This is hardly surprising given the mass nature of the party: it has 2.4 million members, equivalent roughly to one in

five of the working population. In the ranks of the SED, Gorbachevism had found a strong echo and the "Gorby, Gorby!" chants quickly established a common denominator between party and non-party demonstrators. As a the political pillar of the Honecker regime, the party simply collapsed.

Somewhat conveniently under the circumstances, the General Secretary happened to be of ill health, having just recovered from a serious gall bladder operation, and advanced age anyway. In an attempt to salvage the situation, an emergency Central Committee meeting was convened where Honecker resigned and Egon Krenz was elected his successor. Krenz had been Honecker's heir apparent for some time, with impeccable hardline credentials. Some Western commentators (and, incidentally, some of the Polish Solidarity press) even misread the situation badly enough to claim that Krenz as General Secretary represented a victory for the old Stalinists over the dithering Honecker, in preparation for a decisive crackdown! But even if Krenz had entertained such thoughts – which appears unlikely – the pressures for reform for overwhelming: not just from the streets, but from within the party organisation as well.

At this point, it is as well to remember that the SED is not only a mass party, but one with considerable political roots in the East German masses. In some respects, there are strong similarities with the Czechoslovak Communist Party: but while the KSC is almost equally as strong as the SED in proportion to the size of the country even today, the historical roots of socialism and communism in East Germany are considerably stronger than in Czechoslovakia, and, above all, the SED has not gone through anything like 1968 and its aftermath. The reform wing of the KSC was pulverised by the Warsaw Pact invasion and its aftermath and the party is but a pale and demoralised shadow of its former self. The SED, by contrast, is only now entering into its first ever period of genuine reform and open debate: for four decades, the pressure from West Germany and the "siege mentality" engendered by it had submerged its considerable reformist potential in an iron discipline and unity. It took a popular rebellion to break this unity, but at the same time there is enough vitality and energy left in the ranks of the SED for it not to simply crumble but be able to respond politically.

The speed and decisiveness of the party's moves demonstrated this. The media changed from one day to the next, with East German television, run by the same people as before, suddenly producing output of such quality and interest that even the West Germans are clamouring to receive it. The opening of the frontier was an inspired gamble, removing one of the chief causes of the unrest and at the same time demonstrating the commitment of most citizens to the GDR.

The other main demand, however, is still waiting to be met: free elections. The blatant manipulation of the local election result in May 1989 had been a focus of widespread protests, with Krenz suspected of direct personal involvement in the fraud. A new electoral law has been promised, with actual elections following as soon as possible (certainly in 1990), but the real significance of this issue lies not in the formal rules of inter-party competition, but in the history of the SED itself. The party was formed in 1946 from a – not entirely voluntary – fusion between the communist (KPD) and social-democratic (SPD) parties in the then Soviet-occupied zone of Germany. This part of Germany had always been the stronghold of the left,



Demanding free elections outside the GDR parliament

and both parties were of approximately equal strength (600,000 members each) at the time of the fusion. Even now, four decades and many purges later, there is little doubt that the SED harbours a substantial social-democratic element – not only SPD veterans, but also younger activists attracted by the SPD tradition in their disillusionment with the Stalinism of their leadership. At the same time, nobody doubts that the majority of the East German working class continues to look to the West German SPD for political leadership and inspiration. One of the big questions of the forthcoming struggle within the SED will be whether or not this social-democratic tradition finds independent organisational expression again. If it does, it will split the SED

and reduce the party to a communist rump within weeks. If not, if the SED leadership should be successful in containing the inevitable resurgence of social democracy within its own organisational structures, its chances of survival will be considerably enhanced.

An opinion poll conducted for a West German magazine immediately after the opening of the Berlin Wall returned the following voting intentions in the event of free elections:

SDP (East German social democrats)	20%
SPD (West German social democrats)	15%
New Forum	14%
SED	13%
CDU (West)	11%
LDPD (East German liberals)	9%
FDP (West German liberals)	8%
Greens	5%
CDU (East)	2%

Despite the relatively small sample and otherwise questionable methodology of the poll, the results are probably reasonably representative in so far as they show the SED in a minority, but an overall broad majority of essentially pro-socialist currents (SDP, SPD, New Forum, SED, Greens) over openly rightist and pro-capitalist forces.

The opposition

The banners and slogans on the mass demonstrations clearly showed that, for the time being at least, the traditional non-communist parties have been clearly eclipsed by the new groupings to emerge from the opposition, above all the New Forum which now claims more than 200,000 members. If immediate elections were held with New Forum participating, it could well overtake the SED itself on the crest of the present wave of popular mobilisation. However, not only are the promised free elections likely to be a few months away, it is also by no means certain that the New Forum would contest them. Its leaders are clearly split as to whether the movement should confine itself to the role of a non-party pressure group for



democratisation or seek to transform itself into a political party.

Like the New Forum, the other and much smaller opposition groups (sometimes with overlapping membership) – Democracy Now (Demokratie Jetzt), Democratic Renewal (Demokratischer Aufbruch), and the Social-Democratic Party of the GDR (SDP der DDR) – have their roots, and draw their leaders, from the church-centred peace and ecology groups of the late Honecker era. Protestant pastors still constitute a significant section of their leading activists and spokespersons, as do academics and young people with little political and organisational experience. Their authority in the democracy movement is largely a moral one and little is known of their detailed political views.

The most striking feature, however, especially in contrast to the Polish and Hungarian oppositions, is the virtual absence of any open sympathies for capitalism. The SDP alone has included a call for a "social market economy" – the ideological formula for the West German "economic miracle" popularised by Adenauer's CDU in the 1950s – into its founding statement, but its spokespersons have subsequently made clear that their understanding of this term has little in common with Western-style capitalism. The dominant ideology in the opposition appears to be a kind of mixture between Gorbachevism, the radical ecologism of the West German Greens, and the pacifism of the church-oriented peace movement. There are also, however, a number of more explicitly socialist, Marxist groups which cross the thin dividing line between the ruling SED and the opposition, such as the United Left group which claimed several hundred active members in factories, party cells, colleges and churches even before the mass upsurge, and has called for the GDR to present a socialist alternative to the market-oriented reforms in Hungary and Poland.

On the other hand, the predominance of highly political street demonstrations has so far meant that the working class, the hegemonic force in East German society, has not yet found an independent voice of its

The citizens of Leipzig demand: dialogue not violence. More democracy, more socialism! Legalise New Forum!



Politburo reformer Günter Schabowski

own. Few genuine working-class cadres are yet to be found among the two to three thousand members of the SDP, and independent trade unionism has not taken off after the formation of a break-away union under the name "Reform" in an East Berlin electronics factory. Until now, at least, the activity of the workers seems to have been directed primarily at the structures of the official trade union FDGB, which has already experienced a series of purges from top to bottom and is doing its utmost to distance itself from the SED leadership and the old regime – no doubt mindful of the fate of the official Polish unions in 1980.

The dynamic of reform

The first phase of the East German revolution is completed, but what now? The programme of the new government and the newly-adopted Action Programme of the SED are full of the phraseology of economic reform and political democratisation, but few have a clear idea as to what the GDR may look like in, say, five years – or indeed whether it will still be there at all.

In terms of policy-making, the SED still has the initiative. The special Party Congress scheduled for December is thus of the utmost importance, as in the current turmoil nothing can be taken for granted. Since the leadership will be unable to control the selection of the delegates in the present climate, the congress should give a reasonable representation of the currents in the party. Krenz will be fighting for his political life against the reformist tide, with Günter Schabowski, the respected East Berlin leader, waiting in the wings to take over. Two issues will be at the centre of the debate: the relationship with West Germany and the extent of the projected marketisation of the economy. Hovering over it all will be the twin spectres of reunification and social democracy.

The dilemma is the following: if, to address its economic problems, the GDR throws its doors wide open to West German capital, the rationale for its existence as a separate German state will quickly be eroded. Yet to resist the lure of the West German embrace and turn the GDR into the sort of socialist state that comes close to Honecker's anniversary phantasies, the most radical social, political and economic experiment since the Paris Commune will be required. Either way, the bureaucracy will lose its power and privileges. Since the West German option offers at least a slow



**Hans Modrow,
new Prime
Minister**

and lingering death plus the opportunity for sections of the bureaucracy to jump onto the capitalist bandwagon, it is certain to drift into that direction. On the other hand, much of the party ranks, including those who would call themselves social democrats rather than communists, will instinctively resist that trend and can be expected to mount the sort of socialist challenge which the dejected remnants of the Polish and Hungarian parties are no longer capable of.

As to the other government parties – the Liberals (LDPD), Christian Democrats (CDU), Farmers (DBD) and National Democrats (NDPD) – only the Liberals and Christian Democrats are of any independent significance. They will form the more or less open pro-capitalist wing of the regime, materially and ideologically aided by their West German counterparts, as they shed the handcuffs tying them to the SED and rebuild their political and organisational identities. Both, however, have only a slim social base to represent, as the East German middle classes have long



China - Local elections - Krenz?



Not Krenz alone, Modrow must come in



**Free elections
Rehabilitate Professor Robert Havemann
He who lies once will never be believed again
New elections for a new road
Concessions are not a turn!**

since emigrated to the West. Neither a (non-existent) small-holding peasantry, nor the (culturally marginal) Protestant church will provide substantial allies, so the national question will be the main card for them to play.

The key to the future of the GDR therefore lies with the working class and the opposition. The workers are, by and large, well aware that capitalism is no land of

milk and honey. They view the socialised property relations as a positive achievement and are imbued with a strongly egalitarian ethos. Nor are there any significant pro-capitalist, or pro-reunification, currents in the opposition groups. But the broad unity of purpose uniting the New Forum et al at present will soon give way to the emergence of different perspectives and tendencies. But this process of clarification will not be solely, or even primarily, an intellectual-ideological process.

For there are very concrete issues to be resolved: in the economy, the management of enterprises and the setting of production targets. One of the gravest problems confronting the GDR is the appalling record of the old regime on environmental matters, but to break with the tonnage ideology of the Stalinist planning system, especially under conditions of economic crisis, requires a radical reshaping of the decision-making structures. More or less the same applies to the education sector, cultural life, local government, the mass organisations. The GDR is fortunate in many respects when compared with its East European neighbours: it is much more homogenous socially and ethnically, with no national minorities or pronounced class differences. It is a fairly small and, at the same time, wealthy and developed society. There are few complicating distractions – the immediate and burning issue is that of political power and democracy.

The stakes are high

A socialist Germany, the industrial powerhouse in the heart of Europe, has always been the dream of the labour movement. The Bolshevik revolution was built on the premiss of that dream being realised, Hitler's Nazis were unleashed to ensure it was not. In a sense, the GDR symbolises in its existence all the victories and defeats of twentieth-century socialism: the military advance of the Red Army to Berlin, the suffocating weight of the fat bureaucratic arse sitting on the workers it claims to represent. Only half of Germany, and only half the way towards socialism.

Yet if the GDR was to be reabsorbed into West European capitalism under the guise of German unity now, this would be a terrible blow for socialism. Of course it was the division of Germany and the paralysis of the German working class brought about by the imposition of the Pax Americana and Stalinism which lay at the heart of the post-war order in Europe. It remains true that even if such reunification under capitalism were to be the outcome of the present upheaval, it would still be preferable to the maintenance of the GDR by force of arms. But the breathtaking power and discipline of the mass mobilisations this autumn, the dignity of the millions visiting the West and then returning home to build a better future for themselves, coupled with the historic hegemony of socialism in Eastern Germany and the fact that capitalist property and the capitalist class have already been purged from GDR society, make it possible to aim higher: for the creation of the first living example of socialist democracy in an industrially and culturally advanced country. Literally within months, East Germany could be more democratic than any capitalist state, and more prosperous than most. The consequences for the political climate and the terms of political debate in Europe East and West would be incalculable. ■

Chronology

17 January 1988

Several leading opposition activists arrested and temporarily expelled to West – including Bärbel Bohley, now a spokesperson of the New Forum.

26 June 1989

Protestant Church demands Soviet-style reforms in GDR.

7 May

More than 100 people arrested in Leipzig elsewhere after opposition monitoring of local elections reveals large-scale fraud.

8 August

West Germany closes embassies first in East Berlin, then Prague, Warsaw and Budapest after these are flooded with East German emigres.

10 September

Hungary opens border with Austria and allows East Germans to leave.

11 September

New Forum formed. Its appeal signed by thousands despite harassment and arrests.

2 October

10,000 join demonstration in Leipzig.

4 October

Violent clashes with police in Dresden as 5,000 storm railway station when transit train from Warsaw passes through.

5 October

Visa now required for travel to Czechoslovakia.

7 October

Gorbachev visits East Berlin for 40th anniversary celebrations. Thousands demonstrate all over the GDR, suffering brutal attacks by state security police.

9 October

70,000 demonstrating in Leipzig. Local party leaders offer dialogue.

10 October

Meeting between opposition and local party leaders in Dresden. 500 arrested demonstrators released.

14 October

SED organ Neues Deutschland publishes readers' letters demanding reform.

15 October

First country-wide conference of New Forum.

16 October

120,000 demonstrate in Leipzig.

18 October

Honecker resigns. Egon Krenz new General Secretary.

4 November

Over a million demonstrate in East Berlin. The rally is transmitted live on television.

9 November

Travel restrictions lifted. Millions visit West Berlin and West Germany. Number of emigres drops dramatically.

13 November

400,000 demonstrate in Leipzig for free elections.

United Left

The following text was adopted by a group of several hundred socialist Christians, workers and SED members in September 1989, and has become known as the Böhlen Platform after the small town where the meeting took place.

Appeal: For a united Left in the GDR!

Faced with the continuing economic stagnation and deepening political crisis in our country, we address this appeal to all political forces in the GDR which favour a democratic and free socialism. A left alternative concept for change is ever more necessary!

We are very conscious of the difficult starting position: the discrediting of a socialist perspective by what the rulers here have deformed into a caricature of the old aims of the workers' movement has produced more disillusionment and passivity than courageous and problem-oriented thinking and activity in the population. And yet there are not only waves of emigration but also growing numbers of people who want to stay here and change things. For this reason, it is now more important than ever before to build a broad consensus among the left and to draw up a realistic, politically feasible and thorough programme for the socialist transformation of the GDR. This is true for several reasons:

To begin with, the process of renewal in the USSR shows that deep reforms of "actually existing socialism" are not only necessary but possible. On the other hand, the dangerous political turbulences as a result of starting the social renewal much too late speak a clear language in the USSR and Poland: The conflicts in the USSR, now out of control because they have built up over decades, or the effective neutralisation of communist, socialist and even social-democratic thought as a result of the bankruptcy of the PUWP and the still unsolved Stalinist heritage of the Communist Parties are clear demonstrations of what happens if delayed change coincides with the absence of viable socialist concepts. The example of Hungary also shows how under such conditions an improvised borrowing from the arsenal of market economics in order to promote economic reform can itself crises and social divergence. If we in the GDR also allow the accumulating political, economic and social problems of overdue reform to turn into dramatic panic moves, the dangers of a sell-out to capitalism or of a neo-Stalinist military dictatorship will become very real.

However, the GDR and Czechoslovakia offer the best economic and political preconditions for a successful radical social change in a socialist direction, if the strong socialist potential can be mobilised again for such a perspective. If it is these two countries which appear to remain far removed from today's developments, it is not only the political bureaucracy which is to blame. There is also the relatively favourable economic situation, enabling the rulers to continue their conservative course based on a few elements of economic reform for as long as the social tensions remain manageable.

We consider that the GDR, in particular, is faced with a historic opportunity for the radical renewal of the socialist vision of society. If we delay, the

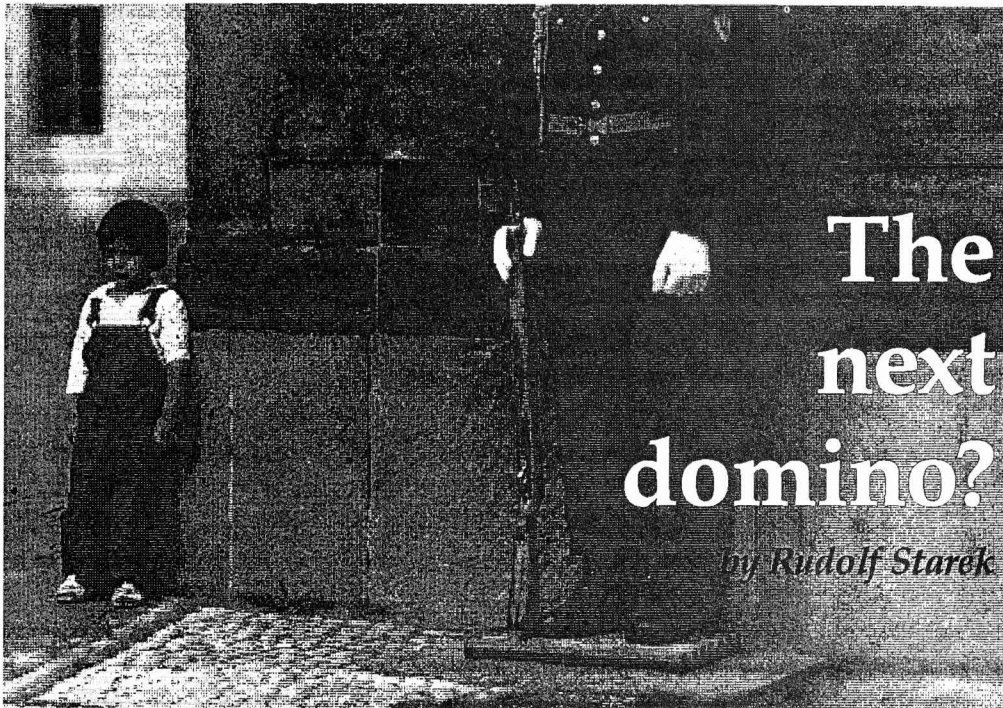
consequences would suspend the prospects of a society that is socially just and guarantees free development to each individual for a long time to come.

The external conditions for radical renewal are complicated enough: under modern international capitalism, the disillusionment of the working people with the ineffectiveness of the social-democratic model of the welfare state fosters the continuing neo-conservative turn to the right. The trade unions have their backs to the wall. The decline in the influence of the West European Communist Parties and their galloping social-democratisation must be called dramatic. The internationalism of the communist mass parties has effectively ceased to exist, even when compared to the still functioning, but nonetheless pathetic, internationalism of social democracy. The fascination with the encouraging escape of the CPSU from the ghetto of stagnation, Stalinism and power usurpation is gradually giving way to concern that the growing centrifugal forces may break more than just the obstacles to a socialist development. The economic transformation in the reformist countries does not work or uses dubious methods. The deficits in the radical renewal of theoretical ideas based on Marxist foundations are catastrophic.

And yet there is a chance: a sovereign turn in the direction of socialism would today no longer be threatened by the military intervention of "fraternal allies". Due to the desolate economic situation, the dangers arising from the political intervention of the West via the channels of "economic cooperation" are much larger. The decisive question remains the social base, the political maturity and the programmatic seriousness of the socialist forces in the country itself. For us, this means to try and regain this base under the conditions prevailing in the GDR. The conditions are unquestionably more favourable here than in the other socialist countries - irrespective of the continuing political repression which extends to left-wing forces, too, and in particular. The left in the GDR cannot afford sectarianism. It must be the driving force in a coalition of reason which is based on the multitude of socialist political and social forces in the GDR, but is also capable of offering a perspective to all social and political groups. A united left must therefore within a very short time elaborate a programme for political and economic transformation which can attract broad social support in its realisation. Nobody, and that includes members of the SED, who wants to take part in the process of renewal must be excluded from it. On the other hand recent experiences have again shown what an unprincipled social philosophy can lead to. We therefore strongly reject the "replacement" of the politico-bureaucratic repression by capitalist exploitation.

The Left must unite on the following principles

- social ownership of the means of production as the foundation and perspective of socialist nationalisation;
- extending the self-management of the producers in the course of implementing the real socialisation of all economic activity;
- the uncompromising implementation of the principle of social security and justice for all members of society;
- political democracy, legality, realisation of all human rights and the free development of the individuality of each member of society;
- the ecological transformation of industrial society.



The next domino?

by Rudolf Starek

TRAVELLING IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA these days engenders the most peculiar feelings. On the surface, the structures of neo-Stalinism remain firmly in the place they have occupied for the last twenty years. But everyday the country appears more and more like a historical museum, a fascinating monument on the verge of collapse.

The collapse of party authority in East Germany has had an enormous impact on both the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) and on the opposition. 1990 looms threateningly for the present leadership in Czechoslovakia as it desperately seeks for ways to maintain the party's leading role. This is almost certain to be undermined beyond repair over the next year, but as yet nobody is quite sure whence the impulse for change will come.

Unrest in the party ranks

The party faces four major and ultimately intractable problems. The first lies within the structures of party control. Internally, evidence is emerging of rank-and-file dissatisfaction with the leadership. During the recent annual plenary sessions of the basic organisations (ZO), there was widespread criticism of the Central Committee's campaign against the opposition's appeal *Several Sentences (Nekolik vet)* and against some of its signatories. Several basic organisations agreed that a political battle with the opposition was justified but that the repressive measures were inappropriate.

The actual mood and contents of the ZO meetings was not reported in the press except in coded form, but there have been some striking manifestations of a slow ideological fragmentation in the party and associated organisations. Tomas Hradilek, one of the current Charter spokespeople, who is under close police scrutiny, has reported how in the Moravian town Lipnik nad Bečvou, where he lives, party activists have vigorously defended his right to contribute at public meetings of the local National Front (NF) when the chair attempted to eject or muzzle him. There is considerable ferment, by Czechoslovak standards, in two of the KSC's allied parties in the NF, the Socialist

Party (CSS) and the People's Party (CSL). Despite heavy censorship, their two newspapers, *Svobodne Slovo* (The Free Word) and *Lidova Demokracie* (Popular Democracy) bear obvious witness to this. A growing faction in the CSS, grouped around the bulletin *Democrat* published in Prague, is openly talking of the deep alienation between the party leadership and the population. It demands a thorough democratisation of society, implying the necessity of a dialogue with the opposition.

Many journalists on *Svobodne Slovo* and *Lidova Demokracie* were among the original 110 writers who signed the petition demanding the release of Rudolf Zeman and Jiri Ruml, the two editors of the opposition magazine *Lidove noviny*, who face charges of subversion. Even more striking than their signatures were those of journalists working on *Svoboda*, the daily of the KSC in Central Bohemia, and *Zemedelske noviny* (Agricultural News). It has also been rumoured that two writers on *Rude Pravo* signed the petition but requested that their signatures be not published. Many opposition activists were particularly encouraged by the cooperation between party and non-party members on the Zeman/Ruml petition. Until now, the opposition has been searching rather hopelessly for striking up contacts with reformist party members. The petition is the first example of ties between these two groups developing.

The leadership must be aware that opposition is growing at the middle levels of the party apparatus. It has two weapons with which to contain its development, one passive, one active. Firstly it can rely on the general fear of reform, often bordering on terror, within the KSC (which, it must be remembered, is a large organisation – one in five Czechoslovaks belong to it). Almost nobody in the country now believes (particularly since Honecker's resignation in the GDR) that the KSC can maintain a significant role in Czechoslovak politics if it attempts to search for a legitimacy beyond the Soviet invasion of 1968. Should the cracks in party unity at the ZOs become obvious, then the outward solidarity in the Presidium would also collapse rapidly. Already there is a split in the

party's leading organ between Milos Jakes, on the one hand, who controls seven members, and Ladislav Adamec, the rather spineless technocrat Prime Minister, who has the support of four members, on the other. For the moment, however, this split remains very much behind closed doors.

Threat of extinction

Dialogue and reform means the end of the KSC as a significant political force in Czechoslovakia. In 1968 the party still enjoyed enough authority to regain the mass popular support which it had counted on in the immediate post-war period and then lost during the fifties and early sixties. But the experience of normalisation and the refusal to adapt to the changing political climate in its four socialist neighbours has meant that any residual affection for the KSC has been more or less wiped out. That more than 10 000 citizens are not prepared to demonstrate in Prague on anniversaries reflects the partial success of the KSC in maintaining living standards where Poland and Hungary have failed. But as East Germany demonstrated quite clearly, economic security cannot guarantee endless toleration for the suppression of democratic and civil rights.

With the threat of extinction hanging over them, many party members, in particular nomenklatura cadres, prefer to fight on the side of the devil they know. Conversely, of course, there are members who recognise that change is inevitable and in order to survive in the future they are slowly reassessing their position.

The main reason why the reformist wing of the KSC remains small and uncoordinated can be largely explained by the rigid control which the Presidium maintains over the Central Committee and by extension the CC over the regional and district organisations. In

position. For the moment it is always the same 5,000 to 10,000 faces which brighten up Wenceslas Square and the old town on the days of the demonstrations. Brno, where there is a lot of lively opposition activity otherwise, can barely muster a few hundred while in Bratislava there have been no demonstrations since a single act of defiance by 2,000 Catholics in March 1988. Provided the size of these demonstrations does not increase and provided the riot police avoid killing anybody (although this cannot be excluded), this type of protest is unlikely to set the ball of change in motion.

Besides Charter 77, the main opposition groups are HOS (*Hnutí pro občanskou svobodu* – The Movement for Civil Freedom) comprising largely liberal Charter signatories like Rudolf Battek, Ladislav Lis but importantly also the Catholic national activist, Jan Carnogursky; the NMS (*Nezavisle Mirove Sdruzeni* – Independent Peace Association) whose leading figures, like Jana Petrova, Hana Marvanova and Tomas Dvorak are young liberal and socialist democrats; *Obroda* (Renewal), comprising ex-communists still identified with left social democracy and euro-communism (Milos Hajek, Venek Silhan et al). Within Charter there are also identifiable groups around Dubcek, Vaclav Slavik and Cestmir Cisar; Jiri Dienstbier, Vaclav Maly, Vaclav Havel and Vaclav Benda, although some of these informal groupings are quite fluid. In addition there are, of course, broad-based expressions of solidarity like *Nekolik vet* and petitions in support of persecuted individuals.

As Jiri Dienstbier has recently pointed out in *LN*, the opposition lacks a cohesive political programme. It is clearly failing to generate active support among the masses and is also unable to allay the fears of the party rank-and-file and its middle apparatus that it can offer them some political perspective for the future. Informal discussions are underway between several groups about how their work can be coordinated, but this has yet to bear fruit.

Although organised opposition has swelled perceptibly in the last eighteen months and attracts passive support from the population, it is not yet sufficient in itself to force the party to alter its fundamental hostility to these social forces. Nonetheless, the opposition has drawn great strength from another of the party's major problems – developments in other socialist countries – and will continue to do so.

The East German events prove to everybody just how quickly even the most entrenched neo-Stalinist system can now disappear in Eastern Europe. It is a frightening example for the KSC. But it has a further and equally worrying implication. Both Poland and Hungary have now denounced the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia unequivocally. If the GDR were to add its voice to the condemnation, that may well be enough to persuade the Soviet Union to do the same. The CPSU has already prepared a reassessment of the Soviet invasion. It has not yet published the document because to do so would lead to short-term political chaos in Czechoslovakia for which the CPSU is apparently not yet prepared. But Czechoslovakia and the fate of the KSC is definitely high up the Soviet foreign policy agenda. Since August this year a number of articles critical of the current leadership and the events surrounding the invasion have appeared in the Soviet press, and not just in the liberal journals but in *Izvestia* and *Pravda* as well. This publicity culminated in early November with a documentary on the Prague Spring broadcast by Leningrad television, which included an interview with Dubcek. For Soviet viewers



Demonstrators confronted by police in Wenceslas Square

contrast even with the SED, there is absolutely no individual within the broad leadership of the KSC who looks remotely likely to question the current Presidium's control. The cautious optimism which greeted the appointment of the 43-year-old Miroslav Stepan to the head of the Prague party organisation (and consequently to the Presidium) has been completely wiped out since he identified himself so closely with the police violence employed against demonstrators in January this year. In the most recent demonstration, protesters pointedly chanted "We don't want Stepan!" for a good five minutes while the riot police were bearing down on them.

The opposition

While containing internal dissent, the party is battling with the opposition on a second front. The demonstrations, which began on 21 August 1988 and of which the last one took place on 28 October, contribute to the insecurity which the party leadership feels but they clearly do not represent a serious threat to its

this may have been just another gripping example of glasnost, for the KSC it is just short of a death sentence.

According to sources in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, has been in the vanguard of those pressing for the reassessment of 1968 to be made public. On 27 October, Adam Michnik's interview with him was published in Solidarity's daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Michnik clearly spent some time pressing Shevardnadze on Czechoslovakia. His answers were predictably ambiguous. *Rude Pravo* quoted him and suggested that his remarks amounted to absolute support for the KSC's position. Shevardnadze pointed out that, because six members of the Warsaw Pact had been actively or passively involved in the invasion, then any revision would need the approval of all sides. While this conveniently side-steps the issue, it implies that the Czechoslovak interpretation of 1968 is by no means the only one. In fact, the only position that matters is the Soviet position as Shevardnadze is well aware. The question is what is the Soviet position on 1968? At the moment, it is a defensive position, but probably the most important thing that Shevardnadze told Michnik was that "Czechoslovakia is a difficult, delicate and complicated problem", i.e. it is not the closed book that the KSC Presidium would have us believe.

The final difficulty confronting the party is the economy. There is no doubt that the Czechoslovak economy is considerably healthier than its counterparts in Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union. In recent months, there has been a staggering increase in the amount of short-term tourist traffic from these three countries into Czechoslovakia which has become the centre of black market activity and soft currency speculation in Eastern Europe. In the short term, the party must maintain the flow of consumer goods into the shops to prevent the economy from contributing to the political crisis. This has been threatened by the wholesale purchase of goods by Hungarians, Poles, Soviets and Yugoslavs which are either unavailable or more expensive in their own countries. The Czechoslovak authorities have now introduced emergency customs regulations which prevent the export of all basic goods, including petrol and foodstuffs, unless they are paid for in hard currency. The regulations would have had to be introduced under any political circumstances, but having done so

the government runs the risk of starting a trade war with its allies.

On 1 January 1990, *prestavba* (perestroika) was due to start in earnest with most enterprises being forced to go over to the system of self-financing. The concomitant dangers of inflation and unemployment which Czechoslovak economists have observed in Poland and Hungary have now, however, persuaded the government to maintain strict central control over those enterprises which employ large numbers of workers. The aim in doing so is clearly political. The opposition may not be able to mobilise workers in large numbers, but social and economic insecurity certainly will. The Komarek Report, a long-term economic analysis provided by the *Prognostický ústav* (Institute for Forecasting) in Prague, has made it crystal clear that, if the Czechoslovak economy does not undergo an extensive overhaul and reform, it is likely to go into reverse growth by the late 1990s. Although it does not say so explicitly, the Komarek Report implies that the leading role of the party is the main contributory factor to the country's economic stagnation. Subjectively the economy affords the party an important sense of security at the moment. It is the highest card that it holds. Whether it is enough to outstrip the rest, which appear stacked against the party, is another question.

Slovakia

With the exception of the reassessment of the invasion, all these problems facing the party are exacerbated by the national question. Just as a neglect of Slovakia provided a key impetus for reform in the 1960s, so it does now. Neither the party nor the opposition have come to terms with Slovakia properly. There are broad areas of cooperation between the Czech and Slovak opposition which remain unexplored largely as a result of Czech ignorance and disinterest concerning Slovakia. The party in Slovakia is now running a risk of mobilising new sources of resistance by the staging of trials against leading opposition figures there, most noticeably Jan Carnogursky and Miroslav Kusy.

The pall of normalisation still hangs suffocatingly over all Czechoslovakia, but nothing can stop the growing belief that the end of neo-Stalinism is now in sight. It is a question of when and, even more importantly, of how. Under which particular pressure or pressures will the KSC finally buckle?

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The difficult path to the future

The political struggle through the eyes of a sociologist

The author, a leading member of the independent socialist movement in the Soviet Union and the Moscow Popular Front, was awarded the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize this year. The following text is part of a forthcoming collection of essays by Kagarlitsky to be published by Verso Books.

by **BORIS KAGARLITSKY**

Perestroika is not bearing its anticipated fruits. This assertion, which until recently would have seemed heretical, has today become banal. Perhaps the significant part of Soviet society, which greeted the changes with enthusiasm, was, like many figures in the country's top leadership, initially unaware of the scale of the approaching difficulties. But, in any case, in the fourth year of the transformations, we are encountering the aggravation of numerous social and national conflicts and we can verify both the slippage of the reforms and the half-hearted and inconsistent character of the measures adopted. The well-known economist, Otto Latsis, has compared the Soviet economy to an aeroplane which cannot pull out of a dive and is hurtling towards the earth. So what is really going on?

At first commentators attempted, in the pages of thick literary journals and fashionable progressive weeklies, to explain all the troubles through the ideological heritage of the past and complained of "Stalinism" and "conservatism". The more confused and disturbing the present and our uncertain future became, the more space was devoted to history in the pages of the press. Unquestionably a country must know its own past. The concealment from the people of the truth about the events of the 1930s and 1940s was in itself a crime. But when stories about the past gradually become a substitute for honest discussion of the present, when the latest publication of Stalin's evil deeds takes the place which should have been filled by information about the current moment, when newspapers reporting the news from thirty years ago decide not to write about what is happening before our very eyes, then this leads to worrying thoughts. The ever-lengthening lists of posthumous rehabilitations and so belated posthumous condemnations explain nothing and do little to help people standing in queues by empty shelves. The long drawn-out trial of history does not bring us a step closer to a genuine historical analysis of the past and present.

It is however essential that history is indeed addressed. In order to understand one's own society, to explain who is acting today and for what, one must return once again to the past, but looking at it from a sociological and not a moralistic point of view.

The Statocracy

Shaken by the scale of the experiences that have befallen our country, we forget at times that our drama is by no means unique. Only occasionally, when

coming across some instance of bureaucratic idiocy in another part of the globe, does a Soviet person exclaim, with a laugh of delight and indignation: "How awful; just like us!". Soviet commentators continue to demonstrate to their readers that the "administrative system" of governing society and the economy was exclusively the fault of Stalin and his entourage in destroying the magnificent edifice of Lenin's New Economic Policy. At the same time it remains an indisputable fact that, throughout this century, analogous processes have taken place in many other countries, completely without Stalin's intervention.

In Eastern Europe in 1945-49, the Soviet model was copied thanks to the presence there of our forces and advisers, and also thanks to Stalinist control of the fraternal communist parties. Both Yugoslavia and China, however, developed comparatively independently but repeated a great deal of our experience. And so it is with Mexico where structures, amazingly similar to those in the Soviet Union, beginning with the one-party system and ending with administrative management of the economy, formed from the 1930s to the 1960s, while ideologically and strategically this country invariably remained part of the Western world. How does this explain the universal inclination of African countries, on gaining independence, to copy our pattern (the more so as this applies in equal degrees to regimes orienting to the USSR and to those receiving support from the West). Why, in the 1960s and 70s, did the South Korean regime, which has consistently adhered to anti-communist ideology and a capitalist orientation, increasingly resort to utilising techniques borrowed from the arsenal of "administrative" planning (five-year plans, centralised state investment, state intervention into the formation of the organisational structure of corporations, strict control over financial institutions)? And, incidentally, how is the massive interest in our administrative methods in the West in the late 1950s and early 1960s to be explained? A description of the structure of the capitalist firm of that period is strikingly similar to a description of our ministries and departments at that time - a fact which served as an initial impulse to the appearance of a theory, which is so fashionable here at present, that of "convergence" - the drawing together of the two systems.

At first glance the incontrovertible successes of the "administrative system" in the 1950s and '60s, which allowed us in only a short period to approach the level

of the most advanced states of the West in some branches, seem mysterious. Another circumstance, which seems no less strange from the standpoint of the now generally accepted approaches, is that wherever a policy analogous to our NEP has been introduced, it has either been wound up over the course of time (for example in China in the 1950s) or it has led to stagnation and crisis (the classic example being Yugoslavia).

All this leads to the idea that the processes occurring in our country can be explained not only by "political mistakes" or "unique" circumstances but also by definite general laws. These laws have been traced in part in the works of radical Western economists or touched upon in the publications of some Soviet researchers (primarily M. Cheshkov).

The fact is that countries which have started late on the path of industrialisation have everywhere found themselves in no position to repeat the "classic" Western European variant. The formation of the English bourgeoisie took centuries. The conditions of the epoch of primary accumulation and great geographical discoveries, which gave rise to capitalist industry in the West, can in no sense be reproduced in the twentieth century. The late-starters have not only had to develop at other tempos, but in quite different, rather less favourable conditions; in essence they have had to travel a completely different path. The weak national bourgeoisie has almost everywhere proved not to have the power to carry out modernisation; it has not sustained its tempos and has been in no position to ensure competent management. The situation has been exacerbated by the fact that the traditional structures of market capitalism have been subject to crisis even in the West itself. The role of the state has increased, bureaucracy has expanded, big national, and then also international, monopolies have formed, which has made the position of the "novices" and the "weak" on the world market extremely difficult and limited their opportunities for growth.

The problems have accumulated more quickly than they have been solved. In such situations, crises, shocks and revolutions have occurred almost everywhere, the victim of which has been the old privileged classes which, having undertaken the modernisation of their countries, have been unable to achieve it. The transformation of Iran's "economic miracle" into a totalitarian hell is only the latest example of the failure of capitalist modernisation. Russia was the first.

The defeat of the old ruling classes in the course of revolutions and overturns could not, however, mean an end to the transformations. There has been no return to the patriarchal past. Once it has entered the modern world, a country must live by its laws. Thereafter the continuation of the changes could only be the state's affair. This has happened in a majority of countries, which have aspired to catch up with the industrial West. It was here that this process assumed its most finished forms.

New people and new groups have come to power but the state apparatus, which frequently only grew and became stronger during the revolutionary upheavals, has remained the sole force capable in practice of resolving the strategic tasks of development on a country-wide scale.

The most natural methods of management for the apparatus have undoubtedly proved to be precisely administrative. If reliance on the market produced undeniable short-term results by helping increase the supply of commodities in the shops and by initially

strengthening the people's confidence in the new power, then it could not resolve a single long-term task of modernisation. The shortage of investment and modern technology has been maintained, rates of growth have remained insufficiently high and, most important, extremely unstable. In the end, the new elite has been able to achieve its tasks most effectively and quickly precisely through administrative and not market methods. This has enabled forces and resources to be concentrated on the principal paths of development in order to find, in Stalin's expression, the "decisive link" and there secure the "breakthrough". For the apparatus, the cost of this success has remained a secondary question.

Our commentators, absorbed in disputes about centralised planning and the market, have avoided paying attention to the question of the social essence of the new bureaucracy. But it is precisely the interests and conditions of existence of the new state stratum, its class nature, which have predetermined the choice of one method or another. Turning the state into the monopoly owner and prime conductor of economic development has decisively altered the role of the bureaucracy. In the classical feudal or capitalist society described by Marx, the "bureaucracy" is above all the executive apparatus of the ruling class. But, it does have its own interests and, at times, it escapes control, giving rise to absurd situations in the spirit of a Franz Kafka novel, but it still remains only the executor of strategic decisions formulated elsewhere.

In the new conditions, however, when the bureaucracy becomes the sole privileged group in society, when all economic and political power is unavoidably concentrated in the central organs of the state, the essence of the bureaucracy changes. The past rather than the present makes it like the caste of old-style officialdom. But it is no longer simply an apparatus but a "class-apparatus", a special social group standing above society. Some sociologists have even introduced a specific term: "statocracy" (etokratia from the French "etat" - state) so as not to confuse the apparatchiks of the new formation with the old officialdom. Can one speak in this case of the origin of a "new class"? Perhaps some very important reservations should be made here. It is unclear whether it is possible in general to speak of "classes" in the traditional sense of the word in such a society.

Engels wrote in his time that, in seventeenth-century Germany there was not a singly fully-formed class (although, naturally, there were oppressors and oppressed). A society, which has experienced terror, wars and, last but not least, all the social effects of forced modernisation with the mass resettlement of people from the countryside to the towns, the eradication of all the old ties and traditions, becomes for a certain period a society of declassés. Terror and war, hunger and political upheavals have done their work. The people have become socially alienated. Millions of peasants, relocated in towns and placed at a bench, have not yet formed a genuine working class. The proportion of hereditary town-dwellers and hereditary workers, not to mention hereditary intellectuals, in society has fallen continuously over a period of many years. The mass of workers has had no opportunity independently to elaborate either its own traditions or its own ideology. In the countryside itself, the old patriarchal way of life, which had existed for centuries, collapsed. Sociologists have talked about "de-peasantisation", of the loss of the link with the soil and of the disappearance of the last vestiges of the village commune ('obshchina').

The comparison with Germany at the time of the Thirty Years War shows that we were far from the first declassé society in the history of mankind. An expert on China has termed ancient Eastern society a "sack of potatoes". Each potato is separate; they are united into a single whole only by the sack – the state. The greater the danger that the potatoes will spill out, the tighter the strings of the sack are pulled. Between the individual and the state there was no intermediary. All the structures that could fulfil this role – trade unions,

parties, social organisations – had themselves become part of the state. People appeared and disappeared in the barracks and communal quarters, but neither the appearance of some or the disappearance of others altered the customary order, which was dictated above all by the needs of the state. The state provided work and bread, guaranteed elementary survival and took what it deemed necessary to take (and even the very lives of its subjects when required).

If this state, with all its prisons, planning departments, repressive apparatus and educational system, which combined the teaching of literacy with the inculcation of the habit of unquestioning subordination to the "authorities", suddenly disappeared, society would have been doomed to destruction: people had neither the means nor the skills for self-organisation. They knew nothing of anything else. The viability of society, the permanence of production and the stability of consumption (albeit extremely meagre) was guaranteed by the stability of the state system.

Those at the top were, in their way, no less declassé than those at the bottom. The privileged stratum, the statocracy, did not possess its own social structure differentiating it from the structure of the apparatus of power. The developed classes in bourgeois society easily withstand crises of the political system. This is not simply a matter of private property, but of the complex system of mutual ties and traditions, which socially consolidate both the higher and lower orders. In our case, however, any political crisis turns into the threat of social catastrophe. From this derives the statocracy's natural conservatism and fear of any political reforms. But this has the reverse effect: any, even the most moderate, attempts at reform have turned into political and social crises.

"Khrushchevism" and "Brezhnevism"

To deny the successes of the "administrative system" is as naive as to deny history itself. Centralised management has assisted the concentration of resources for industrialisation and forcing the pace of growth. Repression has been essential to keep the masses under control and to make them endure the adversity and social disasters wrought by such a policy. This goal was served by the "propaganda of hate" towards both genuine and imaginary enemies, on to which was transferred all responsibility for the sufferings experienced by the people. Different varieties of the formula "centralisation + repression" have been applied in a majority of the countries, from Mexico to South Korea, that have attempted sharply to accelerate industrial development. But, in our case, one of the conditions of success has been the dynamism of the ruling elite, which had been formed in the course of

revolutionary transformations. Veterans of the revolution were exterminated by Stalin; the old party, which originated in the course of the democratic struggle of Russian society against autocracy, was in fact destroyed, but the revolutionary impulse was still preserved. Both upper and lower orders were convinced they were building a new, socialist society. Within the statocracy itself a kind of "natural selection" took place. The struggle between groups and departments culminated in the physical elimination of the vanquished. The people who survived in this system might have been evil-doers and criminals but they were almost never passive non-entities.

Nevertheless, society could not exist for long in such conditions. They became intolerable even for those at the top. Moreover, the decisions that enabled industry to be rapidly created "in a blank space" were no longer appropriate to running it. The economy was swiftly becoming more complicated. The era of the scientific-technical revolution was approaching. The time of "storm and onslaught" had been replaced by a time of normalisation. If Stalin has for us become the embodiment of the first period, then the second is closely related in the public consciousness with the name of Khrushchev. It is therefore possible to talk about "Khrushchevism" with as much justification as there is to talk about "Stalinism".

Paradoxically, the cessation of repression under Khrushchev was accompanied by the sharp growth of bureaucratism in the economy. Under Stalin the rights and obligations of enterprise and department leaders were very loosely defined. Stalin embodied absolute power, but every minister was a little Stalin in his department and every director was the living incarnation of the "leader of the peoples" in his factory. This despotism gave very broad opportunities to leaders at every level. They could pay with their lives for failure but, in the event of success, nobody was interested in the violation of some petty instructions even if such existed. Insubordination to one's superior could cost one's head, but it was possible to get away with it, or it could even prove a virtue, if the top chief was unexpectedly transferred from his office of state to a prison cell.

The end of despotism turned out to be, at the same time, the triumph of bureaucratism. Thereafter the leaders' power, their rights and obligations, had to be strictly regulated. The ordering of relations between the links of the system was accompanied by an unprecedented growth in the number of officials, the complication of business communication and, in the end, still more bureaucratic muddle.

The curtailment of "natural selection" within the ranks of the statocracy led to a sharp fall in the effectiveness of its actions. Decisiveness and brutality were replaced by conformism and the avoidance of risk. Khrushchev attempted to maintain the apparatus's dynamism through continual organisational shake-ups, but this was contrary to the natural logic of the process of bureaucratic stabilisation begun by Khrushchev himself. The epoch of liberalisation was replaced by the "epoch of stability" or, as it is now usually called, "stagnation". In place of Khrushchev came Brezhnev.

Although these two figures are now always counterposed to one another, in practice, Brezhnev only drew the necessary conclusions from the experience of his predecessor and tried to avoid the contradictory vacillations in course that were typical of Khrushchev. Shake-ups of the apparatus ceased at the same time as social shocks to the lower orders. The



**Nikita Khrushchev
- triumph of
bureaucracy?**

time of universal compromise had begun. For two decades the country did not know war, terror or mass resettlements. The flow of people moving from the countryside to the towns slackened somewhat – the human resources of the village had, in fact, been exhausted. The urban population stabilised; the number of hereditary town-dwellers, including hereditary workers and intellectuals in their second and third generation, began to grow. The policy of "stabilisation" of cadres engendered a semi-feudal system of local and departmental "allodia" with their apanage princes and vassals whose positions were guaranteed for life. This sharply decreased the dynamism of the ruling group but, at first, the country only gained from such changes. Living standards improved, stability reigned at both top and bottom and no one tried to eliminate anyone else. A few dissidents were easily isolated, exiled or subjected to repression, but for the majority of citizens, prepared to fulfil a few generally accepted norms, life remained completely safe. It seemed everyone was contented, but Brezhnev's "historic compromise" bore the seeds of its own destruction.

In order to maintain socio-political stability, it was essential to ensure increasing consumption, rising living standards, an expanding number of bureaucratic posts and also a growing volume of investment so as to satisfy the needs of the burgeoning number of ministries and departments. It was, consequently, essential that high rates of growth be constantly maintained in the economy. At the same time, it was impossible to try and increase the efficiency of the economy through any serious reforms as this would inevitably damage the "policy of stability". The limited reforms undertaken in 1965–69 were curtailed. As it was impossible to lead everything from a single centre like in the old days, and it was simultaneously impossible to alter the balance of forces between the different links of the apparatus, the Brezhnev leadership followed the path of creating more and more new parallel "centres" – specialised departments. This "decentralisation at the centre" confused the situation even more and, in the end, generated new contradictions and conflicts. The only means of maintaining economic growth was to draw a constantly increasing quantity of resources into production. Russia had always been rich in resources. Massive reserves of raw materials including oil, which was becoming dearer in the West, enabled it "to keep afloat". But even in such a rich country as ours resources are not infinite. The economy began to "overheat" and shortages arose of virtually all forms of resources. Despite all efforts, rates of growth began to fall. The painstakingly erected edifice of the social compromise began to show cracks.

The years of stability had, meanwhile, passed to the benefit of society. It was not just a question of the growth of living standards and the education of the population but of the strengthening of social ties, the consolidation of literally all social groups and with it a consciousness of their own interests. The declassé nature of society began, little by little, to be overcome. In the expression of philosopher, M. Malyutin, "the potatoes began to germinate". A multiplicity of "informal" links enhanced the solidarity of the apparatus but also strengthened the capacity for self-organisation among society's lower orders. In the last analysis, this signalled the end of the initial alignment of forces between the "people" and the "system". The "intermediate strata" – the technocracy and Soviet managers – also became conscious of their interests. Naturally, the nearer the top, the more opportunity

there was for self-organisation: the intellectual elite and "economic leaders" were the first to raise their demands. Solidarity along national lines was also reinforced. Nations had never been destroyed to the same degree as social classes. Now, in conditions of stability, national solidarity, particularly among members of small peoples, became a serious political factor. National movements back in the 1970s were the first form of mass social movement. The national-republican bureaucracy began to assert its interests against the encroachments of the Moscow "centre" and the intelligentsia came out in defence of cultural traditions.

The years of stability prepared the conditions for a severe social, political and cultural crisis, which no preceding shocks could equal. The elite had discovered earlier than others that they could no longer rule in the old way. But the first attempts at reform also revealed that the lower orders did not wish to live in the old way. Changes became unavoidable. But what sort of changes?

Perestroika

It is quite natural that, in a society where, for decades, the lower orders had had no experience of social self-organisation and self-activity, the changes were begun from above. The universal support for the transformations was also natural. Almost everyone apart from the most corrupt officials acknowledged the inevitability of renewal and, as M. Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote in his time, even the plunderers of state property began to complain that soon there would be nothing left to plunder.

The general enthusiasm for the changes created the illusion of popular "unity" on the "platform of perestroika", a conviction that we were all in the same boat. Meanwhile, the course of events quickly showed that different social groups were setting themselves different objectives. No one desired a return to the past but each understood the future in their own way.

The first to claim their rights were the intermediate strata: the intellectual and scientific elite, and the technocracy – leaders of the biggest modern enterprises and associations. Perestroika meant for them primarily a redistribution of rights and, frequently, privileges within the existing social structure. The Party apparatus had to share power, and administrative methods of management had to give way to market mechanisms. The experiences of Yugoslavia, China and Hungary have graphically demonstrated that, despite serious difficulties connected with the implementation of such reforms, they do not undermine the statocracy's power. Market reform does not, in and of itself, increase the workers' chances of influencing decision-making. Enterprise leaders, who only recently had been devotees of gross output ('val'), are becoming the servants of profit. The political apparatus, while giving up some highly criticised privileges, has retained the function of control. Turning "bosses" into shareholders only reinforces their position and protects them from any assault "from below". Unpopular measures – price increases, inflation, a drop in living standards – can from now on be ascribed to "the objective laws of the market". The system is becoming more rational and more dynamic. The vacuum, which is being formed in the course of the structural alterations, is automatically being filled by foreign capital, which is occupying one strategic position after another in the economy. High-ranking officials are beginning to sit on the boards of international "mixed" companies and to defend the

companies' interests in their own country. Power is gradually turning into ownership.

In essence the utilisation of capitalist methods is the statocracy's last resort, its last chance to avoid the genuine democratisation of society. Such a solution does not give the masses hope that they will enjoy even a part of the freedoms and benefits enjoyed by workers in highly-developed capitalist countries. The creation of an efficient capitalist economy requires a civilised and powerful bourgeoisie, the formation of which, in Europe, America and Japan, took centuries. If this is lacking then capitalist methods in conjunction with "Asiatic" arrangements and traditions can lead to nothing other than dependence and barbarism. The aggravation of social irresponsibility at the top is of no assistance to stability at the bottom. We are apparently returning to the beginning of our drama. The statocracy has been unable to carry out successfully all of the work accomplished by capitalism in the advanced countries but neither can it return to the capitalist road without subjecting the people to new misfortunes.

This model has already been put into practice in many countries beginning with Mexico and ending with Eastern Europe. Nowhere, however, has such an approach led to the crisis being overcome. The Chinese "miracle", which for a long time captivated our reformers, is today turning into a nightmare literally before our eyes: rampant inflation, growing poverty, food shortages and increasingly brutal repressions. The market only reveals the conjuncture that has taken shape. Economic disproportions, formed over long years, begin to have a painful effect on enterprise collectives. In turn, the central bureaucracy divests itself of any responsibility for what is happening. A paradoxical picture emerges: the state first pushes a factory to the verge of bankruptcy and then declares to its collective that it must save itself through "self-financing".

If the redistribution of power in the course of such a reform suits the technocrats, then the mass of the population is obliged to take upon itself the entire burden of the crisis. This provokes protest and resistance. The defenders of the "reforms" are then, in turn, constrained once again, as at earlier stages of the modernisation, to resort to brutal measures in order to suppress the discontent of the "backward" and "conservative" masses. The old idea of movement through repression towards progress and the cult of the "advanced minority", which claims a certain historical truth known to it in advance, so typical of the ideology of Stalinism, are also reproduced in the new theories of the "free market". The apparatus finds a new place for itself in society: without its firm hand the "reform" simply cannot be implemented. The logical outcome of such a course is not democratisation but its direct opposite: MARKET STALINISM.

The paradox of the market solution is that it can only be comparatively successful in conditions where the economy is developing well as it is, i.e., the conjuncture is objectively "working" to boost it. Alas, in such conditions conservative tendencies at the top are, as a rule, triumphant and no one particularly needs reform. And vice versa: when the crisis is being exacerbated and those at the top are prepared to support the plans advanced earlier, those projects no longer have any chance of success. Thus the 1965 Reform was wound up despite outstanding prospects while the ideas of the 1960s began to be diligently and unsuccessfully introduced in the sharply deteriorating situation of the late 1980s.

The more the crisis affects the lower orders, the

more they become active. Demands begin to escalate. Everybody wants something. Writers talk of publishing their own books and factory gain the right to be unrestricted masters in their own enterprises. Pensioners begin to demand an increase in pensions, housewives an improvement in supplies, and workers the right to limit the tyranny of the bosses. The more radical demands from below turn yesterday's radicals into frightened conservatives. The crowds of many thousands, which first appeared on the streets of Yaroslavl, Kuibyshev, the Baltic States and Transcaucasia, are now becoming a regular sight in Moscow, the Ukraine, the Urals and throughout the entire country. Political reputations are swiftly made and destroyed. People are moving from apathy to activity, but this is not quite the same activity to which they are summoned in the pages of the newspapers.

The heterogeneous and unorganised character of society and the absence of developed social classes creates a multi-coloured political mosaic. Voices arguing with each other turn into a chaotic cacophony. Such "pluralism" suits above all the traditional apparatus, which can single out from a multitude of incidental voices those that are most useful to it and declare them the "voice of the people".

A part of the intelligentsia sees salvation in the founding of political parties along Western lines. But such parties, formed by small groups of ideologists and not growing naturally out of the mass movement and daily democratic practice of the majority of the country's citizens, cannot become truly viable. The thousands of people, who came onto the streets of provincial Russian cities in the summer of 1988, demanded not a multi-party system but the elementary right to participate in resolving political and economic problems. This requires not the formation of several dozen "parties" bickering among themselves (we can already observe something along these lines in present-day Hungary, not to mention Third World countries) but a Popular Front: a mass democratic movement on a socialist basis. A movement that is patently opposed not only to "conservative bureaucratism" but also to progressive plans to get out of the crisis by reinforcing inequality and redistributing power among the privileged strata.

The Popular Front

The slogan of the Popular Front was first popularised in Estonia, although for many of the republic's inhabitants it signified not only the democratic unity of the workers but also the opportunity to defend the interests of the indigenous population. In Russia, on the other hand, the Popular Front began to take shape above all as a social movement, a form of workers' democratic self-organisation.

The actual establishment of a broad popular bloc advocating democratic reforms proved a difficult business. It was essential that at least a portion of the intermediate strata was able to overcome its social egoism and, rejecting attempts to pick up an even fatter slice of the social cake, unite with the lower orders. This would signify a repudiation of the distinct material benefits gained for them in the conditions of market Stalinism but would, at the same time, guarantee a freer and safer existence. In many cases solidarity is more beneficial than egoism.

The mass movement can only be constructed on the basis of a compromise between different social strata. But this compromise is precisely the condition for successfully overcoming the crisis and possibly founding a new socialist and democratic state structure.

Throughout the whole of the first period of Perestroika "the question of plan and market" served as a substitute for another, rather more important, question: the question of power. In essence, concealed behind the disputes between the supporters centralised planning and defenders of the "free market" were the contradictions between different groups in the bureaucratic and managerial apparatus, but neither side wished to acknowledge this obvious fact. As it happens, any modern economy needs planning, and any economy in which there are commodity-money relations cannot exist and develop normally without the market. Finally, all theoretical approaches have their weaker aspects. If, for example, science is completely financed from the state budget, the stimulus to applied research disappears; if it is transferred to self-financing then fundamental elaboration suffers. Every attempt at a "combined approach" in turn engenders certain difficulties that cannot be reckoned with. Thus a real and complex problem consists in finding the combination of plan and market that is optimal for society and in determining the correlation between the different factors of development.

Alas, any solution that is optimal today proves obsolete tomorrow. Methods that were effective for forced industrialisation became a brake in the conditions of an industrial society; measures which help to find the way out of a crisis become inconceivable when the crisis has been overcome. In other words, economic development requires constantly changing approaches. It is not simply a matter of discarding once and for all the "extremes" of super-centralised planning and the uncontrolled market, of condemning with equal decisiveness both the fetishism of gross output and the fetishism of profit, but of genuinely reorienting the economy towards people. This means that, irrespective of other considerations, any reform must meet certain moral criteria. Solutions that inflict damage on nature, threaten the freedom of the individual or condemn people to poverty must have no chance of success.

How can this be achieved? Who can say what is the optimal correlation between plan and market at a given stage and how to guarantee the interests of the majority? Who will be the judge of all these questions? The state? The political bureaucracy? But this is a key principle of STALINISM. Experts perhaps? But wouldn't it be dangerous to entrust our fate to a bunch of "wise men", who also characteristically make mistakes? Who will determine the competence of the experts? And, finally, whose interests will the "wise men" judge to be of paramount importance?

It is quite clear that questions about society's future paths of development must be decided by society itself. This starting principle of Marx's conception of socialism becomes crucial in the formation of an economic and social strategy of change. Only a democratic decision-making mechanism at all levels can guarantee us against a repetition of the tragedies of the past. Ownership must become social, not in word but in deed, and this means that it is essential to lay the foundations for workers' self-management in the enterprises, in academic institutions and at home. "Higher" organs of management must be formed by the self-managing collectives themselves on a democratic basis. The power of the soviets also remains a fine slogan until they are granted extended rights, including rights of ownership of an important part of the enterprises operating on their territory. The Supreme Soviet will only become a "socialist

parliament" when national investment strategy, fiscal and budgetary policy, major programmes of economic, technological and social development are considered by democratically elected deputies, expressing the interests of the different groups of the population. We have not yet attained democracy by increasing the number of candidates for each place. The will of society will only be expressed when the masses are democratically organised.

The Popular Front movement creates the possibility for such a broad organisation. The principles of self-management and democratic decision-making allow very different social groups to come together, laying the foundation of a new historic compromise. The unity of the progressive socialist bloc is an alternative to the outburst of national passions and group egoisms, which prepare the ground for "normalisation" with the aid of repression.

Although Popular Front organising committees have formed in various parts of the country, spontaneously and independently of each other, they have almost always started out from the need for such a broad left bloc. In Yaroslavl, Kuibyshev, Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Leningrad and Minsk, where by the spring of 1989 the movement had already reached a significant scale, the work in creating the Front had enabled non-party people and Communists who support democracy, believers and non-believers, youth and pensioners, activists from socialist groups and ecologists, to be united. It is not a matter of founding a new party; the movement has had to concern itself not only with politics but also with a mass of other, apparently "non-political" questions (consumer problems, the preservation of architectural monuments, the working and training conditions of people, who are not being defended by the official trade unions, etc.). The Popular Front must not and can not have a monopoly in the democratic movement: far from it, every group and social stratum is in a position to support totally the historic compromise and they also need to defend their own interests through their own organisations.

Nevertheless, the course of events demonstrates that the Popular Front movement is capable, to the greatest extent, of mobilising the democratic potential of the masses. The Democratic Union, founded in spring 1988 by groups with a pro-capitalist orientation, has been able to create all-Russian structures but has not gained and, most probably, is not capable of gaining authority among the masses because of its economic and social programme. Various nationalist groups (who also frequently use Popular Front terminology) have achieved certain successes but this can scarcely assist the cause of democracy.

The deterioration of the economic situation, the aggravation of hostilities between nations and conflicts between opposing political groupings cannot but cause us anxiety about the country's future. Our traditions of unfreedom are too strong and the obstacles on the road to any serious democratic activity too great to be able to speak now with any confidence of the triumph of the ideals of humanism and justice. But it is also clear that our country is no longer as it was. Every step on the path towards the masses' self-organisation, however difficult and insignificant it has been, inspires in us hope that our children will have a future other than that of slavery. ■

First Congress of the Popular Movement for the Reconstruction of Ukraine

Ukraine, the second largest republic of the USSR, has been the sleeping giant of perestroika, largely untouched by the political upheaval elsewhere in the Soviet Union while still in the iron grip of Volodymyr Shcherbytsky. The report below was written before Shcherbitsky's dismissal.

by J.V. KOSHIW

On the 8th, 9th and 10th of September 1989 in the city of Kiev, capital of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine, the impossible happened. Over 1000 political activists opposed to the rule of Moscow held a congress to demand an independent Ukrainian state. The delegates represented regional (*oblast*) organisations of the Popular Movement for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, or Movement (in Ukrainian *Rukh*). The hall of the Kiev Polytechnic Institute was festooned with the hitherto forbidden blue and yellow flags and tridents. Delegates covered their chests with badges of these symbols of Ukrainian independence. Outside the hall stood large crowds of supporters with blue and yellow flags listening to the proceedings broadcast through loudspeakers. The Kiev militia, with special riot troops at the ready, stood by. For the first time in Kiev, no one was arrested for displaying a Ukrainian flag or badge.

After three full days of explosive and chaotic debates, which at times threatened to destroy the congress, the Movement adopted a statute, programme and resolutions, and elected leaders. When the idea of the Movement was first mooted in January 1989, the founders proposed that it recognise the leading role of the Communist Party. However, by the time of the Movement's congress, this didn't even appear in the proposed programme and was not even debated. The most immediate demand of the congress was for direct and democratic elections to the presidency and the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine.

Late Sunday evening, after the congress had ended, delegates and supporters marched with blue and yellow flags about a mile to the statue of the 19th century awakener of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko. There they held an enthusiastic midnight rally addressed by the Movement leaders and Adam Michnik and Volodymyr Mokry from Poland's Solidarity.

The congress witnessed a number of dramatic moments. The two appearances at the podium of Leonid Kravchuk, the chief of the Ukrainian Communist Party's Department of Ideology, astonished the delegates. His call for the movement to cooperate with the reformist elements of the party added a new and unexpected dimension to the proceedings. He warned the Movement that it was not equal to the forces opposing it and called on it to scale down its demands.

The appearance of the more acceptable face of the party, Ivan Salii, one of the Kiev party leaders, cheered the delegates. His call for the resignation of Ukraine's party boss, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, was met with thunderous applause.

The congress was electrified by the appearance of the Soviet troop commander from Western Ukraine, Colonel Vilei Martirosian. He is also a USSR Supreme Soviet deputy representing the Ukrainian town of Rivne and a member of the Movement. He told the delegates that he and like-minded commanders had decided to take the side of the people if an attempt was made to impose a military solution to the political problems of Ukraine. If that wasn't enough, the head of the Kiev Militia, Shapochka, sent greetings to the congress and wished it success.

No less dramatic were the presentations of former political prisoners, most notably Levko Lukianenko, Viacheslav Chornovil, Ivan Hel and many others. Bishop Pavlo Vasyly of the banned Ukrainian Catholic Church called from the rostrum for the full legalisation of the Church and return of all its property. A representative of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church also asked the delegates' help in the legalisation of his church. Since the revolution of 1917-20, Ukraine had never witnessed such a spectrum of opinions at a political meeting. It became clear to everyone present that the congress was the beginning of a new political order in Ukraine.

There were three main groupings at the congress. The most prominent one consisted of delegations from the regions of Western Ukraine: Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivske, symbolically represented in the leadership of the Movement by the former political prisoner Mykhailo Horn. These delegations were the most numerous and vocal at the congress. Their air of confidence and their determination to achieve an independent Ukraine is backed by massive popular support. Two weeks before the congress, on the anniversary of the Stalin-Hitler pact when Western Ukraine was "liberated" by the Red Army, they led large demonstrations all over Western Ukraine. The cities of Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivske witnessed demonstrations of over 100 000 people. Of the many young delegates from Western Ukraine who took part in the debates, Vasyl Chernovy from Rivne stood out because of his gift of expressing himself, his political astuteness and his combativeness.

From the other end of Ukraine, the Donbas, came delegations which essentially consisted of representatives of the coal miners' strike committees. They were led by the strike leader Petro Poberzhny from Donetsk. He, like the other miners' representatives, has none of the Ukrainian patriotic fervour of Western Ukrainians. They support the demand for Ukrainian to be the state language, but

demand the right to carry out their affairs locally in Russian, something which is not palatable to many Western Ukrainian activists. However, they exhibited even more confidence than the Western Ukrainians because of their successful strike during the summer. They are for all practical purposes in political control of Donbas mining towns. Some of the strike committees have quartered themselves in local party buildings from where they rule their districts. They successfully intervened at the congress with the warning that if the Ukrainian nationalist symbols of the blue and yellow flag and the trident were adopted, the Movement would be rejected by the Russian-speaking Donbas.

The Kiev delegates, headed by prominent Ukrainian writers and academics, and backed by numerous work places, had the largest impact at the conference. It was they who organised the congress, prepared the programme, led the disparate elements in a common direction, and were finally elected as its leaders. It became clear during the proceedings that the organisers, led by Volodymyr Iavorivsky, Dmytro Pavlychko, and Ivan Drach, all members of the Communist Party, had conspired with other reformist elements in the party to steer the congress away from confrontation to cooperation with a yet-to-be reformed Communist Party of Ukraine.

It fell upon Dmytro Pavlychko who chaired much of the proceedings to successfully manoeuvre the delegates to soften or reject confrontational resolutions. Resolutions which from the party point of view were extreme, were either side-tracked or voting on them was delayed in order that an alternative resolution could be presented by prepared speakers. For example, the resolutions relating to the Chernobyl accident, including the holding of a public trial of Shcherbytsky and other party leaders, were not put to the vote. The delegates were easily manoeuvred to accept a poetic but empty resolution on ecology which did not commit the Movement to any specific action.

Only on one issue did Pavlychko's ability to control the fate of resolutions fail him, the vote relating to the new election law for the Ukrainian republican elections. The party's proposed election law is designed to give it the majority of delegates in the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet and with it the presidency. The congress accepted an alternative election law in which all the delegates and the presidency would be voted in directly. The delegates' fervour reached a peak in the discussion over what to do if the party enacts its proposed law. Despite Pavlychko's efforts to delay the vote on this issue, the congress voted to call a national strike in Ukraine if the officially proposed election law is adopted.

Outside the three main regional groups, the delegates from the cities which separate the Kiev region from the Donbas, specifically the towns of Cherkas, Dnipropetrovsk, Kremenchuk and Poltava, were a distinct group, though small. They draw their strength from their work places. While they have adopted the blue and yellow flag and trident, they, like the Kiev delegates, are willing to scale down linguistic demands for the sake of close cooperation with the Donbas miners' strike committees.

Finally there were thirty-five USSR Supreme Soviet deputies who support the Movement. These deputies represent all major groups at the congress. They and the yet-to-be elected deputies to the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet are destined to play a leading role in the near future in what certainly will be a tumultuous period in the political history of Ukraine.

The reformist members of the Communist Party, led

by Kravchuk and even more so by Saliy, will also play a pivotal role in the future development of the Movement and of the political situation. It is certain that at least in the Kiev party apparatus there is open opposition to Shcherbytsky. But in the regions, especially in the cities of Kharkiv and Odessa, the resistance to change among the local party bosses is very strong. The Odessa party sent a selected delegation to the congress in opposition to one elected by the members of the Odessa Movement. When the mandates of the party-appointed delegates were rejected by the Movement's mandate committee, Ukrainian television used this to tell its audience that the congress was undemocratic. For this and other disinformation, Ukrainian television was excluded by the delegates from the congress. In Kharkiv, while the congress was taking place, the party bosses staged a demonstration against the "nationalist" gathering in Kiev. It is yet to be seen what kind of a popular opposition can be organised against the Movement by the retreating conservative party leaders.

The congress elected Ivan Drach as its leader for a two-year term. Drach, though certainly a person of integrity, is no match for politically hardened regional leaders. This is also true of the deputy leader, Serhii Koniev, an articulate and well-liked radical and USSR Supreme Soviet deputy from Dniprodzerzhynske. The two most forceful political personalities are to be found in the elected secretariat of ten people who will be employed full-time to administer the Movement. Mykhailo Horyn, who will chair the secretariat, represents the toughest strain of the movement for an independent Ukrainian republic, and is as combative a political personality as they come in the Soviet Union. On the same level of resoluteness, but not political astuteness, is Dmytro Poyzid, a young police detective, who organised the dozens of stewards with blue and yellow arm bands who forcefully guarded all the doors of the congress hall from the crowds which besieged them. From the podium, sounding like a future Minister of Internal Affairs, Poyzid called for the organising of self-defence teams throughout Ukraine against repressions. The nine members of the secretariat, apart from its head Horyn, received the most votes in the following order: Volodymyr Muliev, Mykola Porovsky, Odarych, Bohdan Ternopilsky, Maria Kuzenko, Maria Antoniuk, Viktor Linchevsky, Vsevolod Tskiv and Dmytro Poyzid.

A survey of the delegates' backgrounds was carried out at the congress by the organisers, and the results announced were:

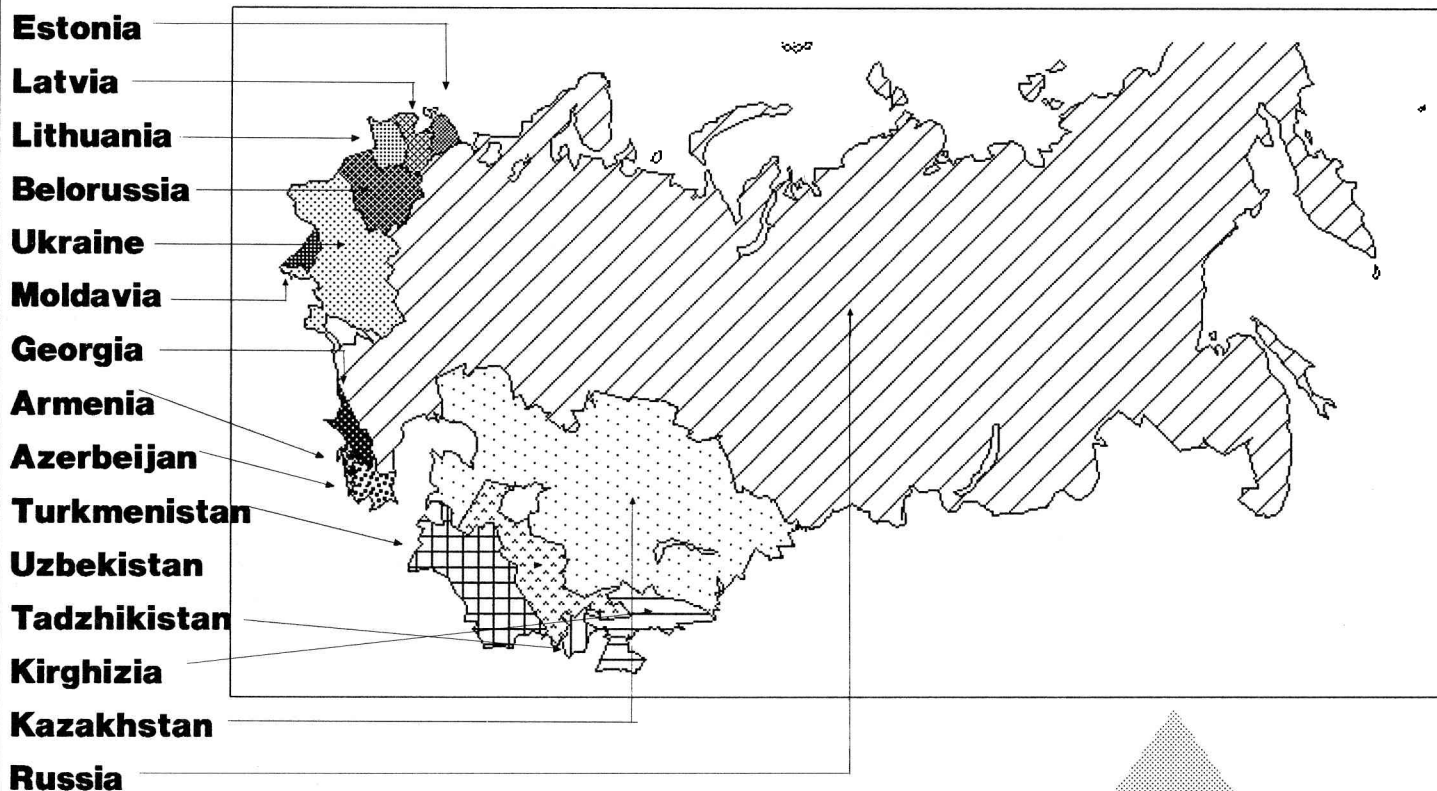
- ▶ 1,158 delegates were elected throughout the regions of Ukraine representing 280,000 active members. 1,109 delegates attended the congress. The largest delegations were from the cities of Kiev, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivske. Only three of Ukraine twenty-five *oblasts*, Crimea, Luhanske and Transcarpathia, did not hold regional congresses to elect delegates.
- ▶ By nationality, 944 delegates were Ukrainians, 77 were Russians, 9 were Jewish, 6 were Polish, 6 Byelorussian, 2 Armenian, and one each were Korean, Greek, Hungarian, Czech, and Crimean Tatar. The appearance of a Ukrainian-speaking Korean living in Ukraine was one of the unexpected moments of the congress.
- ▶ By profession the delegates were: engineers (329), teachers (130), academics (121), workers (109), cultural workers (104), doctors (48), journalists (42), lawyers (25), farmers (16), party functionaries (6), self-employed (6), and less than six were students, priests, architects, shop employees, actors, and so

on. Two of the delegates were unemployed.

- ▶ Among the delegates were 228 members of the Communist Party and 24 Komsomol members. The allegiance of the delegates to the various unofficial groupings was not available. There were at least a few dozen members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, which is by far the best organised unofficial political grouping in Ukraine. All its major leaders, like Lev Lukianenko and Vyacheslav Chronovil, were delegates and gave well-received speeches.
- ▶ Among the non-Soviet guests, there were observers from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania. From Poland, Adam Michnik and Volodymyr Mokry, a Ukrainian member of the Polish parliament, spoke on behalf of Solidarity. Surprisingly there was only one guest each from the United States, Canada and Great Britain: Professor Taras Hunczak from the US, Chrystyna Freeland from Canada, and Jaroslav Koshiw from Britain. It was not clear why visas were denied to many others from North America who wanted to come. The party-controlled newspaper, *Pravda Ukrainy*, published a slanderous article during the congress accusing Hunczak and Freeland of being enemies of the Soviet state. This manoeuvre backfired as the congress invited the accused to the podium and enthusiastically greeted them.

Among the many slogans loudly chanted by the delegates, the one which in the end prevailed, almost to the exclusion of all others, was *unity*. The delegates sensed that the potential for fragmentation was very high on the language question, the independence symbols, and the relationship with the Communist Party.

Freedom of speech is becoming the norm in Ukraine, whether it be in the congress or on the streets. Yet to come is the freedom of the press and the other public media, and the right to organise political parties. But the first steps in this direction are being taken. The congress voted to publish its own newspaper, to be called *Narodna Hazeta*, and elected as its first editor Anatolii Shevchenko. The newspaper is to be published by the printing house in Kiev that prints all the major newspapers in Ukraine, and where the print workers are supporters of the Movement. This, and the possibility of the Movement having its own building in Kiev, was the carrot that caused even some of the toughest nationalists to agree to the softening of the congress's resolutions. Political realism decided the final outcome of the congress. The Popular Movement of Ukraine has been born. Time is not on its side as conservative forces are gathering strength for a counter-reformation. The next few months, especially the outcome of the republican elections, will decide the political future of Ukraine for years to come. ■



**THE REPUBLICS
OF THE
SOVIET UNION**

The Continuing Challenge from the Baltics – Central Committee fails to respond

by JEREMY LESTER

Antonio Gramsci once observed about the Great Depression that "a crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In the interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." A more perceptive comment on the current situation in the Soviet Union, particularly as regards the question of nationality relations, would be difficult to find.

ON 19 AND 20 SEPTEMBER, the Central Committee of the CPSU met in plenary session, in the full glare of TV, to propose solutions for the birth of the new USSR and the treatment of those morbid symptoms that have been so dominant in recent times. Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Moldavia, Uzbekistan and all the other familiar trouble spots were at the heart of the discussions. Above all, however, the continuing political conundrum of the three Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Events this summer

In the last issue of *Labour Focus*, we sketched out the nature of the rise of the Popular Front organisations in these three republics, and looked at their relationship with the ruling Communist Parties and the prospects for gaining some degree of autonomy.

In the intervening months, the issue has rapidly progressed from republican autonomy to the real possibility of secession from the Union. So quickly have events moved that one cannot help thinking that the situation is fast spinning out of control – and it is not just the Popular Fronts that have been at the forefront of this process, with the indigenous ruling parties often outdoing their Popular Front rivals.

Take Lithuania, for example. The republican Supreme Soviet, following the Estonian lead, has now declared itself sovereign and completely ignored Moscow's declaration that such a move is unconstitutional. Moreover, it is now drawing up a law on Lithuanian citizenship which would far extend the rights of native Lithuanians over the non-indigenous population. This, in turn, has precipitated the Salcininkai and Vilnius rayons, both predominantly non-Lithuanian, to declare themselves autonomous districts within the Republic on the basis that "recent laws and draft laws infringed upon their rights".

In a recent move, a special parliamentary commission declared the 1940 vote to join the USSR "invalid". Such an assertion of parliamentary sovereignty may have come as no surprise after the Estonian precedent of last November, but a real surprise was the decision, this summer, of first the Komsomol and then the Lithuanian Communist Party

to declare themselves independent from Moscow and ready to compete with other political parties in freely contested elections at some future date. The CPSU has never before faced such a challenge to its democratic-centralist principles, certainly not since the 8th Party Congress in March 1919 rejected "root and branch" the federalist party structure put forward by nationalists and Mensheviks.

This step is a clear sign that the Lithuanian communists are not prepared to be outflanked by other forces in the Republic. Speaking to *Izvestia* in mid-September, First Party Secretary Algirdas Brazauskas commented:

"I believe that acquiring independence and strengthening the sovereignty of the union republics is the way to salvation... The time of the cosy one-party system is over. The time of senseless confrontation and an apparatus monopoly on the truth is over... The discussion [about the status of the Republic's Communist Party] began without our permission. [But] we had to choose whether to lead it or allow vitally important issues... to be resolved without the participation of [the republican] Central Committee."

So how has the All-Union Central Committee responded to this challenge to Moscow's authority?

Gorbachev's plan

The party's plan, as outlined in its document "The Party's Nationalities Policy Under Present Conditions (Platform of the CPSU)", published in mid-August, and supplemented by Gorbachev's keynote address on the first day of the plenum, envisages the following for the Baltic republics:

A high degree of economic independence will be allowed from the beginning of next year, up to and including republican control over "the ownership and management of the land, mineral resources, forests, water and other natural resources on its territory." The nationalists are not pleased, however, that Moscow will have joint control (following an amendment agreed upon at the plenum) and will be able "to define union-wide principles for the [actual] use of such resources, taking into account, among other things, state-wide and inter-republican interests and the interests of defence and the country's security."

The republics will be self-accounting and self-financing (that is to say, will have control over taxation), but will pay centrally levied taxes and contributions to an all-Union fund to support underdeveloped regions. A single market will continue to exist and the economic well-being of any single republic is to be considered "inseparable from the process of the deepening of specialisation, integration... and the build-up of the overall scientific and technical potential" of the country as a whole. "Tendencies towards autarchy", Gorbachev emphasised at the plenum, "and attempts by relatively

prosperous republics and oblasts to isolate themselves and fence themselves off would be extremely dangerous. This can bring extremely negative consequences for those who embark upon this road."

It was left to the Kazakhstan First Secretary, Nazarbayev, to point out the inconsistency of the party's proposals: "Why", he asked, "should the right of the Union Republics in the CPSU platform of possession and mastery over their own land, its minerals, timber and water and other resources not be supplemented by the right to use all of these riches? Without such a decisive right, a republic's sovereignty is no more than a declaration."

The republics, and a range of groups within the republics, will henceforth be able to own industrial, transport, agricultural and trade property. Again, however, to the disappointment of the nationalists, this is to be offset by the fact that the central authorities will be entitled to decide on "mutually acceptable general forms of regulating ownership relations." The republics can also have control over foreign currency reserves and set up trade associations abroad, though there is no mention of national currencies. A republic's foreign ties must not, meanwhile, "conflict with all-Union interests."

Representations in such international organisations like the International Olympic Committee and UNESCO, as well as the United Nations, will be allowed "in principle". The republican parliaments will be asked to overturn recent declarations of their 1940 entry into the Soviet Union as "invalid". In the words of the General Secretary, "...there are no grounds to question the decision on the entry of the Baltic Republics into the USSR and the choice made by their peoples." Republican parliaments will have new independent powers enshrined in constitutional amendments, but they will not be permitted a final veto over the decisions of the all-Union Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Deputies. Should disputes arise between the tiers of government, then the dispute will be aired in front of a new constitutional court (the USSR Constitutional Oversight Committee) with final powers of arbitration.

Much to the disappointment of the Baltic nationalists, although hardly surprisingly, separate republican citizenships are possible only on condition that there are no national, religious, linguistic or residential disqualifications, and only providing the republic accepts the overall sanctity of Soviet citizenship, which grants equal rights and duties to all citizens. Thus Moscow still firmly backs the Russians and other minorities in the Baltic states, who earlier this summer (especially in Estonia) went on strike against electoral and linguistic discrimination against them. To further protect the rights of minorities, there are now plans to adopt a law "On Guarantees of the Rights of USSR Citizens Living Outside Their State-Territorial Formations or Not Having Such on the Territory of the Soviet Union."

This aside, Moscow accepts that each republic should have the right to declare its own indigenous language the official one, providing that the use of Russian and access to education in Russian are guaranteed by law and that there is no discrimination against those who do not speak the republican language.

Recent demands from various Baltic quarters for national armed forces drew a firm rebuttal from the central party authorities. One could clearly imagine the consequences of national armed forces in, for example, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Looking through the eyes of the Baltic nationalists (and this is taking a narrow vision of things), it is clear that the proceedings were a disappointment. Yes, they would argue, advances were made, but what was dished out with one hand was firmly retrieved by the other. Another disappointment for the nationalists, radical or not so radical, was the applause in the conference hall every time a hardline statement was made. Gorbachev's keynote speech, for example, was listened to in near silence until the moment when he warned that "nationalist, chauvinistic and other extremist organisations can and should be disbanded." Precisely what organisations he had in mind was not, however, made clear.

Most enthusiasm was shown by the delegates when the General Secretary turned the full force of his anger at the idea of federalised party structures: "...we should resolutely reject the federalisation of the CPSU. I will put it bluntly: this would mean the end of our party as it was founded by Lenin and would inflict irreparable damage to perestroika and the entire cause of socialism. The one who followed this path would assume the gravest responsibility before the party and the people."

The republican elections

Despite the formal unanimity of the Central Committee on this issue, the question of independent status for individual republican parties is almost certainly one that will not go away. Barely two days after publication of the resolution, the Communist Party newspaper in Lithuania reported how it intended to seek a degree of independence from Moscow at an extraordinary party congress to be held towards the end of this year.

This is not surprising when one considers the position of the party organisation in Lithuania. Some time before next spring, it must contest a republican parliamentary election that will be more open and freer than the contest in March this year which saw the Popular Fronts sweep the board in all three Baltic states. Defeat then was a moral blow for the republican parties, but at a national level it was salvaged by the in-built "conservative" majority in the Supreme Soviet.

No such compensation exists at republican level. If the CP is outflanked again by the Popular Front (Sajudis) and other forces like the newly-established Green Party, Democratic Party or Social Democratic Party, all of whom now openly proclaim their goal to be "the restoration of an independent, democratic Lithuanian state", then it is clearly within the realms of possibility that on taking power, the non-communist parties would organise an immediate referendum on secession from the Union - making use of their constitutional right under Article 72 of the 1977 Brezhnev constitution. Should there then be an overwhelming majority for secession, one can only begin to imagine the consequences for the Lithuanian communists, Gorbachev's reforms and indeed Gorbachev himself.

The Lithuanian Communist Party, which genuinely desires an autonomous Lithuania within the USSR, thus needs to do everything to win popular support, including, if necessary, jumping on the nationalist bandwagon to prove that it is more than "the extended arm of Moscow".

What then are Gorbachev's options now? There appear to be two. Either he will eventually come to accept this move as yet another high but necessary risk in democratising the country under some form of communist guidance, or he will conclude that such a

challenge to his personal authority is too big to ignore and thus take action against the Lithuanian party, possibly including the replacement of its leading cadres or even the disbandment of the entire republican organisation.

Either alternative involves great risks, of course. Disbandment of the party or wholesale leadership changes would either necessitate the cancellation of the forthcoming elections, or the elections would go ahead with an even more certain victory for the non-communist forces. Accepting the Lithuanian demands for independence in the hope of making them electable would leave him exposed to strong attacks by the already alarmed conservatives. Ultimately, of course, both Gorbachev and the Lithuanian Communist Party will be subject to the verdict of the Lithuanian electorate – a none too pleasant prospect at the moment. Their hope must be for the "Quebec syndrome" to come to their aid – that at the moment of truth, people will shy away from the unknown quantity of independence.

There is, however, another option lurking in the background: the creation of a pretext for martial law or emergency powers being imposed. Both Gorbachev and Shevardnadze have denied that they would ever resort to this kind of measure, but the doubt persists that some situation might arise in which the use of force would be deemed necessary. An interesting aspect of this is how many Western writers and correspondents not only accept this possibility, but also condone in advance any harsh counter-offensive by Moscow.

Some American analysts, for example, have started to imply that the struggle for Baltic independence, for so long a cause celebre championed by the White House, is perhaps not worth supporting after all if it means Gorbachev's demise. Other commentators, meanwhile, have begun to report the more negative sides of Baltic nationalism – the emergence of re-emergence of opposition groups with abhorrent "blood and soil", pseudo-fascist elements about them, the anti-semitism of some, or their cynical hatred of all non-indigenous nationalities.

Still others have begun to reassess the inter-war period of independence in a much more critical light or

have voiced their concern that independence might not "automatically" result in American-style democracy. Thus, as Martin Walker wrote in a Guardian report from Washington at the end of August: "There is a feeling [here] of premature nostalgia that we could miss the stability of the Russian Empire once it is gone."

A missed opportunity

The overriding impression of the Central Committee plenum was that of a fudge, and it also showed, not for the first time, that the national question is one that Gorbachev personally finds great difficulty with. Perhaps this is because he knows that the conservatives can use it against him with a measure of support amongst a party and population (especially in Russia) tired and concerned at seeing the country racked by disorder, indiscipline and anarchy; a country where, as depicted in a recent *Krokodil* cartoon, a man would stop and ask another man drowning what his nationality was before deciding to rescue him.

Or perhaps it is because Gorbachev hails from the southern part of the Russian Federation – a region which provides little experience of the problems of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. Most likely, it is a combination of both these factors and many more beside. Ever since he came to power, Gorbachev has made a hash of the national question, something which he himself largely admitted in his plenary speech. In particular, the decision 18 months ago to convene a plenum on this issue was clearly premature and only heightened expectations that serious reforms were on their way. The consequences of that 18-months delay and the ideological and political void it created are only too apparent now.

Nor have Gorbachev's reactions to nationalist crises been consistent. At times, for example, he seems to be wholeheartedly endorsing radical initiatives from Baltic forces, only later to be heard endorsing calls from conservatives to end the turmoil and restore order and stability. The lack of initiative shown at the Central Committee on Gorbachev's part was a missed opportunity, one that might not so easily come his way again.



From the satirical magazine *Krokodil* (see text)

The unfinished saga of Solidarity

by DANIEL SINGER

For the next weeks and months the eyes of the world will be focused on Poland, where the events are now unfolding at an unexpectedly dramatic pace (when last May I had lunch in Warsaw with Tadeusz Mazowiecki and we pondered over the consequences of the forthcoming general election, I didn't think that three months later he would be forming the next Polish government and neither did he). But there are deeper reasons for this concern. The questions now being raised in Poland are vital and the tentative answers they will provide will have a relevance well beyond Poland's frontiers. We already knew that the "revolution from above" brought to eastern Europe by the Red Army after the war got stuck in a blind alley. But must the story run the full circle ending in a capitalist restoration or can it be given a different conclusion? We also know that the Brezhnev doctrine is discarded by his successor. But how far is Mikhail Gorbachev able to tolerate change in his area of influence and how eager is he to tamper with the state of Europe established at Yalta? Last but not least, Poland, for all its peculiarity – the powerful Church, the numerous peasantry and the strong labour movement – is part of the family. What is at stake is the fate of the Stalinist heritage and this affects other countries of eastern Europe, Russia in the first place. History providing little scope for experiments, the precedents are significant. We should, therefore, examine Poland's unfolding drama in all its specificity, but keeping in mind this wider dimension of Poland as a laboratory.

But, to begin with, why did the plot suddenly change pace? Let us recall the scenario. Last autumn, after a series of strikes, the Jaruzelski regime decided that it had no chance of reforming the economy without popular support and opted for a "historic compromise". The terms of this introduction of the opposition into the system were then worked out in a "round table" conference. The Communist Party guaranteed itself a presidential and parliamentary majority by reserving two-thirds of the seats in the crucial lower house of *sejm* for the ruling coalition (299 out of 460). Solidarity was allowed to compete for the remaining 161 seats and for all the 100 seats in the upper house or *senat* with essentially delaying powers. The assumption was that, if this co-existence works for four years, then a genuine poll for all the seats in both chambers would be allowed. This Fabian timetable has now been completely upset because it was based on a misunderstanding of the nature and influence of free elections.

Shortly before the round table, when some leaders of Solidarity revealed to me the proposed electoral deal,

I argued that the Party would never buy it. My conviction was based on a sort of Gresham's law of electioneering, namely the assumption that good elections would discredit the bad ones, that if an entirely free vote is allowed in parts, it will overshadow the whole. I proved wrong. Whatever the reason, presumption or plain blunder, the Party accepted the deal and so, in June, came the landslide. Solidarity captured 99 seats in the *senat*, and all those for which it was entitled in the lower house. On paper, the ruling coalition still had a majority, but the arithmetic was already obsolete. The rubber stamp parliament suddenly recovered a real life and even the puppets began to dance on their own. The CP's once faithful and allies – the Peasants Party (with 76 seats) and the Democratic Party (with 27 seats) – could no longer be counted upon. With only 173 representatives, not all of them reliable, the Party had lost the control of the situation.

It all stood to reason. Even in constituencies where it was not allowed to put up candidates, Solidarity could whisper to its electorate whom to favour among contenders from the opposite side (Tadeusz Fiszbach, party secretary in Gdansk at the time of the birth of Solidarity is the best known case of a communist thus chosen against party wishes). Above all, *Peasants* and *Democrats* could do their own thinking. Given seats by the CP this time, they would have to win them in open competition next time and they could see which way the wind was blowing. When you bully and bribe your allies, you should not be astonished if they opt, when the occasion arises, for a more interesting bidder. One can also provide a more charitable interpretation. With elections becoming the expression of class interests, it is quite natural that Poland, where nearly 40% of the population is rural and well over a quarter of the labour force works on the land, should have a strong peasant party. Whether it will be the ZSL or Rural Solidarity and whether one party will be enough as small peasants begin to be squeezed by more capitalistic competition is another matter.

But the arithmetic altered at once. The President was to be elected by the two houses together. General Jaruzelski scraped through, on July 19th, by the grace of Solidarity because seven of its members spoil their ballot papers on purpose. Having thus fulfilled its part of the bargain, Solidarity found itself in a dilemma. It had now an effective power of veto and, in any case, it would be blamed by the people for whatever happened. Was it worthwhile to have responsibility without power? Hence Adam Michnik's slogan: "Their president, our Prime Minister". But should one have full responsibility without full powers? Bronislaw Geremek, the influential leader of the Solidarity group in parliament, seemed to have doubts about a government in which Solidarity did not have full control. The, while General Kiszczak was dragging on with his efforts to form a coalition, Lech Walesa took everybody by surprise clinching a deal with the leaders of the Peasant and Democratic parties. And this is how, on August 24th, Tadeusz Mazowiecki became Prime Minister.

A party in search of a role

Why did General Jaruzelski accept? Possibly, once the movement was set in motion, he had little room for manoeuvre. Alternatively, he may hope it is the turn of Solidarity to get bogged down in economic difficulties. Finally, it may have been the only way to get a "large coalition" with Solidarity as a senior partner since it refused to be a junior one. Jaruzelski as President keeps

control over the armed forces and the police, has a say in foreign affairs and, in principle, could dissolve parliament. He therefore has some choice. On the other hand, the party whose secretaryship he just handed over to the former premier Mieczyslaw Rakowski, is in a state of shock. How traumatic for the CP is the experience of losing power can only be understood by contrasting their system of rule with ours.

In the capitalist world, the wealthy have political influence because they are rich and do not lose their riches when they lose office. In the Soviet world, the apparatchik owes his relative privileges, power and prestige to his political position. If he loses one, he is deprived of everything. Remove the nomenklatura, i.e. the nomination of key jobs, from this system and it is empty. How bewildered the Party is over this situation you may gather from the debate over its future now carried in *Trybuna Ludu*, its official organ. Here is a sample from the issue of August 17th. The author claims that to recover rapidly a leading position the Party must drop ideology for pragmatism, run the country not according to capitalist or socialist rules but in keeping with economic principles; move beyond class barriers, particularly "since our program now becomes attractive even for people living on capital". Why will this party be considered left-wing? Because it will soften the impact of the market on the weak and help them through social insurance. Yet if the movement is thus open to all, it should not forget that its chosen targets are "the dynamic, who are bearers of progress and development". Or should one translate Poland's budding yuppies?

The article, if slightly exaggerated in tone, conveys the mood of the party reformers, who quarrel among themselves not about the degree of socialism their "social-democratic" program should contain, but about the speed with which price controls should be abolished or about the degree of collaboration with Solidarity. Tomorrow they may fall apart on the role the present *nomenklatura* should play in the privatisation of Poland's industry. The so-called reformers, however, are not alone in the Party. A recent meeting in Warsaw of party secretaries from big industrial plants revealed a mood of resentment against the leadership among the rank-and-file. Here are two examples of questions that were reported: "Whose interests is the party defending, are they really those of the workers?" and "A free play of prices - with whom is one playing and what are the chances of the worker in this game?" Add to this wing the party members in the official trade unions (known as OPZZ), quite eager to exploit the situation if Solidarity is driven to assume the posture of champion of social peace.

In principle, a cure in opposition could be a good reducing treatment for the Party. It still claims two million members, one million less than in 1980, and it would lose many if it had no jobs to offer. Yet what is being proposed is a period not in opposition but on the fringes of power and, looking at the programme of the reformers, one cannot see why the totally discredited organisation should suddenly become the backbone of the Polish Left. The congress that cannot be much delayed will show what line was chosen. It may also herald a split.

If the party is divided by its defeat, Solidarity may well be split by its victory. To understand why one must go to its origins. Solidarity, it should not be forgotten, was born out of a strike. At one stage, it was a huge trade union, counting nearly ten million members, the bulk of Poland's working people. Backed

by the nation at large, this working-class movement had the intelligentsia at its service. This was the moment, in 1981, when the Party could have made a really historic compromise with the movement accepting the setting up of an upper house representing the revived workers' councils on a national scale. It chose to stage a military coup instead.

On purpose. The Party was eager to make a deal with the Church but not with the workers. Indeed, its purpose was to break the alternative labour movement and in this it half succeeded. The nature of the resistance gradually shifted the centre of gravity from the factory to the underground press, from the workers to the intelligentsia. The Catholic Church, negotiating with the government and providing shelter for the resistance, was also strengthening its hand. This picture is both right and inaccurate. In a sense, the workers did remain the backbone of the movement, the solid in Solidarity. At the beginning of last year, most people were burying Solidarity. It took two series of strikes to resurrect it and force the government to negotiate. But, the deal clinched and the election over, the situation is now reversed. The intelligentsia is walking in the corridors of power and the labour union has not got two million members.

It may be objected that it takes time to rebuild a union. Possibly. The snag is that the policies envisaged by its government could hurt the union. If, in its search for capitalist efficiency, the government just tells the workers to tighten their belts; if, in its quest for privatisation or foreign capital, it allows the spread of non-union enterprises and no-strike deals; if, to cut it short, the movement that was born to assert the workers' right to an autonomous representation is ordered to toe another line - then the gap between government and union will be too wide even for Lech Walesa to close. The workers are not unaware of the gravity of the situation, but they must be offered something to justify sacrifices.

Solidarity, too, must hold a congress in the near future. It is living for the moment on borrowed democracy, with a charismatic leader revealing great political sense, with both labour leaders and political advisers who have shown their mettle but were elected or chosen long ago, with even the parliamentary candidates chosen from above. True, they all then received a mandate from the people (unless we consider the general election as a vote of non-confidence in their predecessors). But Solidarity must now hear the views and accept the verdict of its rank-and-file. The congress will have to deal with the fundamental question: does the labour union, like in Britain, wish to create a Labour Party to represent its interests or does it want to remain a union, allowing its members to express their political opinions in various parties to be set up? In this battle, cleavages will appear not only between unionists and politicians, but also among the latter between various shades of opinion, with Thatcherites and social-democrats prevailing. It will be interesting to hear how loud the voice of self-management, prominent eight years ago, is now in this chorus.

The shadow of Cardinal Glemp

The split mind of Solidarity will be one handicap for the new Prime Minister, the shadow of the Church may be another, surprisingly since Tadeusz Mazowiecki was picked as Premier partly because of all the serious candidates he was the only Catholic intellectual. Yet to live with Poland's powerful Church is a problem and its present primate is quite a phenomenon. Cardinal Jozef



Cardinal Glemp

Glemp's recent antisemitic outbursts over the Carmellites in Oswiecim should not really come as a surprise. Glemp is what the Poles call an *endek*, an allusion to a reactionary party, the National Democracy headed by Roman Dmowski, which in the interwar years pandered to the nationalism of the middle classes. It was not in favour of the extermination of Jews, simply of their elimination by all possible legal means. The Cardinal has no love for "atheistic communism", though he knows how to get on with Caesar. He has no love for Solidarity either, particularly for its left-wing. He would prefer to have a reactionary Christian Democracy and a union to boot.

Some people think that in a country like Poland where not only Mazowiecki or Walesa but Jaruzelski, too, seek the Primate's blessing on every important occasion, it might be better to have an open Catholic Party than the insidious, occult power of the Church. In fairness, it must be added that the Church cannot in its entirety be identified with the primate. It must also be stressed that antisemitism is completely alien to Mazowiecki who, as a progressive Catholic, is miles apart from an *endek*. He nevertheless still has to prove in office that he can govern independently from the Church.

Eastern neighbour, Western money

In one field the situation of the newcomer is now much better, namely the relations with the eastern neighbour. Eight years ago the very appointment of Mazowiecki might have been considered as the crossing of the Rubicon. Today, the nomination of this "man from outside the *nomenklatura*" is greeted without antipathy by the Russian press. It is true that the new premier went out of his way to please. He suggested that there was an opportunity to improve relations not just between parties but between two societies. He expressed his backing for perestroika and his hope that other countries in Eastern Europe, too, would be reassured by his policies. He solemnly proclaimed that his government had no intention of changing alliances or ceasing to be a member of the Warsaw Pact. All seems quiet on the eastern front.

If there is a threat of intervention in Polish affairs, it comes from the West. This sounds the more paradoxical since Poles of every political complexion are complaining that the West does not interfere enough (Poland's friends should come to the rescue before we begin to drown - pleaded Mazowiecki). The illusions about a Marshall Plan for Poland have disappeared. Wits already say that Cardinal Glemp will soon blame the Jewish lobby for this boycott. More seriously, it is not true that the West is not interested in the eastern markets. Simply, capital is not sentimental and it travels on its own terms. It will invade Eastern Europe when it finds it profitable. If, to achieve those terms, a Solidarity-sponsored government obeys the "diktat" of the International Monetary Fund at the risk of a break with its own constituency, the Western capital will be interfering in Poland, if only by proxy.

In dubious battle

This is the situation that Mazowiecki inherits. The country is heavily in debt with more than \$38 billion due to Western creditors alone. Its youth wants to emigrate. The economy has the worst of both worlds. It has the lines, the paperwork and bad distribution of a "planned" system, the conspicuous consumption,

profiteering and tax evasion of a capitalist one, without the advantages of either. This obviously cannot go on. But the new Prime Minister also has assets: the memory of old days of Solidarity; the desire of a people to recover hope and its relative trust in men with clean hands; the promise of Lech Walesa to ensure peace on the labour front for the next six months; relative goodwill both in Moscow and the Western capitals.

Who is the man embarking on this risky venture? 62-years-old Tadeusz Mazowiecki is a tortured Catholic intellectual, a man of great personal integrity and of a stubborn will. A lawyer by training and journalist by profession, he began his collaboration with the regime under the not very good auspices of the Catholic Pax organisation. But he rapidly switched, founded a monthly, *Wiez* (The Link) which can be associated with people who at that time were trying to reconcile socialism and Christianity. Personally, he always proved to be a man of principle. In 1968 he protested against the antisemitic campaign. Three years later he tried to set up a commission of inquiry into the massacre of the workers in Gdansk. This was too much and put an end to his ten years as parliamentarian. Afterwards he led the life of an oppositionist, helping hunger strikers, teaching at the "flying university". His great moment came during the strike of 1980, when he inspired the petition of intellectuals and then presided over the commission of "experts" helping the strike committee. The close association between him, Geremek and Walesa dates from then. He spent a year in detention after the coup and then resumed his work for Solidarity. Last year he was one of the very rare intellectuals to be found among the Gdansk strikers. And yet the same man, in his investiture speech, now proclaims: "The long-term, strategic aim of the action of this government will be the recovery by Poland of economic institutions known for a long time and verified. By this I understand a return to the market economy and to a role of the state approaching the one prevailing in the economically developed countries." This needs no code. It says in plain language - our objective is a return to capitalism.

Which brings me to end on a sad personal note. Nine years ago I travelled to Poland to greet an extraordinary re-entry on the political stage of Polish workers "presenting their interests as the superior interests of society as a whole". They were coming straight out of Marx, I argued, but I was honest enough to add that they were anything but Marxist, indeed that if people were building elements of socialism in Poland, it was like M. Jourdain talking prose, without knowing it. It turns out that such unconscious construction is insufficient. After an early move towards self-management, what has been happening in recent years there but also elsewhere drove people in the opposite direction, and this is how a man who once wanted to reconcile Christianity with socialism now wants to take Poland back on the road to capitalism. Yet where there is a will, there is not always a way. My less sanguine hopes today are linked not with the policy of Solidarity, but with its contradictions. They are still linked with the inventive capacity for resistance of the Polish workers, because the saga of Solidarity, if we mean by that the Polish labour movement, is still unfinished. ■

Socialist Responses to Polish Style Thatcherism

Many readers of Labour Focus, who supported Solidarnosc through martial law, will have deep reservations about the economic programme of the Solidarity led coalition government. With the enthusiastic support of a host of New Right economic advisers, the Mazowiecki government is preparing an extensive programme of privatisation and austerity.

translated and introduced by David Holland

We publish below two responses from the Polish left to this situation. The first is a statement by the Wroclaw Regional Committee of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution).

The second is an editorial from the Warsaw paper "Warszawianka," published by a breakaway group from PSP (DR), associated with Grzegorz Ilka. It operates within the framework of a loosely federal structure: "The Polish Socialist Party Press Agreement."

Both texts emphasise the abandonment by the Walesa group of the ideals of 1981 and demand a return to them.

In response to the new situation, the UK Support Committee of the PSP (DR) has launched an international appeal, aimed particularly at those on the left who supported Solidarnosc in the face of repression, but are now concerned that the Polish working class should be able to defend its interests in the new environment of capitalist restoration in Poland. The text is as follows:

The coalition government in Poland plans to marketise the economy and sell off national assets to private interests at home and abroad. This will profoundly affect working people. It will deepen social inequality and provoke unemployment.

"We the undersigned, call upon the new Polish government:

- 1) To legalise the activity of political parties in Poland by socialists, such as the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution).
- 2) To respect the right to strike by trade unionists as a basic human freedom."

At the time of writing, this appeal has already been supported by the following Members of Parliament:

Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Jeremy Corbyn, Mildred Gordon, Audrey Wise, Bob Cryer, Harry Cohen, Alan McKay, Richard Caborn, Ann Clwyd and Martin Flannery.

and the following Members of the European Parliament: Stan Newens, Alan Donnelly, Tom Megahy, Geoff Hoon, Ken Coates, John Bird and C. Ford.

New signatories can support the statement by writing to:

PPS (RD) International Office,
The Basement,
92 Ladbroke Grove,

Statement by the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) on the New Government in Poland.

The appointment of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as premier of the People's Republic of Poland is an expression of the deepening of the crisis of the system of the ruling nomenklatura. This socio-economic phenomenon has its roots in the establishment of Solidarity, independent of the bureaucracy of the workers' movement in August 1980. The eight-year long effort of General Jaruzelski's regime to stifle the self organisation of society has ended in fiasco.

The appointment of the Mazowiecki government does not, however, mean that society has taken power. It has been constructed on the basis of 35% democracy and at the price of a guarantee not to disturb the foundations of the system which has existed hitherto. The fundamental structures of power – the office of President, the ministries of Internal Affairs and Defence, the National Bank of Poland – are not only outside social control, but outside the control of the Premier himself. The group of opposition leaders represented by the new premier who have agreed to these conditions, have not exploited to the full the opportunity arising from strikes and the bankruptcy of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP).

Nonetheless the establishment of the government does create possibilities for the fulfilment of social expectations. These may be listed as follows:

- 1) The destruction of all the remnants of totalitarian government; the liquidation of the mechanisms of domination of the state over society, above all the dissolution of the Security Police, the Zomo, and the ORMO, together with the reform of the penal code, with the end of securing democratic freedoms. This means the also the destruction of the privileged status of the PUWP and all the groups connected to it (The Democratic Party, the Peasants' Party, the Union of Socialist Youth etc). All those fulfilling leading functions in administration or the economy, should be subject to election. All local administration should be subject to free, secret, equal, proportional and direct elections.

A guarantee of freedom of political and social activity. This means that there should be no restriction on the right to strike or on the creation of trade unions. This should include the police force and the army, in accord with clause no. 2 of the 21 demands of the

Gdansk Inter-factory strike committee in 1980 "Securing the right to strike and the security of strikers and those rendering them assistance."

In accord with demand no. 7, payment should be "made to all strikers for the period of the strike as for medical leave."

The activity of political parties, which are the basis of modern democracy and a condition of the subjectivity of society should not be legally restricted.

Real freedom of the press and of information should be guaranteed through the liquidation of the censorship and the destruction of the material and legal basis for monopoly in this area. This refers especially to the press distribution network, which should be put at the disposal of all political, social and cultural groups. Radio and television should be subjected to representative bodies at an appropriate level and access to them should be guaranteed to all political groups.

2) The economy should be subjected to social needs, with the goal of a modern Twenty First Century economy, which should guarantee to all members of society satisfactory living conditions i.e. at the least the right to a nourishing diet, dignified housing, comprehensive health service and universal access to social services (for example nurseries, education and culture).

The indispensable condition for the realisation of these goals is the subordination of the economy to the producers. Only such a model of social life can guarantee to each person the possibility of self realisation and it is the indispensable condition of the emancipation of society. To the last moment of its existence, the government of Mieczyslaw Rakowski followed in the footsteps of its predecessors, in executing faits accomplis, which orientated the Polish economy in wholly the opposite direction. The possibilities for appropriation by the nomenclatura were widened and opportunities given for the development of speculative and corrupt capital. The conditions were created for the sale of the national means of production to foreign capital. What is more, it permitted the precipitate rise of foodstuff prices through the introduction of market mechanisms in a situation in which there were acute food shortages; it continued the process of linking up the bureaucratic economy with market mechanisms, so worsening the position of the majority of society. The government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki should radically break from the policy of the preceding government.

3) The application of planning, self management and the market. There should be an awareness that the destiny of the economy rests first and foremost in the hands of the workers themselves. Only through the self organisation of the workers and through their initiative can the resistance of the old Party-State apparatus be overcome. Only in this way will the new government be able to realise economic changes that are favourable to the workers.

In accord with thesis no. 1 of the Solidarity programme, adopted by the First Congress of Delegates in 1981:

"We demand a self-managed and democratic reform at every level of management and a new socio-economic system, combining planning, self management and the market...The social enterprise should be the basic organisational unit in the economy. It should be controlled by the workers' council, as a representative of the workforce. The Director should be responsible for operational matters and he should be appointed competitively by the council, which also has

the right to dismiss him...The reform should socialise planning."

The realisation of a reform understood in this way requires social control over production by self-management organisations of workers, farmers and artisans. These should be concentrated in self-management chambers at regional and national level. Such control requires:

- Ensuring identical possibilities for the activity of self-management organisations, trade unions and other bodies representing workers in all sectors of ownership, together with a unified legal system relating to production, employment, trade, working conditions and wages.

- The transformation of working relations within the enterprise in the direction of liberating labour, especially through restricting the numbers of supervisory staff and guaranteeing that they are subject to election.

- The public availability of economic information. Workers' control over the means and goals of production is an indispensable stage on the road to society enjoying full responsibility for the management of the economy. This involves monitoring production, co-operative links between self managements and Chambers of Self Management (with reports on the state of enterprises and of the economy). This will make possible a national democratic discussion on the principles of central allocation of economic surpluses and an ever wider satisfaction of the needs expressed by society.

It will not be possible to eliminate the application of market mechanisms of distribution for as long as socio-economic development has not reached a sufficient level to satisfy needs for particular products. However in conditions of scarcity, decisions about the application of free market mechanisms should be subjected to the will of a society conscious of its needs.

4) The self-defence of workers from the effects of the crisis. The painfulness of the present economic crisis requires that the workers undertake self defence activity:

- Workers' control over prices. The regional structures of Solidarity in co-operation with, amongst others, commissions of the union on trade and services, must produce a weekly public accounting on the rise in the cost of living. On this basis the introduction of a weekly cost-of-living bonus should be demanded. The government should resolve to take determined steps to arrest the rise in prices.

- Social control over the distribution of foodstuffs.

In accord with thesis no. 7 of the programme of Solidarity, adopted by the First National Congress of Delegates in 1981, in conditions of intense scarcity of food-stuffs, the basic structures of Solidarity should: "set up a nation-wide network of trade union commissions on the market and food, co-ordinated centrally and in co-operation with the organisations of Rural Solidarity."

The Tadeusz Mazowiecki government should recognise such commissions, regardless of who controls the various stockpiles of consumer goods. This should also refer to the stockpiles controlled by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence.

- Giving a real value to work. Preceding governments began the process of connecting prices on the internal market to the level of world market prices. The share of labour in the gross costs of production has been reduced to a minimum. The Mazowiecki government, in agreement with Solidarity, should carry out a radical reform of the wages system and first and

foremost increase the proportion of labour costs in the overall cost of production to the world average level.

● The right to work. In accord with thesis no. 9 of the programme of Solidarity adopted by the First National Congress of Delegates in 1981: "We are for the universal right to work and against unemployment...At enterprises anticipating pay-roll cuts factory commissions should examine the possibilities of shifting employees within the enterprise in such a way as to enable them to get other jobs or to work shorter shifts without loss of pay."

Like the trade unions in Western Europe, we demand the 35 hour working week.

● The renunciation of debts. As the premier rightly pointed out in his speech to the Sejm: "The economy is in a deep state of foreign indebtedness." Forty-nine billion dollars were borrowed from 1971 on and there still remain thirty-nine billion to be paid back. Society cannot be responsible for debts incurred by the wasteful measures of the nomenklatura governments.

● Full economic and political sovereignty. We should reject the IMF conditions, which if fulfilled would lead necessarily to a drastic reduction in living standards in Poland as well as the subordination of Polish economic policy to foreign capital. The military and economic agreements resulting from Poland's membership of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance which restrict sovereignty should also be subject to revision.

5) The Self Managing Republic. In accord with the programme of Solidarity adopted by the First National Congress of Delegates in 1981: "We want a real socialisation of the system of management and of the economy and therefore we are aiming at a Self-Managing Poland."

● Free elections to constituent bodies. The Basic Law must be an expression of the conscious free will of society. The new government should announce free elections to a Legislative Assembly. These elections should be free, equal, secret, direct and universal.

Particular attention should be directed to ensuring all candidates identical material facilities for conducting their campaigns.

● The question of government. The road to the Self-Managing Republic requires the complete liquidation of the nomenklatura authorities. Only a self organised workers' movement is equal to this task. This movement has been enriched by the experience of martial law and underground activity, struggling to take power in the work-place and at regional and national level

The Mazowiecki Programme and Us

We are glad that for the first time in the history of the People's Republic of Poland, we have a non communist premier. The government created by him however, is half made up of representatives of the parties which has enjoyed power up until now. These are the parties which have led us into economic catastrophe and have carried out a policy aimed at maintaining communism in Poland. Some of the pathological elements prevailing in our country can be discerned in this situation.

Certainly many areas of burning injustice have been improved, thanks to the support of parliament, especially as relates to the democratisation of social and economic life. This process has not however been completed.

If however we analyse the programme of the new government, presented on the 12th of September, we have to dismiss illusory hopes for further radical change in the political situation and in particular for improvement in the economic situation.

The fundamental jarring note in a fine and profoundly humanist statement by the premier, which promises sovereignty for society, is the assumption that sovereignty is possible without freedom, or freedom without independence.

The new government has been appointed, as in former days, on the basis of *raison d'état*. It maintains

all obligations towards the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA.

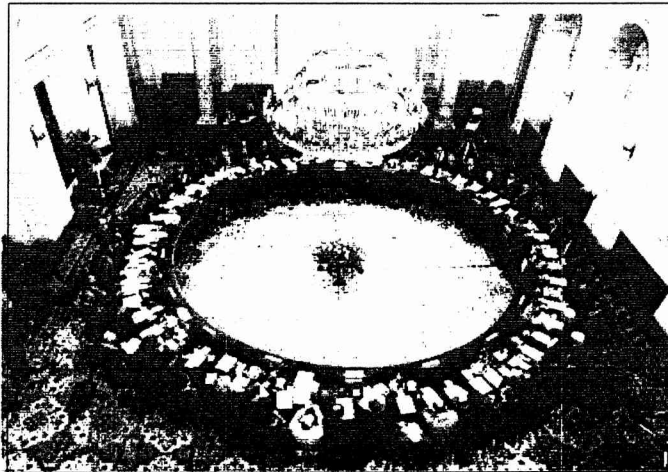
Renegotiation of the conditions of these obligations is not proposed. Lech

Walesa's statement in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 9th September that

"the communists can help us..." and that one should not agitate for the removal of the Soviet army from Poland or for withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, because in the near future "this problem will be resolved by the United States and the Soviet Union themselves," provides further clear evidence that

our political and economic relations with the East will not undergo change. It should be borne in mind that aspirations and demands which are not expressed publicly and officially do not exist in policy, even though they are the universal wish of the whole nation.

Premier Mazowiecki in his statement, observed that "The great powers put forward a concept of security zones defined BY THEM, which can practically be identified as spheres of influence. A reasonable treatment of this question must lead to the search for



solutions, which on the one hand take into account the interests of the great powers and on the other respect the sovereignty of our state and its freedom to establish freely its INTERNAL relations." This is a new formulation of the Brezhnev doctrine and guarantees the loyal support of society for it.

We are pleased at the promise in Mazowiecki's statement that political pluralism will be introduced and that there will be co-operation with all parties and social groups represented in parliament, provided that at the same time permission is given for extra-parliamentary groups to be active and to organise themselves. We are concerned however at the reservations expressed in the condition that this activity must be informed by "a feeling of responsibility in the face of the difficult issues which confront us." Who is to decide whether the political convictions of an extra-parliamentary Party are "responsible." The police? the Government? Or public opinion and the support society shows for their programmes? We are also disturbed by the statement that the government "will create a legal framework" so that political associations "will be brought into existence in a natural manner." This is a promise to introduce a law on political parties and the principles governing their formation - something of a rarity in the legal practice of democratic states. This law is to be formulated by a parliament which has been elected by only partially democratic means. In this parliament the majority of seats belong to the parties which governed formerly and whose interpretation of constitutional freedom of conscience and of political pluralism has been taken out of our hides. These are parties which are now dramatically struggling for survival in government. All the Ministries connected with such policy are in the hands of the hitherto governing parties. This must arouse some concern as to how they will realise the principle of political pluralism in practice. We are of the opinion that the law on political parties should await the occasion when deputies sit in parliament who have been elected democratically and not from a plebiscite between the communists and Lech Walesa's Citizen's Committee. What is really necessary now is a law on publication of the finance, economic activity and the principles for sponsoring political parties. Clarification of the sources of finance and their legal regulation as regards the hitherto hegemonic parties, particularly the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) could diminish their gigantic economic capacity and corresponding capacity for propaganda and equalise, a little, their capacity for conducting political activity and that of the already existing and newly established extra-parliamentary parties. Today this is the basis of political pluralism, practically the most important.

In our opinion legal changes relating to the principles of economic and state administration, the functioning of justice and of the institutions connected to it, are not possible without the "massive change of state functionaries" which the government "does not intend to carry out."

The promise of "appointment of personnel on the basis of ability" will not provoke alterations in the behaviour of functionaries, their activation and engagement in work, if a guarantee is given that they will all remain in their posts. Each one is deeply convinced that he is an "expert" or at least someone who gets things done and that it would be difficult to find anyone better.

At the same time, we cannot agree with the assertion that "in the armed forces and in the departments of internal affairs, conditions should be

created for the participation of all socio-political forces in drawing up policy and evaluating the activity of these organs." In our opinion, the political opinions of the employees of these "organs" should be their private affair, a matter for outside the work place. We will demand a completely apolitical army, police force and judiciary. The security of the citizenry requires that representatives of any kind of "socio political forces" should be excluded from influence on drawing up policy for these institutions. A democratically elected parliament should determine this policy. The government should carry it out and it should be monitored by parliamentary commissions. These organs must be the guardians of the constitution, the law and the security of the state and should not be putting into effect the policy of any party.

Only then will the declaration in the premier's statement that "no citizen will be discriminated against or rewarded on the basis of his world view or political convictions" become real. The assertion that "the army is the military wing of the Party" will then lose its meaning!

Changes in our Stalinist constitution are burningly needed. However a new constitution should be adopted by a parliament which has been elected in a fully democratic manner. In such a parliament there will be representatives of all social and political organisations that are active now or in the future, elected on the basis of competing programmes supported by the voters. It appears that both government and parliament should be aware that their functions are the result of a compromise concluded between the communists and the constructive opposition in the Round Table talks and that their views on many questions cannot be agreed to by all, or even the preponderant social groups. In the elections, society expressed confidence in the people chosen by Lech Walesa and distrust towards the previously governing parties. This confidence cannot however be identified with the free conscious choice of economic and political programme of the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, or treated regardless as support for the views of the Committee. Many voters, who were not actively engaged in political life during martial law (very often through no fault of their own) identified (and still identify) the political line of Walesa with the line of Solidarity in 1981. Many votes were cast for the Self Managing Republic in these elections, for putting the factories in the hands of the workers, for friendship with the subject nations of the Soviet Union (not for co-operation with its government and military).

If parliament does not want to forfeit the confidence of society, it should work out right now a new electoral code, which was promised at the Round Table and wait a little for the creation of a constitution, until the forces in parliament bear a closer correspondence to the real wishes of society, even if it is made up only of parliamentary political parties. To change a good new electoral code for a worse one would be a political error in the eyes of the world, but to change a new constitution, even of the worst kind, for a better one, will be ... a little stupid.

In a word, not all of the political changes announced arouse our full confidence. Amongst other reasons this is because of the enormous technical capacities of the apparatus belonging to or recruited by the PUWP or by its satellite parties. The new government does not intend to alter this, owing to the appointment to ministries of the parties governing up until now (PUWP-4, and Justice to the United Peasants' Party). It has also declared full loyalty to the USSR,

more so than other communist countries. It can practically be said that totalitarian Romania has a more independent policy, or a Czechoslovakia, resting on perestroika, or Democratic Germany, without mentioning Hungary ...

The changes in the economy however, really will be a turning point... But there will not be the expected liberal line on taxation in relation to productive enterprises. Nor will the elimination of taxation on above average increases in wages, which for years have been the fundamental obstacle to production. According to Mazowiecki's speech, they will be rigorously applied. The taxation policy will cause the disintegration and break up of the still existing and functioning state enterprises and will lead to the complete reprivatisation of the national economy. Inflation is to be controlled by increasing prices, while wages are to be frozen (they are not even to be partially index linked) and by further stifling of the mechanism which will make possible an increase in production and supplies to the market. There is no suggestion as to negotiating the suspension of repayment of the debt (proposed by "the capitalist Sachs"), apart from the enigmatic assertion that "We expect an understanding on facilitating credits on the part of the foreign private banks." However there are promises that there will be unemployment and a "momentary" worsening of the standard of living for the whole of society (but will it be for the whole of society?).

Premier Mazowiecki proposes to the weakest that they should fall below the hunger line and to those who have gathered millions from not always morally pure speculative productive activity, that they will be able to reap further rewards from the ending of the "administrative control of prices."

The break-up of many enterprises, whose production is needed for the market, will necessarily create unemployment and poverty for many workers and their families. Where does the government intend to find the cash in the empty state coffers to fund the employment agencies and social protection for the unemployed, promised in the programme? Either these promises will be carried out, increasing the budget deficit, or the restriction of inflation, which has also been promised will be effected.

A man can live without eating for about two weeks, on bread and water at the most for a couple of months. Will this be enough time for the Premier to restrict inflation in this way? Will the hungry have enough patience and faith to get through this period?

It should be taken into consideration that in today's pathological political and economic conditions, there is no way of defining which enterprises are profitable (socially useful), which have lost productive capacity (this is not a matter of access to credit - enterprises with real productive capacities are forced into bankruptcy because of the taxation on pay-rolls), which are operated rationally from a production point of view and not relying on "indicators," faced by penal taxation, to show a rise in production. First and foremost the value of their fixed capital is unknown. What is more there are not even any uniform principles for price fixing or assessing turn-over in all sectors. How can they be liquidated and sold off on this basis?

It has to be recognised that the basic principles of the Premier's speech have the conscious purposeful goal of liquidating socialised industry (largely state and co-operative) in all sectors, and its sell off below its real value to domestic and foreign buyers. But who in Poland has got "big money" from honest, dignified and legal activity, which did not violate working regulations

? There is only one answer to that and it was carelessly given to us by the television on the 15th of September. The "underground economy" and that part of manufacturing which is connected with it, is very pleased with the programmatic principles of the new government. The private proprietors of currency exchange businesses, to be legalised a couple of months later, in the course of one day brought down the black market price of the dollar by one third. And this with their illegally acquired gains, which testify to connections with the nomenklatura and the police!

The bank however responded quickly to this situation and upped its rates of exchange. Indignant representatives from the black market protested on television against this practice and revealed that they had discussed the matter with someone from the Ministry of finance (for 22 minutes and 45 seconds). So we have arrived at a situation where the underground economy presents its terms to the state, a state that is no longer supposed to be communist, but "ours." Who does the premier intend to sell off national assets to? If illegal activity pays so well, are all those of us who worked and earned legally to regard ourselves as idiots? What prognosis for the future, new, legal order does this offer?

The new government intends to build a new "pure" economic system on the foundations of the pathological old one and employing its economically destructive elements. This is not what we expected from premier Mazowiecki and his team ...

Market equilibrium is to be restored by increasing prices to such a degree that they significantly restrict consumption levels, or demand. The control of the inflationary race between wages and prices is proposed through imposing a rigid block on wage increases, whilst freeing prices. But the cost formulas for price fixing are not to be eliminated - only the controls associated with them. With a goods-starved market, we may arrive at a situation where it is profitable to produce one product and sell it to the highest bidder!

It can be assumed that the new government's programme is directed first and foremost towards Western societies and governments. It has to provide evidence for "the introduction of democracy" and political stability in relations with the USSR. (This is so that Big Brother doesn't get upset, because then our Western friends, as usual, will not help, but will be in an impolitic situation, as at Yalta and Potsdam...). It has to display too the transition to a capitalist economy.

This primitive impoverished capitalism will be excellently adapted for manipulation by the western capitalist powers, with unemployment, the absence of social security, an empty market ...

One supposes that the goal is the acquisition of financial support from the West. However even if Western governments and institutions decide to deliver the greatest amount of assistance they are considering, it will still be a drop in the ocean of our national requirements.

From the USA - 200 million, from Western Europe - 200, from the IMF (eventually, if we fulfil their conditions and significantly reduce consumption) another 200. If we multiply this with optimism two fold, we have one billion, to hundred thousand dollars. Round this up to two billion and we have about 4% of our debts to the western banks! A significant part of this has to be in the form of "food aid." So we will find in the shops cheese, meat (perhaps sugar?) at prices probably approximating Western ones, calculated to "stabilise" the black market rate for the dollar. The hourly rate for a worker in West Germany is about 19

dollars, in Finland 18, in the USA 14. For us at the most it is 0.2 of a dollar. So, using the rate obligatory for society (though not for institutions) at black market prices, a Polish worker earns 95 times less than a West German one, 90 times less than a Finn, 70 times less than an American. Who will eat this "food aid" if the government does not make up the difference between the exchange rate and the buying power of consumers? If this means lower prices, this will reduce the value of the "food aid." So perhaps something of the order of 2% of our debt will trickle through onto our table.

So what about this poor fellow, cap in hand, who needs a £1,000 and gets 5p from one neighbour, 5p from another and maybe as much as 10p from a third? He can be assured of good advice. His neighbours will trade with him, give him preferential treatment and advise him on how to work well. Someone who tried to improve his lot and escape from poverty this way, we would all describe as a senseless idiot.. So we cannot hope to get out of the crisis by relying entirely on foreign finance. This is the more the case when this help is conditional on a large part of it being used for the development of private enterprise. Who has the best chance of using this kind of help? – the nomenklatura and the legalised "underground economy." So all the honest idiots can regret that for the last nine years they have not been stealing from this shabby communist state and that they have even been so naive as to occupy themselves with underground union or political activity.

So what dangers flow from economic policy proposed by the Solidarity premier – not just for the government but for the whole of society?

The PUWP, being extremely fair to us, doesn't voice any reservations: Yes, please! Go ahead! Do it! It is however positioning itself excellently in the social situation and with regard to economic possibilities. The fact that they began the Round Table Talks literally at the last minute testifies to this. The beginning of the "free market" in agriculture and the process of privatisation indicates the same, to the degree that it would be extremely difficult to turn back from these decisions. The whole guilt for the liberal economic programme and its social consequences will thus be borne by Solidarity, broadly defined. In this way it is preparing to regain its "leading role," not with the help of constitutional clauses, but through the economic endowment of the nomenklatura with property and through gaining social support for its new social democratic programme. With this in mind, the Party

leadership's conciliatory attitude anticipates the transformation of the Party at its XIth Congress into a Social Democratic Party, with a new programme, statutes and name, but with the same apparatus, assets and sovietised rank and file. No-one will be able to hold this new style PUWP responsible for the forty years of the People's republic, nor for its role in the construction of the programme of the present government. No-one will want to remember that this is "the same Party, but not the same" if stands "in defence" of the workers threatened with poverty. Once again people from the same circles will stand at its head. Its huge material apparatus and propaganda machine will stifle any attempt by the already existing and active socialist parties to negate the credibility of its programme and proposals. The PSP, standing for democracy and independence, will not manage to oppose it, with only out dated technical capacities.

The implementation of the programme of the Tadeusz Mazowiecki government may be the direct cause of the return to power of the members and activists of the present PUWP, which will achieve its old aims, but with different tactics and under a new name. We already know the working name of this new/old Party – The Eighth of July Movement.

One may suppose that the final form of premier Mazowiecki's speech was shaped by many pressures and that its implementation will differ somewhat from its declared form, though still based on the same elements. But this does not arouse in us much hope.

It is necessary to alert the Independent Trade Unions, as well as (!) Solidarity. What is required from us is loyalty to the ideals of Solidarity in 1980-81, calling for the sovereignty of society, workers' self management, social justice, endowing the workers with ownership, for the Self Managing Republic and for respect for the dignity of every man. Thanks to eight years of unremitting underground struggle for these ideals, the PUWP and the "constructive" opposition have produced an agreement making possible the entry to parliament and government of nominated activists from the Lech Walesa group. Now we must demand from them the implementation of a socio economic programme which will represent a continuation of these ideals they once accepted and not their contradiction; striking at the productive capacities of the enterprises, introducing poverty and unemployment and producing the liquidation of the sovereignty of the workers.



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Nr. 140

Letter from Poland



Dear comrades,

The Supreme Council of the Polish Socialist Party – Democratic Revolution sends its very warm thanks for the coverage you have given to our party in the pages of your journal. We are very interested in getting the truth about our party across to as many people in the Western labour movement as possible. This is particularly urgent today, when both the authorities and the Walesa fraction of Solidarnosc are attempting to impose an iron curtain of silence around the real ideas and articles of those of us in the Polish opposition who reject the antidemocratic and anti-working class deal struck at the "round table".

In our case, while welcoming the legalisation of Solidarnosc, we refuse to be bound by the round table decisions curtailing its internal democracy and restricting the right to strike, and we utterly reject the idea of "healing" the Polish economy through lower pay, longer hours and privatisation. We therefore called for a boycott of the recent elections. These were not only savagely antidemocratic, but also, and most importantly, held as a plebiscite on the round table agreement. As such, they primarily served to legitimise the PZPR's efforts to effect a recomposition of the ruling elites in our country.

The PPS–RD refused to be part of these efforts. As a result, a number of leading members of the Walesa current are at present conducting a slander campaign against our party. In this context, we greatly appreciate the refreshingly truthful coverage your journal has given us.

In conclusion, please accept our best wishes for the success of Labour Focus, by far the best journal on Eastern Europe being published today in the West.

*Jan Sylwystrowicz
for PPS–RD Supreme Council*

TO OUR READERS IN THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE

This may be the first copy of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* which you have seen.

We hope that it is not the last.

This journal has been published for over twelve years now by a group of socialists from different positions in the spectrum of left-wing politics. Our views may differ on many issues, but we all share a common commitment to the struggle for democracy as an essential part of any system that deserves the name of socialism.

We also believe that there are many common interests and concerns that unite the

Western left and the democratic opposition in your countries. Our journal therefore promotes the exchange of ideas and open debate across the division of Europe and the world, and welcomes your contributions to such discussions.

Our pages are open to you: we do not exercise censorship of views we may disagree with.

We can translate from any language spoken in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Please let us know if you would like to receive *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* regularly. Write to:

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Civil War in Yugoslavia?

As we go to press, the first show trial of a major political figure since that of Milovan Djilas thirty-odd years ago is about to open in Yugoslavia. Driven by its desire to criminalise the Albanian aspiration for national equality in Yugoslavia, but unable to put a whole people on trial, the Serbian bureaucracy – with Federal consent – is instead charging Azem Vllasi, together with several Kosovo workers and managers, with counterrevolution.

by MICHELE LEE

If condemned, they could face a firing squad. Anything short of their unconditional release will strengthen tendencies towards the country's disintegration.

End of the Postwar Consensus

For about forty years after the Second World War, the political consensus in Yugoslavia in regard to the national question was broadly speaking Leninist. It was understood that the state created in 1918 had not been the product of a bourgeois revolution and that the Yugoslav bourgeoisie had been incapable of establishing a parliamentary democracy. The reason for this was sought mainly, though not exclusively, in its inability to solve the national question. The pre-war state had been built on national oppression and could not be maintained without it. Consequently, the revolution that took place in 1941–5 was seen as a fusion of socialist and national-democratic programmes. The new state was organized on a federal basis, with republics acting as the national states of individual South Slav nations, while two autonomous provinces were established to take care of national minorities. This arrangement was the necessary basis for the industrialisation of an essentially peasant society and for inaugurating a socialist democratic order.

Whereas the pre-war state never knew a moment of national peace, the post-war federation, and the socialist premise of the new order, stabilized national relations to such an extent that the revolutionary character of the Communists' solution could before long be eased out of the collective memory. The existence of the republics and provinces came to be seen as 'natural' and 'obvious'. Today, a new right has emerged in Yugoslavia which, because of its commitment to restore capitalism, finds it necessary to uncouple the national question from its socialist content. These critics of Yugoslav socialism argue that the above solution of the national question in Yugoslavia could have been reached through a 'natural' evolution of the bourgeois order. It neither required in the past, nor implies in principle, any commitment to socialism. Whereas before the war a progressive evolution was suspended by the economic and political convulsions in Europe, today it could be safeguarded by Yugoslavia joining the European Community.

The imagined benefits of such membership depend to a large extent on the ideologues' national location. They all hope that the West, by means of direct

economic aid or investment, would help to quell potential working-class resistance to capitalist restoration. But whereas the non-Serbs hope that Western love of democracy will prevent a takeover of the Federation by Serbia, their Serbian counterparts are convinced that the West will place its bets on the largest nation, since only Serbia's hegemony in Yugoslavia can guarantee the strong state necessary to keep the workers down.

At the same time, the nationality policy of the LCY is in total disarray, which is not surprising since national equality in Yugoslavia has always depended on the success of the socialist project. These days, however, party officials themselves are declaring that the project has always been a 'utopian' one. The political infrastructure of the country has over the past two years undergone a vast transformation, which, however, remains hidden from the untutored eye, since the outward appearances of the past architecture have been kept in place. Just as the Slav newcomers to Dalmatia used the masonry of Emperor Diocletian's palace to build their own houses, adapting the temple of Jupiter to the new Christian rites, so today also the structures and symbols of socialism are used for wholly different purposes. A formal, that is legislated, return to a full market economy has not stopped vibrant speeches about the central role of the working class; although federalism has gone out of the window, federal party and state organs are still in place; party and state functionaries swear by national equality while openly subverting it; autonomous provinces exist on paper, but function as mere departments of a centralised Serbian state. The survival of these outward shells testifies to the tenacity of the past; but today they serve to uphold an increasingly uneven and contradictory political development which bodes ill for the country's future.

In June 1989 *Labour Focus* talked to two members of the newly established Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative. The text below incorporates substantial parts of that conversation. Pavlusko Imsirovic, a Serb socialist living in Belgrade, was a student leader in 1968, and was subsequently sentenced to two years in prison. In 1982, he was imprisoned once again, this time for two months, for organizing a demonstration against martial law in Poland. In 1985, he was charged, together with five other Belgrade intellectuals, for 'counterrevolutionary activity'. *Labour Focus* took an active part in the

ultimately successful international campaign for the release of the Belgrade Six. Shkelzen Maliqi, an Albanian socialist from Prishtina, was with Imsirovic in the 1968 student occupation of the University of Belgrade (then renamed 'Karl Marx Red University'). In recent years, more through force of circumstances than from any particular ambition, he has become a prominent spokesman for the Albanian community in Yugoslavia. As a result, he finds himself today on the political blacklist and could easily end up behind the bars.

Pandora's box

The Pandora's box of the national question in Yugoslavia was opened in 1987 by Slobodan Milosevic, then party head of Serbia and today its state president. He was the first to break with the previous rule that political differences must be solved through official channels, i.e. on the basis of an inter-bureaucratic consensus. Milosevic's plan to change the country's internal balance of power in favour of Serbia led to the abolition, first de facto and then de jure, of the constitutional arrangement that granted Yugoslavia's substantial national minorities equal status with the dominant South Slav nations. From now on it will be the Serb majority, vested in the People's Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, that will decide the exact measure of national rights to be enjoyed by Albanians, Magyars, and others.

This is how Pavlusko Imsirovic resumes Milosevic's grand design. 'At the famous 8th plenum of the Serbian party's central committee, held in November 1987, party leader Slobodan Milosevic's militant line won against the more moderate one of republican president Ivan Stambolic. Milosevic summed up his strategic aims in the slogan that Serbia should be constituted like all other republics - a position which would logically entail that the provinces be separated from Serbia and constituted as independent Federal units, but which he interpreted in the exactly opposite sense of complete centralisation. The winning faction was pressing for a homogenisation and consolidation of the apparatus, on the territory of the republic as a whole. The idea was to gain control over the provinces, but to keep their separate representation in the Federation, gaining in that way three automatic votes out of eight at the Federal level. And if Serbia could also win control over Montenegro and bend Macedonia to its will, it would then be in a position to suspend consensual decision-making at the Federal level. This would allow the Serbian bureaucracy to re-make the Federation - that is, the apparatus of power at the Federal level - according to its needs and desires.' The maintenance of appearances was thus functional to the changing of reality.

Serbia's unification was ensured in April 1989, when dozens of men, women and children were killed by the Federal police sent into Kosovo to end Albanian national resistance to the removal of the Province's autonomy. The unification was achieved, in fact, through a small-scale civil war, which could be kept small because the Federation had officially sanctioned the change. Milosevic achieved Federal compliance by mass mobilization on a nationalist basis. Imsirovic describes how this was done. 'For two years mass rallies have been instigated, and usually organized, by the Serbian party and state apparatus. They were well-organized and financed. The participants were given free transport, technical services and even money. Those who appeared as direct organizers - i.e. the members of the Committee for Protest Rallies from

Kosovo Polje - were all party members. Some of them are retired high functionaries of the police, pushed into the background and pensioned off after the fall of Rankovic. These ex-policemen have apparently become an exceptional pool of cadres for Milosevic.'

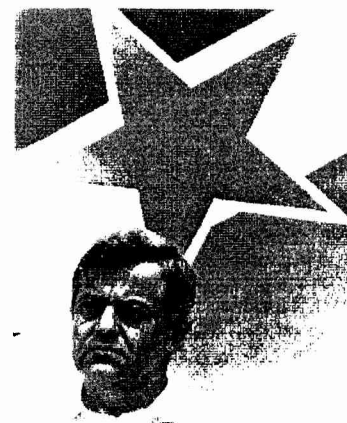
The provinces were stripped of their reality by an effective coup d'état staged by the Federal apparatus against the Federation, which thereby turned into its opposite, a non-federation, in accordance with the same logic that made provinces non-provinces. According to Imsirovic, 'the decision made at the Federal level for an armed intervention in Kosovo, which took place with the declaration of a state of emergency last April, was the apparatus's answer to the general strike in Kosovo. With this general strike led by Kosovo miners, the most combative layer of the Albanian working class, this nation tried to defend the modicum of autonomy which it had enjoyed until then.

And with this application of military and police force against the general strike in Kosovo, we saw something truly paradoxical. Namely, the armed forces of the state were used against people demonstrating in defence of the existing constitution, the existing state order. In other words, the state broke up demonstrations in defence of the existing, valid constitution. It thus brought down a constitution which inhibited its plans, by using state violence against it.'

Collapse of the Federal Centre

The Federal blessing for the violent suspension of the existing constitution was due partly to bureaucratic miscalculation and partly to fear, induced by the Serbian leadership's readiness to resort to civil war. It is worth examining in some detail the process by which reality was turned into appearance, if we are to grasp the danger which the crisis of the bureaucratic order poses today for Yugoslavia's internal peace and stability.

Maliqi describes how the deal between the Serbian and Kosovar bureaucracies was bungled. 'In 1987, the provincial leaderships in Vojvodina and Kosovo found themselves in a dilemma over which current within the Serbian party they should support, particularly as there was no obvious difference between the two in regard to the push for Serbia's unification. They feared Stambolic more than Milosevic, since they considered him a more capable and competent politician. Milosevic was an unknown individual widely perceived as a simple careerist. The Stambolic-Milosevic split was seen basically as a battle for power within Serbia proper. Milosevic also let it be known that he was ready to reach a compromise with the provinces and the Federation. However, in the course of the summer of 1987, when the Serb nationalist movement in Kosovo and Serbia became more radical and Milosevic threw his weight behind it, Azem Vllasi, the head of the Kosovo party, started to move closer to Stambolic. Although at the 8th plenum of the Serbian CC he did not speak publicly and the Kosovo representatives abstained from voting, Vllasi did speak at the closed session in defence of Pavlovic and his view that Serb nationalism was becoming dangerous at the closed session. The trouble was that even at this time the Kosovo leadership did not take the differences between Stambolic and Milosevic very seriously. They supported the positions of Stambolic and Pavlovic, but



Slovene party leader Kucan

did nothing to save them, because they thought they would be able to handle Milosevic more easily than Stambolic.'

The brutal purge of Stambolic and his supporters following this plenum provoked considerable consternation among reform-minded members of the Federal CC, the one body with the authority to intervene in the affairs of the Serbian party. But, according to Maliqi, 'it actually seems to have been the provincial leaderships who blocked an attempt in the Federal CC to investigate the manner in which the Stambolic forces had been routed in Serbia. The Slovene party leadership raised this question, but the provinces - who at that time still believed in their deal with Milosevic - said that this was unnecessary. At this point in time the official procedures for changing the Serbian constitution had just begun and it seemed that concessions were going to be made to the provinces. It was believed that a behind-the-scenes compromise would be struck, whereby the Republic would be more closely involved in provincial politics, but the provinces would retain the lion's share of their autonomy. This was their big mistake.'

The Serbian leaders kept up the momentum. At the end of October 1988, the Vojvodina leadership was overthrown by a Belgrade-inspired mobilization of ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins living there. This was done in order to put pressure on the Federal party, which was due to meet that month. Maliqi again: 'Soon after the fall of the Vojvodina leadership, the 17th session of the CC LCY took place, at which the Federal party and state leaderships lined up behind Serbia.

The nationalist movement in Serbia had by then grown so strong that it was impossible for the Federal leaders to influence it by recourse to their party authority. They therefore sanctioned Serbia's proposed constitutional changes. Although they were aware of the possibility of mass resistance in Kosovo, they were much more frightened by what was already happening in Serbia. They gave their agreement under the influence of the Serbian mass movement, which involved hundreds of thousands of people. Kosovo, after all, is far weaker and easier to control. Serbs are more numerous and their distribution across Yugoslavia means that the country could not withstand a mass Serb revolt. The Kosovo Albanians, on the other hand, live in a province whose powers are limited, and which can put forward its demands only at the Federal level. The Serbian leadership immediately demanded Vllasi's political elimination, because he was seen as a dangerous individual, as somebody who now symbolized Kosovo autonomy. There was no longer any place for Vllasi on the CC LCY and he was soon forced to resign.'

By resorting to mass mobilization, the Serbian party leadership got its way, wiping out in the process the remnants of the authority of the Federal party, which had provided the political backbone of the Yugoslav state since 1945. The CC of the League of Communists made one last attempt to act as an all-Yugoslav authority. In Maliqi's words: 'After the session, the Federal party leadership got in touch with the Kosovo leadership and the head of the Federal party, Stipe Suvar (a cadre from Croatia), arranged for a common



meeting of the Provincial and Federal central committees. Suvar thought that the Federation should have the final say. This was the Croatian idea – that the Federation not Serbia should decide what should happen in Kosovo. Suvar's plan was that some of the Kosovo leaders should resign in return for Federal intercession, but the Kosovo leadership refused to comply.

What were the reasons behind this apparently suicidal intransigence on the part of the Provincial leadership? The plain truth is that they did not trust the head of the Federal party. Suvar had gained his leading position with Serbia's support and the Federal party under his direction had sanctioned the illegal overthrow of the Vojvodina leadership. What is more, 'at its 17th session the CC had directed a public warning to the Kosovo party – an unprecedented act – criticizing it for having conducted a wrong policy in Kosovo. The Albanian leadership was offered no concrete alternative by the Federal leadership. The meeting of the Federal and Provincial leaderships was in any case aborted, since Milosevic refused to come. He refused to accept Federal involvement, taking the position that Kosovo was an internal Serbian affair. The Federal CC's open condemnation of its Kosovo members strengthened Serbia's hand, giving it the opportunity to insist on what amounted to a total purge of the Kosovo party. Serbia demanded the resignations of Vllasi, the new provincial party chief Kacusha Jashari, and some others. In fact, they sought as many resignations as possible.' The last vestige of the Federal party's authority collapsed finally when, a few months later and against its express will, the Montenegrin leadership was overthrown with Serbia's support by a younger generation of functionaries. The new Montenegrin leadership has pinned its hopes on becoming a junior partner to the Serbian 'big brother' in Milosevic's New Order. Since the Montenegrin economy is in a state of total collapse and the new leadership has few ideas what remedy to apply, its plan is to integrate Montenegro's economy with Serbia's. On Federal issues, also, Montenegro has lost its previous independence. Thus by the beginning of 1989 Serbia had acquired control of four votes in the Federation. What is more, the party purges which followed in Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro changed the composition of the Federal CC in Serbia's favour, choking off all possibility of an effective challenge being mounted from within the Federal party. The Federal party ceased to exist in anything but name. The outward shell was there, but the substance had gone. This success could only embolden the Serbian bureaucracy to further action. Although it controlled only four out of eight votes, it felt confident that on certain issues it could also count on Macedonia.

The Flight to Nationalism

This tectonic shift within Yugoslav politics encouraged the local bureaucracies to embed themselves even deeper into their national constituencies and in general fanned nationalism throughout the country. In June 1989 Macedonia followed in the footsteps of Serbia by voting to remove from its constitution any mention of its Albanian and Turkish minorities. Such a Macedonia is ready to support fully Serbia's policy with regard to the provinces and also with regard to internal democratisation, against Croatia and Slovenia, since these latter two republics have been highly critical of certain aspects of Macedonian internal policy. The sorry state of Macedonia's economy, however, is likely to result in the replacement of the current leadership by a younger and more impatient generation, coming from

the youth organization. (A challenge from the party organization within the ministry of the interior was defeated only last September.) The Macedonian Young Turks have as few ideas as their elders about how to achieve the miracle of an economic turnaround; but they see the removal of the current office holders as a necessary precondition. What is more, the Macedonians harbour bitter experience of pre-war attempts to turn them into Serbs, and the new leaders are likely to be far less supportive of Milosevic than the current ones.

Slovenia has responded to this danger 'from the East' by increasing as much as possible the distance between itself and the Federation. Throughout 1988 Serbia, aided by conservative forces within the Federal leadership, invested considerable energy in an attempt to discredit and ultimately unseat the liberal Slovene leadership. Its strategy, pivoted on encouraging a conflict between Slovenia and the Army, culminated in the trial of the Ljubljana Four; this, however, backfired, since the trial provided the occasion for the Slovene people as a whole to rally behind the Republican leadership in defence of Slovene sovereignty. This national mobilization set off the process which, in September 1989, led the Slovene Assembly to adopt a constitution affirming the Republic's right to secession and establishing the local state as fully sovereign. The new constitution explicitly denies the right of the Federation to impose a state of emergency without the approval of the local Assembly. At Serbia's insistence, this move was condemned by the Federal Presidency as 'unconstitutional' and 'separatist'. The Federal bureaucracy also voiced its concern at the more liberal provisions in the Slovene constitution for individual citizen's rights, at the removal from it of the leading role of the party, and at the acceptance in principle that Slovenia's small but numerous political parties and groupings would be allowed to contest the forthcoming elections (spring 1990). Its gradual but constant broadening of internal democracy and its resolute stand on the question of national sovereignty have given the Slovene party a mass support without which it would not be able to stand up to Federal interference.

Understandable as the Slovene move may be, it remains wholly within the logic of the fragmentation of the Yugoslav federation. The Slovene leadership has argued that Serbia's criticism is wholly unwarranted, since Slovenia had not interfered in Serbia's own constitutional labours. Defending the slogan of 'All power to the republics!', in the spring of 1989 the Slovene party leaders invited, their Serbian counterparts to discuss points of difference. This initiative failed, since Belgrade imposed conditions so stiff that they would have amounted to Slovene surrender. What was demanded was full support for Serbia's policy in Kosovo. And although the Slovene leadership had already in effect provided a great deal of support by voting in favour of a host of Federal party and state measures (including the introduction of the state of emergency into Kosovo without which Serbia's unification would not have been possible), it could not publicly agree to this demand. For Kosovo was by now no longer, so to speak, a foreign-policy issue, but had become a crucial dimension of Slovenia's internal politics. When, in March 1989, troops were sent to Kosovo in response to the Trepca miners's strike, the Slovene party was moved (under pressure from its own miners among others) to sign the so-called Ljubljana Declaration, together with all other, official and oppositional, political organizations in Slovenia, protesting against the state of emergency in the name

of national equality. It was repudiation of this act that Belgrade was demanding, knowing full well that the Slovene party could not comply without isolating itself from its popular base.

Mass mobilisations in Kosovo and Slovenia proved to be an effective instrument for narrowing the space for bureaucratic manoeuvre and thus limiting the damage caused by bureaucratic Realpolitik. It is obvious, nevertheless, that the same process which led to the loss of Kosovo's autonomy has resulted in an enhanced autonomy of Slovenia. How is this to be explained? One part of the explanation lies in a tacit agreement by the republican leaderships, reached at the end of last year, to uncouple the question of the status of Yugoslavia's national minorities (in effect, the provinces) from that of the South Slav nations (i.e. the republics). This measure was justified on the grounds that Serbia should have control over its own Republican state machine in the same measure as such control was exercised by Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, etc. But the idea that strong national republics would guarantee national equality has, in reality, turned into its opposite. By conceding Serbia's right to swallow the provinces, the republican leaderships have dealt the Federation what may prove to be the terminal blow. The weakening of Federal authority has turned increased national insecurity.

Today all Yugoslavia's nationalities, Slav and non-Slav alike, have grown more insecure and civil war has become more likely rather than less. Slovenia's erection of constitutional barriers may prevent Federal (i.e. Serbian) interference, but is no substitute for a positive programme for the Republic's role in the Federation. The Montenegrin nationality feels itself today in acute danger from Serbianisation (the recent grotesque spectacle involving the return of the bones of Montenegro's last king and queen for reburial in 'the homeland' will not assuage it!). The same can be said for the Macedonian. At the same time, nationalist mobilization in Serbia has exposed Serbs living in other republics (not to speak of Kosovo!) to national revanchist reactions from the locally preponderant nations.

Bosnia-Herzegovina – the land that plays the ungrateful role of a buffer zone between Croatia and Serbia – has been in a state of turmoil for the last three years. This republic, with its mixed population (40% Moslem, 36% Serb, 24% Croat), was immobilised by the great 'Agrokomerc' scandal of 1987, partly instigated from Belgrade, which in the space of a few months removed its long-standing leadership without replacing it by any durable new combination. The stability of this republic has rested traditionally on its strict 'Yugoslav' orientation, which today – in the massive restructuring of the inter-national balance of power – is ceasing to provide a firm foundation. In an attempt to alter its neutral stance, Belgrade has been encouraging Serb-inhabited communes to reject the authority of Sarajevo and proclaim their loyalty to Serbia. There are signs that Belgrade is also planning a campaign to revive memories of the ancient Christian-Moslem conflict, in which the struggle against an alleged 'Moslem fundamentalism' supposedly at work in Bosnia would play a central role. Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, will not bend so easily: the departure of the old leadership has opened the door to a crop of younger and better educated politicians, many of them of Moslem origin, who are determined to maintain the national status quo in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. Moreover, if republican politics were to split along national-religious lines, it is likely that the traditional coalition of Moslems and

Catholic Croats would again spring into being, isolating the Orthodox Serbs.

This is why the Serbian leadership is now turning its attention to Croatia, the republic which has always held the balance of power in Yugoslavia. The target is its supposed soft underbelly, the Serb population of Croatia (11% of the Republican total), which – as in Bosnia-Herzegovina – is being pushed into the unhappy role of champions of the New Order. This role Croatian Serbs seem not at all keen to assume, since they are well integrated into the Republic's political and economic life. The attack 'from the East' on Croatia has been two-pronged: in addition to raising the Serb question in Croatia, the validity of Croatia's borders – both internal and with regard to Italy – are currently being contested by reference to the London Treaty of 1915! Croatia's lacklustre and divided leadership, constituted after the great 1972 purge of the Croatian party on the grounds of nationalism, has shown itself neither able nor willing to play the national and democratic card on the Slovene model. It has tried to avoid taking sides, preferring instead to speak of a 'Yugoslav synthesis'. Serbia's recent offensive in Croatia, however, has raised the national temperature. More out of fear than desire, Croat politicians appear increasingly ready to fight the mounting menace to the Republic's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. An inner-party struggle has been unleashed whose outcome will determine also just how fast Croat nationalism will grow in the forthcoming period. The signs of its revival are already there, so that Serbs in Croatia might all too easily become an embattled nationality in turn.

Kosovo as the Weakest Link

Once Federal support was withdrawn, Albanian national and democratic rights could be curtailed. Yet the withdrawal of this support need not have provoked quite such an outcome in Kosovo – nothing like that happened, after all, in Slovenia – had not another factor come into play: namely, Kosovo's great poverty. In this respect, Kosovo occupies a unique place in the Federation. Nowhere else are the economy, the administration and the welfare state so heavily subsidized by the Federation. This relation of dependence has limited standing of the Kosovo bureaucracy in the eyes of the Albanian masses, and blocked progress towards the modicum of democracy achieved elsewhere in Yugoslavia. The local bureaucracy, in its efforts to safeguard Albanian national rights in Yugoslavia, has been reduced to playing on differences between the republics, or on tensions between the Federal party and its Serbian wing. Jealous of its privileges, within Kosovo itself it imposed strict limits on all autonomous thought and action. Only when it realized, in late 1988, that Serbia had succeeded in removing its Federal protection, did the Albanian bureaucracy turn for support to the people which it claimed to represent. But Vllasi's hurried attempts to fill the local party-state with his own people had hardly got off the ground before the Federal army and police moved in.

By this time the Albanian population, under working-class leadership, was already on the move. The local bureaucracy responded by opening the mass media, but this gesture was too little and too late. This is how Maliqi explains what happened: 'The mobilization of the Albanian masses started before the 17th session of the Federal CC. It coincided with the public debate about the constitution. The debate in Kosovo started on 10 October 1988 – in fact very late [i.e. after it

became clear that Belgrade would not respect the deal it had made]. The public was presented with drafts of the proposed Federal, Republican and Provincial constitutional amendments. It was then that the Albanian people spoke up. It became clear that the Albanian nation was against the constitutional changes proposed by Serbia. By this time the government in Vojvodina had already fallen and there was this terrific pressure coming from Serbia. This broke the psychological barrier of silence. People up to then had said little, but now a space appeared. The media were now quite open (which does not mean that one could say whatever one wished), because Vllasi and Jashari realized that this was their only line of defence. Two sets of constitutional amendments were debated: one proposed by Serbia and one by Kosovo. (Vojvodina too had had amendments which were practically identical to the Kosovo ones, but after the fall of its government it renounced this earlier stance). The two sets differed on issues relating to the key institutions of the state – such as the judiciary, the police, territorial defence, international relations and planning. The Serbian party had criticized its Kosovo counterpart for not declaring itself in favour of the Serbian constitutional amendments, which it said the Kosovo party should have done in accordance with democratic centralism. Vllasi's [new] position was that this was a matter for the people and not for the party. He insisted on observing the constitutional rule that changes in the constitution are decided by the will of the citizens. The debate in Kosovo was public. It was organized at the level of the communes by the competent body, the Socialist Alliance. Each socio-political organization, each professional organization (such as the Association of Writers, or of Philosophers, etc.), had also to take a position. In other words, the correct constitutional procedure was honoured. And the Socialist Alliance had to report that practically every commune was against the constitutional changes demanded by Serbia. The people gave its support to the Provincial amendments. Serbia at this point instigated a terrific pressure for the leading Kosovo representatives to resign. This provoked tremendous resistance in the Provincial party committee, so that its meeting – which was to decide on the purges – was postponed several times. Some people resigned in advance.

What emerges from this account is that the political institutions provided by the existing constitution were perfectly able to express the popular will. The Serbian leadership's challenge to the constitutional procedure on the grounds of 'democratic centralism' – the Kosovo party being an integral part of the Serbian LC – was a wholly cynical exercise, since the Serbian party is itself an integral part of the all-Yugoslav party, which up to that point had not supported Serbia's amendments. However, as we have seen from the above account of the 17th session of the CC, the Federal party leadership had no stomach to defend the existing constitution. The time for bureaucratic manoeuvres was up, but manoeuvring was all that this leadership was capable of. Yet the Federal leadership includes Slovene, Croatian and Bosnian representatives, i.e. representatives from the three Yugoslav republics which do not approve anti-Albanian politics. How is one to explain their going along with the Serbian constitutional changes? An answer that relies solely on the fear induced by Serbia's mass mobilization is by no means sufficient. An explanation must be sought also in the economic domain: to endorse Albanian mass resistance would have involved taking responsibility for Kosovo's economic problems. Slovenia and Croatia

were not willing to do that, Bosnia could not. The understanding that it would not be possible to sustain Yugoslavia's federal order without a consistent commitment to more even economic development – a position from which the Federal party has been retreating throughout the 1980s – proved to be accurate. Kosovo's economic weakness (and a similar logic can be seen at work also in Montenegro and Macedonia) has played a crucial role in Yugoslavia's growing instability. The chain of national equality snapped at its weakest link, endangering the democratic prospects for each and every Yugoslav nationality. The iron rule (that one finds operating already in the Habsburg Monarchy) which ordains that the national question in a multinational state can be solved only in a comprehensive manner – socially, economically and politically – in the late 1980s came into operation in Yugoslavia in all its destructiveness.

Democratic Counter-Challenge

The positive side of this regressive movement was the emergence of autonomous popular action. According to Maliqi: 'When it became clear that the Serbian leadership was going ahead brazenly and without any scruple, and that its aim was to eliminate Vllasi, the day that the meeting was finally scheduled the miners of Trepca met and said that enough was enough. Saying that they should be consulted as well, they made a protest march to Prishtina. They were followed by others. That evening there was a meeting of the Provincial party committee, attended by representatives of Serbia who insisted that Vllasi, Jashari and others had to go. This caused an explosion the following day. Several hundred thousand men, women and children marched from different parts of Kosovo to Prishtina, braving snow and sleet, some marching for more than ten hours. The demonstrations lasted 4–5 days. They were completely peaceful. The basic rule of behaviour was imposed by the miners of Trepca, who came out with clear slogans. They hailed Tito, the party and the Federal party leader Suvar, and refused to surrender Vllasi and Jashari. And when these people did resign, the miners demanded that the resignations be revoked.'

One of their key demands was that the 1974 constitution be left in place, at least as far as its basic principles were concerned.'

It is worth recalling at this point that Trepca miners had always formed the backbone of the working-class membership of the Communist party in Kosovo. They continued to support traditional party policy on the national question, even after the party had abandoned it. Such was the strength of this idea that action could be mounted without any formal organization, and with a force that delivered a deadly blow to Milosevic's plan for a peaceful imposition of Serbian 'unity'. Maliqi confirms that 'there were no formal autonomous organizations of the miners or the working class. No special committees. It was a question of the general mood. It was enough for someone to make a move and everybody would follow. The first to move were the workers and they were later joined by the [Kosovo] leadership. The November demonstrations had a big impact, undermining Milosevic's whole project. His demands for constitutional changes became illegitimate in Kosovo. The Serbian leadership immediately proclaimed the demonstrations to be an act hostile to Yugoslavia – a counter-revolution – and tried to impose this view upon the Provincial party committee. The idea was to criminalise the workers' action. However, this did not go through. For two months a battle was waged around the assessment of the

November demonstrations. A veritable underground struggle was also taking place within the all-Yugoslav leadership. Here again, Serbia insisted that its position should become the official position of the Federal party.

In the meantime the Serbian party tried to bring its own people – people who did not even stand publicly as candidates – onto the Kosovo leadership. In this way Rahman Morina emerged as the Provincial party secretary. Serbia insisted that Vllasi be expelled from the CC LCY, and this indeed happened at the CC meeting held at the end of January 1989. This provoked an immediate revolt in Trepca. In other factories protest meetings also took place, to cancel the imposed resignations and reject the Serbian assessment of the character of the November demonstrations. The miners demanded that Suvar and Milosevic come to talk to them, which both refused to do. The new, imposed leadership of the Province then produced its own position, which was even more condemnatory than the Serbian one. It was this, in particular, that enraged the miners. They now had no legitimate means to express their disagreement. The drive for adoption of the constitutional changes reached its peak at this time, which further electrified the atmosphere. This is why the miners decided to go down into the pits and not come out until their demands were met. The bottom line was that the three Serbian-imposed officials – Morina, Azemi and Shukria – should resign.'

The decision of Vllasi and his supporters to open up the media was of decisive importance. The Trepca miners formulated ten demands and the others simply solidarised with them. The miners' demands were transmitted through the media, which now became completely open. The local press also reported support from other parts of the country, from Croatia and Slovenia. In fact, this time workers in other factories started to move a week before the miners began their underground strike. In some factories, in the middle of February the workers started to reject lunch – they would come into the canteen, walk through and throw down their empty trays as a sign of their dissatisfaction.

This kind of action spread and culminated in a general strike. The central demand was the three resignations, but some worker party members also condemned Milosevic's policies and demanded his resignation. Mass action pulled in the local party organizations. According to Maliqi, 'they were instructed to oppose the workers' action but as a rule refused to obey. After a few days, some party secretaries solidarised with the miners and demanded that at least the three should resign. The first step was made by the youth organization, then others followed. Factory party organizations, in particular, threatened collective resignations from the LC.' The Kosovo party split along national lines, with the Serbs and Montenegrins insisting that Serbian demands should be unconditionally accepted, while 99% of Albanians were against this. It was, in fact, a total collapse of the party in Kosovo.

The End of the Post-War Order

The Yugoslav leadership was faced with a clear choice. One response, as the Ljubljana Declaration argued, would have been to respect legal norms and, with them, the will of the Albanian people. The other choice, supported by Milosevic, was to change the constitution by force. Having accepted Serbian constitutional amendments, however, the Federal leadership could not but opt for the latter. It decided to put down the general strike by force but, to minimize

bloodshed, only after the miners had come out. To get them out, the Federal party got the three Kosovo officials to resign. Maliqi describes what happened next: 'A big protest rally was immediately organized in Belgrade, which became a kind of occupation of the Federal Assembly. The Federal leaders, it seems, feared that the situation in Serbia would get out of control and provoke a civil war. The rally in Belgrade came up with quite radical demands, including the wholesale resignation of the Federal leadership and in particular the party leader Suvar. This was rejected, but in return the decision to impose a state of emergency in Kosovo was announced. When, at about 10 o'clock in the evening, Milosevic appeared before the crowd, there was little he could throw to them. So, when a group at the front started to chant: 'Arrest Vllasi!', he gave his word that there would be arrests. The following day Vllasi was arrested, on the pretext that he had visited the striking miners in Trepca.'

The state of emergency imposed in Kosovo broke the back of the workers' action. This opened the way for legalization of the constitutional coup d'état. In Maliqi's opinion, 'Vllasi's arrest was linked to the impending vote in the Kosovo assembly. The idea was to intimidate the Kosovo leadership and the assembly delegates. For, along with Vllasi, the managers of all the larger enterprises were arrested, including those of Trepca and other mines, and in this way an atmosphere of fear was created. The army moved in and occupied all strategic points and special police units were also sent in. The constitution was to be voted in at the end of March, so at first a state of emergency was not formally proclaimed, but instead something called a "state of exception", in order to avoid the situation in which a new constitution would be adopted under military rule. All the same, in the Province expectations were high that the assembly would vote against the changes, all the more since only a short while before it had voted in favour of Kosovo's own, quite different amendments. These hopes were disappointed. As soon as the Serbian constitution had been formally voted in, the state of emergency was announced and mass arrests began.'

This action by the Federal state removed the last vestiges of the legitimacy of the post-war order. Never before had the constitution been violated so fully, national rights taken away so brazenly, the working class repressed so openly. The Federal state invoked wartime measures. According to Maliqi, 'there were several attempts in Trepca to continue the struggle, but then the militarisation of labour was introduced – i.e. workers were obliged to return to work as if it were a war situation. Each worker was sent an order to report to work, and anyone who refused to obey was either sacked or arrested. This is how the general strike was broken. Immediately after the Serbian constitution was adopted by the Provincial assembly, students and other citizens started to protest.

Four days later, the Serbian assembly voted in the new constitution in a celebratory mood. In Kosovo this caused demonstrations in several places. But whereas before it had been workers who gave the lead, the workers were now silenced and as a result the revolt was more disorganized. Demonstrators were drawn in the main from the poor quarters of the cities, from the shanty districts of Prishtina and from towns like Podujevo and Suva Reka, where there is a lot of poverty. The demonstrations involved the poorer section of the population and the educated layers did not join them, which is why they took a more extreme form. The conviction grew that the intelligentsia had

betrayed the people. It was an act of desperation. And it must be remembered that the repression this time round was quite severe. There was shooting. Although a few of the demonstrators were armed, the majority just used stones. The police used firepower and many people died, many of whom were not even on the demonstrations. Some were shot down at bus stations, others on the road.'

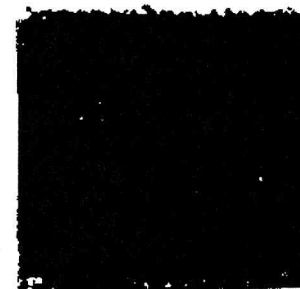
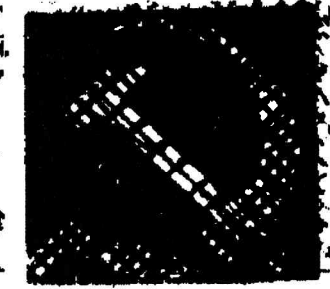
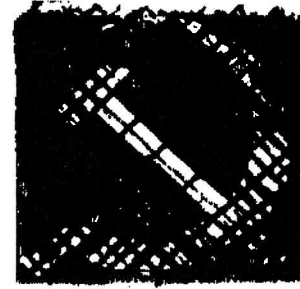
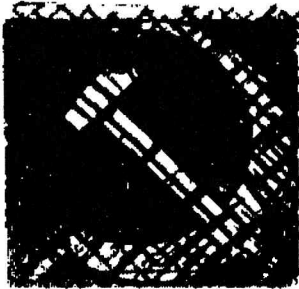
The League of Communists had sanctioned what amounted to a fratricidal war. As Maliqi says, 'the units sent to Kosovo were not prepared for what happened. Some of them, especially the reservists from Serbia, were quite scared. At times they fired uncontrollably. It is said, but I have no means of knowing for sure, that units from Slovenia and Croatia refused to shoot. There were also clashes between local Albanian police and units from outside: in Urosevac, where the first mass demonstrations took place, women with children marched first and when a unit from Macedonia started to club them, it seems the Albanian police intervened to protect them.'

An ugly new Yugoslavia was born from the Kosovo bloodshed. The Federal state's show of force sent a clear warning to all nationalities. In Slovenia, as we have seen, the result was a constitution giving the Republic virtual independence. Everywhere the lines of national divide were now drawn more sharply. The state of emergency in Kosovo has not yet been lifted and is likely to become permanent, since the Serbian bureaucracy has in fact lost any political instruments for controlling Kosovo.

The Contesting Forces

In Kosovo, for the first time since the war we have seen Yugoslav workers lead a popular movement on a democratic programme. The collapse of the Kosovo party-state – the structure which was meant to safeguard Albanian national rights – did not prevent an organized resistance to the bureaucratic putsch. Yugoslavia's revolutionary legacy was simply repossessed by the workers. The survival of the country today, as in the past, depends not so much on the existing state institutions as on popular democratic action. Maliqi and Imsirovic are both convinced of this. In Maliqi's words, 'the workers were the vanguard of the national-democratic movement in Kosovo and the factories will once again become centres of resistance – if not open, then at least passive resistance. They will wait for the moment to organize themselves, perhaps by forming independent trade unions or some parallel secret organization. The workers have this self-discipline, they are an organized force and one conscious of its power, and they will not undertake adventurist steps of a kind that will only provoke repression. They, and a section of the intelligentsia, place their hope in the process of democratisation in Yugoslavia; in that context, they will seek legal channels to achieve the return of a normal situation in Kosovo.'

The main opposition to the process of democratisation



lies in the coalition between the new right and sections of the party-state apparatus. Such coalitions are emerging in all the republics and express local specificities. The Milosevic phenomenon may seem extreme and untypical but in reality it is paradigmatic of the new order now emerging in Yugoslavia. This is Imsirovic's assessment. 'Milosevic emerged as a man who allowed national self-expression, who cancelled certain taboos, who related favourably to Orthodoxy and its institutions. All that noisy clamour about the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, about the role of the Orthodox religion in preserving Serb cultural traditions, represents not just Milosevic's flirtation but his open alliance with the Orthodox church, Serb nationalism and Serb chauvinism. For since his arrival in power there is no longer any mention of Serb chauvinism. Since the 8th plenum Serb nationalism has been promoted to a state-building Yugoslav force; to a mild, harmless phenomenon which can only be positive. But this is a nationalism summoned up to help preserve the power of one fraction of the Yugoslav apparatus, which as a whole is riven by fractional struggles.'

'Milosevic's social basis – the forces on which he relied to get rid of Stambolic's fraction and repressively consolidate the apparatus of power – are provincial party functionaries, in other words, the middle and lower ranks of the party apparatus. Milosevic was able first to win over regional party committees and then to make an assault on the Belgrade party, the largest party organization in the country, which under Dragisa Pavlovic was a Stambolic bastion. After Pavlovic's departure, the Belgrade party was thoroughly purged. The purge was made easier, given a certain cadre basis which Milosevic had established during his own time at the head of the Belgrade party, and which he used in

his onslaught. Milosevic, after his victory, replaced those purged with a group of arrivistes, primitive careerists, who have no moral or political scruples and who are highly unpopular. The other important layer of support for Milosevic is the rising entrepreneurial class in Serbia. We are told daily that the Albanian people's desire for autonomy or a republic is counter-revolutionary, yet at the same time you can see people on Belgrade television arguing openly in favour of capitalist restoration in Yugoslavia. The demands raised by the Albanian masses have never questioned the social character of ownership or the achievements of the revolution – such socialist achievements as have survived over the past forty-odd years. We have never heard from the Albanians a demand for the re-privatisation of social ownership. But we have heard such demands come from precisely those social layers and political groupings that support Milosevic. At the time of the military intervention in Kosovo, in March 1989, there was an interview with a well-known entrepreneur from Kosovo, one of the Karic [ethnically Serb] brothers, who – as a successful businessman – spoke warmly, indeed passionately, in favour of re-privatisation of the means of production in Yugoslavia. And nobody dreamed of stopping him or calling this by its right name: the programme of counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalism.'

Imsirovic, however, does not think that Milosevic's support in the Serbian masses is very solid: His influence on the Serbian masses is highly overestimated. This is proved by the fact that the first thing he did was to purge all the media, placing them under tight party control. In Serbia today, there is practically no organ that can write critically. All editorial boards have been purged and critical

journalists sacked. He has made the press speak with one voice. A person confident of his legitimacy could have allowed at least a mildly critical paper, such as a student paper with its small print-run. But Milosevic is well aware that the appearance of any other political alternative would soon bring him into question, since it would expose how weak his influence in the masses really is. Observers from outside frequently identify his influence in the masses with his control of the media. And when one reads the Belgrade press, one gets the impression that Milosevic is a charismatic personality. Posters bearing his face are printed in large numbers, there is no illustrated journal without his photograph. We can speak of a kind of renaissance of the cult of personality.'

This is not to say that the nationalist appeal of Milosevic's project has not found a resonance in the Serbian masses. 'With his chauvinist hullabaloo, Milosevic has succeeded in temporarily slowing down political mobilization in Serbia, in confusing the masses and in exporting their dissatisfaction, by turning the existing social tensions against an imaginary outside enemy. Today this enemy is the Albanians, tomorrow it will be the Slovenes, the Croats, the Moslems, etc. – indeed anybody who resists him. The rapid growth in the number of strikes and the broadening of workers' demands suggest that he does not have much time to implement his programme of gaining power at the all-Yugoslav level and consolidating the Yugoslav bureaucracy; that he must move very fast, conquering one Federal unit after another, in order to confront the masses with a strong apparatus of repression. All the individual republican and provincial apparatuses are in crisis. Milosevic's aim is to consolidate the bureaucratic structure of power. And the final aim is a confrontation with the masses, to put a stop to their political development. This is why he and his supporters have fought so hard over the last year for the convocation of an extraordinary party congress, which will now take place in January 1990. The idea is to achieve a numerical majority there and then proceed to a wide purge of the party apparatus in the other Federal units. Whether he will succeed remains to be seen. But if he does, then we can expect a rapid purge of the party apparatuses in Slovenia and Croatia and their 'normalisation around the programme of the Serbian bureaucracy. This means purges, the consolidation of power by purely repressive measures, the shutting up of intellectuals and workers. Re-centralisation would consolidate the power of the Yugoslav bureaucracy as a whole.'

Milosevic's success involves the return of a state based on national repression, albeit in the guise of Yugoslav unity. How easy will it be to reconcile this with the emergence of the local parties as national champions? According to Imsirovic, 'we are witnessing a notable confusion in the Yugoslav bureaucracy. At times they resist Milosevic, while simultaneously they seem to be retreating step by step. We are dealing with a struggle between several factions. There are differences between them, but also a readiness to capitulate. Fractions are formed on the principle of loyalty to the local apparatus – or the dominant current within it – not to the people, to the class, to the achievements of the revolution. This can best be illustrated by the case of Suvar. Suvar stood up to Milosevic at the 17th party plenum and defended a Yugoslavia based on national equality in the same way that Chamberlain stood up to Hitler and defended Europe in 1938 – retreating step by step and encouraging his adversary's appetite. Suvar is evidently more afraid of mass mobilization in

Shkëlzen Maliqi



Croatia than he is of Milosevic. With Milosevic he will always find a common language. It is true that his faction is the bearer of an alternative strategic option. But at the moment when he had a chance to gain undoubted support in Croatia, at the moment when a mass wave of solidarity with the Kosovo miners welled up in Croatia, Suvar retreated cravenly, because he was frightened of this quite different but far more effective kind of resistance to Milosevic. Instead, together with other Yugoslav functionaries, he gave his blessing to military rule in Kosovo.'

'One cannot have much hope that this or that part of the apparatus, this or that local bureaucracy, will put up a decisive resistance to Milosevic. Although the Slovene party signed the Ljubljana Declaration, it has done so little to realize its political programme that one wonders whether this is indeed the line of the Slovene party. The signature of the liberal wing of the Slovene party was a means to legitimise it in the eyes of the Slovene masses, nothing more. All these years, the Slovene liberals have failed to take their programme for a democratic transformation to the masses in other republics, to look for allies or mobilize outside Slovenia. This is the best proof of how seriously they take their programme. It seems they are hesitating between the hope that they may yet find common ground with Milosevic and the fear that the latter will purge them all and replace them with what the Slovene youth press ironically describes as "healthy forces", i.e. orthodox Stalinists.'

In Imsirovic's view, 'the fateful and decisive force in Yugoslavia has not yet made its will known, has not mounted the political stage in all its power. The working class is still searching for adequate forms of struggle, its own form of intervention in the conflict of the various factions. It is ready, as has been shown in Kosovo, to give support to its own national bureaucracy at a time when the latter is defending what is in its interest. But it is not willing to play the role of cannon fodder in inter-bureaucratic quarrels. Suvar is aware of this, which is why he was not brave enough to mobilize Croatian workers to resist Milosevic. The wave of solidarity in Croatia and Slovenia was a real blow at the foundations of the anti-Albanian South Slav coalition and an inspiration for the development of a democratic federation based on national equality. Such a federation, naturally, must be based on self-determination, including the right to secession. Without voluntary adhesion to the federal community, there is no equality in decision-making within it.'

Expectations for the Future

Since this conversation took place, Slovenia has adopted a constitution which should lead to relatively free elections in the Republic in the coming spring and possible loss of power by the local party. The Federal party and state bodies have condemned this act, but – short of the Yugoslav army taking direct power in the country as a whole – they no longer have the authority or the means to reverse it. The outcome of the struggle at the Federal level will have fateful implications for all Yugoslavs. According to Maliki, 'in Kosovo, the people are ready to act, but right now everybody is waiting for the outcome of the struggle for power in Yugoslavia as a whole. Slovenia, and to some extent Croatia, have a quite different concept of how the Federation should work from the one held by the current leadership in Serbia. The difference is of a principled nature, the two concepts are mutually exclusive and cannot coexist.

The Albanians support the former model, because it allows for a democratic expression of popular will. In

the Albanian masses, as I have said, there is a general will to resist, but at present there is no means of coordinating this. They are ready to intervene massively on the key questions regarding the constitution of the Federation.'

'But if such a struggle were to fail, then we would face a permanent and violent repression. There is a plan for a fresh colonization of Kosovo, to "correct" the ethnic structure in favour of Serbs. That such a plan exists is only confirmed by all the talk in Serbia today about the "genocide" against Serbs which has allegedly been conducted by Albanians over the past 300-odd years! In fact, when Kosovo was incorporated into Serbia at the end of the Balkan Wars, already three-quarters if not more of its population was Albanian. Since then, there have been three attempts to "correct" this percentage, but they have all failed to a greater or lesser degree. Today, it is even more difficult to imagine how this would work. But it is nevertheless being proposed. The idea is that Serbs would be brought in, while Albanians would be resettled throughout Yugoslavia – and some encouraged to leave the country altogether. There is an even more radical plan, which relies on an eventual civil war in Yugoslavia to expel as many Albanians as possible to Albania. There is also a third option, according to which the Albanians would be forced to accept a redrawing of frontiers. Kosovo would be divided: Kosovo proper would be joined to Serbia, while Metohija would go to Albania. The majority of Albanians would then be expelled to Albania. A substantial part of the remaining population would be resettled. Naturally, this is all speculation, but such intentions do exist and are expressed today. The most radical are the Chetnik elements, who are ready for a massacre of Albanians, for a true genocide. Currently all this looks most unreal; but it is possible to imagine a situation in which Yugoslavia would enter a whirlpool of national strife, and various nationalist forces would seize the opportunity to create what would amount to a regional crisis. And while the attention of the world was focused on larger countries like China, the Soviet Union or Poland, they would try to press forward to a "final solution".'

Maliki's argument is that 'we are dealing with a crisis of state socialism, which has used up its historical credit. Everywhere the party-state is falling apart. In Yugoslavia there are forces which seek more democratic channels of state legitimation. Yugoslavia is a multi-national state and any attempt to impose a single national will would provoke the country's break-up. In which case the question of Kosovo would still be open, since Yugoslavia's disintegration would not only lead to an intervention of big powers, but also open up a regional conflict in which Bulgaria and Albania would be bound to get involved. There is no doubt that a democratic transformation of Yugoslavia demands a democratic transformation of Serbia. The current leadership is obsessed by the idea of a Greater Serbia, but I do not believe that it will remain in power for any period of time, since I do not believe that it is able to bring any real advance or benefit to the people of Serbia. In Serbia, also, there are forces capable of offering another vision of Serbia and of Yugoslavia: that is, of Yugoslavia as a democratic community of all its peoples. Such forces are to be found in a section of the intelligentsia and also in the working class. For although the Serbian working class may appear momentarily blinded by the nationalist project, its future lies in cooperation with the working class in other parts of the country.' ■

The massacre of Romanian villages

by Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine

Analysis of the project and reactions

What does it consist of, exactly, the programme of so-called "systematisation of the Romanian territory", and, in particular, of the Romanian villages? If, in the West, everybody agrees that it would mean a veritable cataclysm, both from the human point of view and from the cultural patrimony point of view, there is still lack of clarity regarding the extent, the degree of advancement and especially the finality of this programme. As far as the extent of the project, the official documents, and Ceausescu himself, could not be clearer: all the regions of the country are included and if the danger of disappearance explicitly concerns 7000-8000 villages, the rest of them remain potentially threatened by the "systematisation".

The programme entered its final phase at the beginning of this year and it is estimated that around a dozen villages have actually been erased. Nevertheless, there exist certain differences from one region to another: thus, contrary to an often voiced opinion, the demolitions did not start in Transylvania (where a Hungarian minority of two million people lives, victims of forced Romanisation). In the surroundings of Bucharest, the Ilfov region - set as an example and pilot zone of the systematisation - remains the area most touched so far. But, at different rhythms, destructions took place all over the country, and especially around the big cities, often attacking villages which are several centuries old. In many of these cases, the inhabitants were informed the night before the arrival of the bulldozers.

In fact, the project was not born yesterday. It was in



Bucharest, too, is a victim of "systematisation"

1967, shortly after the end of collectivisation, that the basic principles of systematisation were announced, and taken up again at the 10th Congress of the RCP in August 1969. At the national Party Conference of June 1972, the directives become more precise and the villages are divided into three categories, according to which their fate is being decided today. The first category includes localities bound to become towns; the second, villages destined to become modernised and endowed with urban-style buildings; and finally, the last category consists of villages which, "lacking economic perspectives", are doomed to disappear. In 1974 the project is given a "legal framework" through the adoption of a law forbidding the building of new houses outside a perimeter rigorously set to this end.

Nevertheless, until not so long ago, there existed no law concerning the actual plan of "rural systematisation": but on the 17 April 1988 the legislation establishing the legal basis necessary to the pursuit of the plan is set in place.

Thus, the "systematisation" programme, which took a long time to mature and is today operational, does not appear as a sudden "folly" of the Conducator, but as one of the facets of a global social project. From this perspective, the destruction of the peasantry appears as an additional step on the Orwellian path of a total collectivisation of Romanian society.

The "Systematisation Plan of the territory and the Localities" in Romania

The systematisation of the Romanian villages represents the last stage of a global programme intended to bring about the radical transformation of the whole habitat of the country, both rural and urban. It concerns the following:

1. Rebuilding of towns and cities according to a unique model: the centres of these must be remodelled in order to become "politico-administrative centres" regrouping official buildings around a square large enough to contain the crowds gathered for demonstrations; around this centre the habitat must be concentrated into large blocks of flats built, if necessary, on the site of erased old quarters. The "systematisation of the towns" must be finished largely by 1990. In fact the plan has already been executed in most Romanian cities and Bucharest is the main example: it is well-known that the essential part of its historic centre has been destroyed.

2. The traditional rural habitat must disappear, in three stages from now to the year 2000 (1990-1995-2000) through the following measures:

- the demolition of more than half of the presently existing rural localities. Those concerned in the first

place are the non-collectivised villages and the hamlets. These will be pulled down and their sites used for agricultural purposes.

– the reconstruction of the remaining villages, following the urban model, aiming to reduce as much as possible the occupied surface: large buildings in the centre, regrouping other habitats into pavilions with at least one storey.

– the creation of 558 "agro-industrial centres", chosen among the 5000–6000 new villages and equally distributed between the 40 departments (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Officially, this programme of "systematisation of the rural localities" is being justified by the concern for the recuperation of arable lands. Nevertheless, the figures presented are derisory when compared to the total agricultural surfaces; these figures would thus correspond only to a reappropriation of privately-owned plots or of non-collectivised land, which has been intensely cultivated so far. In any case, the real problem of Romanian agriculture is not one of insufficient agricultural land (with 0.46 hectares of arable land per inhabitant Romania's place in this respect is second in Europe, after Poland). The real problem is the weak rate of productivity of the farms belonging to the state and the cooperative sector.

The second argument put forward by the official propaganda today in order to praise the "systematisation" is that it is necessary to modernise the conditions of life in the countryside. This could be an acceptable argument if it wasn't refuted by the very facts. According to the official press itself, the majority of the apartments newly built in the countryside have no running water, no heating systems and no sanitary installations: the kitchens are shared (one for each floor) and the toilets are in the back yards.

What is, then, the real aim of this operation? First, the peasant working in the cooperatives as well as those working on their private plots will lose both their individual houses (with stables, henhouses, vegetable gardens) and their private plots. In other words, the peasants will lose the little economic independence which they still retained vis-à-vis the state. From this point of view, the "systematisation of the territory" can be seen as a second collectivisation of the land, at a time when Romania suffers of a chronic shortage of food and when, according to official statistics, the profitability of the private farms is much higher – in spite of their archaic technology – than that obtained in the other sectors.

It is also, and above all, the means of destroying a peasantry which is insufficiently controlled because it has succeeded, up until now, to preserve its essential identity through its cultural traditions, its patrimony, its social relations and solidarity which are based upon traditional community relations such as the family, the neighbourhood, the ethnic group, the parish.

The final aim – otherwise openly proclaimed – of the systematisation programme is to achieve, under the pretext of "reducing the differences between the towns and the villages" an as perfect as possible "homogenisation" of Romanian society: a society without a past or memories, without traditions or religions, without ethnic or cultural differences, the society of the *new man*. Nicolae Ceausescu summarises this in the following terms: the systematisation of the territory will lead to the "creation of the unique working people of Romania".

Opposition and Resistance September 1988 – September 1989 A Chronicle of Events

Until not so long ago there was little to report about a Romanian movement of dissent. Isolated acts of protests by individuals ended in the exile or the disappearance of the people who dared to speak up; outbursts of mass protests and revolt were brutally crushed and thus short-lived (the miners' strike in 1977, the uprising of the population of Brasov in 1987).

The following accounts seem to show that this state of affairs may well be undergoing a fast change. The acts of protest and resistance described below are coming from all sectors of society: ordinary citizens in the cities, peasants from villages threatened with destruction, members of the intelligentsia, including well-known artists and scientists, and even high-ranking members of the Communist Party.

● In September 1988, Doina Cornea was the first to respond, by launching an appeal addressed to Ceausescu, against the "systematisation" programme which she qualifies as "genocide". Her open letter was smuggled to the West and was broadcast into Romania by Radio Free Europe. Since then more than 60 people are known to have joined and signed the appeal. Doina Cornea, a retired university professor living in Cluj had been arrested together with her son between the 19th of November and the 24th of December 1987 for having distributed leaflets calling on the people to demonstrate in solidarity with the striking workers of Brasov. After being released, she and her husband have been practically under house arrest and were several times beaten by members of the *Securitate* (the secret police) surveilling their house. Several Western journalists and more recently a Belgian MEP, Gerard Duprez, were also assaulted, beaten and their belongings stolen by plainclothes policemen, following attempts to establish contact with Cornea.

● At the end of September 1988, Aurel Dragos Munteanu, essayist and novelist, hands in his resignation from the party. In a letter addressed to Ceausescu, he explains that his resignation is due, among other things, to his refusal "to carry the moral responsibility entailed in giving his support [through his party membership] to the programme of destruction of the rural localities".

● A letter recently arrived in the West describes the uprising in a village in Maramures-Petrova, populated by Romanians and Ruthenians. Armed with wooden clubs the villagers attacked a delegation of local party leaders who were trying to persuade the people to agree to the destruction of their village. The plan was to have them transferred to another village as a prelude to a future "systematisation". Following this attack, Gaftone, secretary of the regional propaganda department and a *Securitate* commander, was severely beaten and hospitalised. The *Securitate* units called in from Sighet, a nearby town, refrain from interfering. The peasants are victorious: the first party secretary of the region, V. Barbulet, promised to cancel the plans for the destruction of their village and accepts a new *maire* – this time a village inhabitant – appointed by the villagers themselves.

● In mid-March 1989, six veteran party leaders distance themselves from Ceausescu's policies and denounce, in the first place, the plan of rural "systematisation". In an open letter addressed to Ceausescu, they write: "The whole of the systematisation plan and the forced displacement of peasants into three-storey buildings are contrary to article 36 of the constitution, which protects the private

property used for housing, its annexes and the land which is occupied by these." They add: "What predominates today in the countryside is the fear of systematisation, with 7-8000 villages threatened with demolition. Besides economic, cultural and humanitarian objections formulated by the civilised world against this programme, it is worthwhile raising a legitimate question: why urbanise the countryside while normal living conditions cannot be ensured in the cities?"

In May 1989, one of the signatories of this letter, Corneliu Manescu, was forcibly removed from his Bucharest residency into an estate-type block of flats situated in the new agro-industrial centre of the Chitila commune. His present flat has no running water, with the toilet in the back yard. His daughter was made redundant and transferred to Succava in the north of the country. Manescu, who used to be Romania's Minister for Foreign Affairs in the late 1960s, is 73 years old and severely ill. For several months he has been deprived of any external contact in spite of interventions by West Germany and Hungary where he had been invited for medical treatment.

Silviu Brucan and Alexander Birlandeanu, two other signatories of the same letter, were also forced to move into the suburbs of Bucharest and their homes are under police surveillance.

● Also in March 1989, the poet Dan Desliu addresses an open letter to Ceausescu accusing him of violating the constitution and of regarding it as a vulgar piece of paper: "If it wasn't so, the bulldozers would not be allowed to tear day and night into the individual houses of the peasants, victims of the systematisation plan...".

Desliu, aged 62, attacked the Ceausescu regime calling it "the inflexible dictatorship", "the government of fear" and denounced the transformation of the country "into an immense concentration camp under open skies". On March 17th he started a hunger strike to protest against the repression to which he was subjected and to demand an end to the judiciary proceedings against him. At the beginning of April, Desliu was forcibly confined to a mental hospital in Bucharest. At present he is at home, under house arrest and physically weakened.

● Another letter smuggled to the West and signed by a group of peasants from the province of Iasi (north-east Romania) says that the Romanian population knows about Operation Romanian Villages and that they rejoice over it. This group of peasants insists that it should be made known that the villagers do need running water systems and electricity, but that they do not want to see their houses destroyed to this end.

* A second letter, signed Ion Diaconu, relates the revolt of two villages from the Bistrita-Nasaud district, Parva and Monor:

The villagers of Parva learned that they are to be soon removed to a nearby village, Rebra. Only a few administrative formalities are still needed in order to put this decision into practice. A certain Huciu is charged with bringing to the district headquarters the plans signed by the village authorities. The villagers, having learned the purpose of his visit, keep him in confinement for three days at the headquarters of the local Popular Council. They demand, in exchange for his release, the presence of the district first party secretary, Buslui, who sends instead one of his underlings, a certain Musuroia. Negotiations follow. The villagers are suspicious and they organise a 24-hours guard around the village, tolling the church bells

as soon as an official car approaches the village to call the villagers to assemble in front of the village hall. The authorities resort to intimidation and the village priest is sent to Bistrita (capital of the district); the bells are replaced with drums and barricades are set up at the entrance to the village. Eventually, the authorities give in and the removal of the village is cancelled.

The courage of the inhabitants of Parva becomes contagious: the people of Monor, a village threatened with the same fate, decide to displace, during the night, the stone posts marking the boundaries of the district, thus becoming part of Mures, a different district. It is a symbolic act expressing their will to escape the decision of "systematisation", coming from the authorities of the Bistrita-Nasaud district.

● Gabriel Andreescu, 37, bio-physicist, has been unreachable since the interview given in Bucharest to journalists from French television in June. Shortly before the interview, he managed to send a letter to the participants of the European Community conference on human rights, held in Paris. At the same time, he went on a 15-days hunger strike, starting May 20, in order to protest against the violation of human rights in his country, the xenophobic policies of the Romanian regime and the destruction of the villages.

● At the beginning of April, Andrei Plesu, philosopher and art critic, was dismissed from his position as researcher at the Institute of Art History in Bucharest. He was sent to work as a museograph in the city of Bacau, although until June no actual appointment was available for him.

These measures were taken by the authorities after he signed, together with six other intellectuals, an appeal addressed to the president of the Writers' Union, D.R. Popescu, asking him to "exercise his statutory duties" to defend their colleague, the poet Mircea Dinescu, subject of repeated acts of repression and dismissed from his position as editor of the magazine **Romania Literara**. Dinescu's dismissal occurred after he gave an interview to the French newspaper *Libération* in March 1989, in which he called upon the Romanian intelligentsia to protest against the plans to destroy thousands of Romanian villages.

● Four Romanian journalists were formally charged with having printed and distributed leaflets hostile to Ceausescu and calling upon the people to demonstrate against the regime. They were arrested and beaten by the police between 25-27 January this year. They are: Petre Bacanu, 47, journalist at *Romania Literara*; Alexander Chivoiu, printer; Mihai Creanga, 47, theatre critic at *Romania Pitoreasca*, and Anton Uncu, 41, journalist at *Romania Literara*.

Bacanu is still imprisoned in an unknown place, while the other three were released after months of detention and transferred to the provinces.

Three other journalists from *Romania Literara* were made redundant for having expressed, in a private conversation, their sympathies with their colleagues. They are Pia Serbau, Dorel Doriau, and Ion Strica.

● Finally, a letter dated March 1989 and signed by "a group of Romanian journalists" expresses support for the four leaflet authors and declares that as editors of the official press their only consolation is to know that "nobody reads our articles or gives them any importance".

Dossier compiled by Lucretia Lautaru from *La Nouvelle Alternative*, Nos. 14 and 15, and based on information provided by *La Ligue pour la defense des droits de l'homme en Roumanie*. ■■■■■