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The East German crash



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East German crash paves way for austerity in West

A LOOK AT the policies pursued by West Germany's rulers since they took over the East suggests an alarming conclusion: a massive attack on the rights and living standards of West German workers is being planned.

WINFRIED WOLF

THIS is clear from a series of features:

- The federal government and the West German firms and banks are subjecting the new regions in the East to an economic crash.

- At the same time they are accepting an accumulation of debt which, on the one hand, is leading to the ruin of the state's finances, and, on the other, being largely directed towards stimulating consumption, is not laying the basis for a subsequent "self-generating" upturn.

- This type of economic policy creates a climate in which the call for "severe austerity" rings loud. This demand will cut against the interests of the great majority of the population, and big cuts in earnings will be used as a weapon to transfer the same policy to the West.

- Finally, it would be reasonable from the point of view of the introduction of such a policy that there be a national coalition including the social democracy, at least for the initial period.

Entrepreneurs heading to East

The entrepreneurs who have been heading East for the past twelve months, did not do this with the intention of actually undertaking anything. Their policy has been "buy up and wait".

This is above all true of the riff raff who were not embarrassed to appear in the Wild East in the form of vultures. Thus the Narva light bulb factory was taken over by a notorious speculator.

The same however is true of more respectable concerns. Thus Siemens has been seen as by far the biggest arrival in the East. Six firms with 12,440 employees were bought. Nonetheless, Siemens only added on 274 million marks in promised investments.

In September, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (September 3, 1991) published a list with this conclusion: "By the end of July the Treuhand took in 11.6 billion Deutschmarks for all the successful purchases of enterprises. This was accompanied by promises of DM67.8bn in investment."

Note well — these are only promises and the investments are to be spread out over five or more years.

Thus promised investments in the Wild East are less than in the ancestral West, taking into account the different sizes and situations of the regions. At the same time the Treuhandanstalt has been a splendid instrument for preventing a massive influx of foreign capital where it is not wanted.

The foreign press has several times reported how non-German interests have been hindered and left out of consideration. Of the some 3,000 enterprises bought from the Treuhand, a mere 115 have gone into the hands of foreigners, in almost all cases into the hands of small entrepreneurs.

The four larger concerns that have been taken over by foreign firms are Rüdersdorfer Zement GmbH (workforce of 3,200, new owner Britain's Readymix); the Olympia Baugesellschaft GmbH (workforce of 2,700, buyer Société Générale d'Entreprise, France); Energiebau Dresden (workforce of 1,850, buyer ABB) and Industriemontagen Meserburg GmbH (workforce of 1,800, buyer, Pallas Invest SA, France).

State investments have largely gone into renovating or constructing the infrastructure — telecommunications, post, roads, rail and energy. Possibilities of nationalizing large firms in the ex-GDR with the aim of restructuring them have not been taken up.

One exception here is the half-state, half-private Konzern VW which, with the purchase of the Sachsenring car works in Zwickau, has become by far the biggest investor in the ex-GDR (promised investments DM4.2bn).

Collapse of ex-GDR economy

The rather un-entrepreneurial behaviour of the entrepreneurs goes hand in hand with the collapse of the ex-GDR economy and the rise in unemployment. In 1990 industrial production dropped by 28%. The collapse had accelerated by the

One year after unity

ON OCTOBER 3 1990, less than a year after the massive demonstrations that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) was absorbed into the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). The elections that followed in December were won by Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrat Union with a slightly reduced share of the vote.

Until now the political initiative in creating the new state has been in the hands of the West German capitalist class, who have sought to impose their institutions and interests on the newly acquired region. This has not only meant the introduction of massive unemployment in the East to discipline the workforce both in East and West, but also the systematic exclusion of any potential non-German or East German economic competition.

At the same time movements of resistance to the onslaught — around issues such as abortion rights and unemployment — have wrung limited concessions from the West German bourgeoisie, while the economic costs of unification leave the country heading for a massive budget crisis.

Now, as Winfried Wolf explains, the West German capitalist class is contemplating a massive attack on the rights and living standards of the West German working class in a situation where, as is made clear in the interview with Dieter Reinken on p. 5, the West German labour movement has yet to come to grips with the problem of its own unification, faced with the widely differing problems of workers in the West and East. ★

end of 1990. In the fourth quarter, the drop over the year was officially estimated at 51%.

Thus, when people talk about a "stabilization" of the situation in the middle of 1991, they mean that the economy has come to rest at a level of real output of about a quarter that of 1988.

At the same time the official figures for unemployment in the former GDR rose to 1.1 million by August 1991 with 1.5 million people on short time.

According to the Federal Labour Institute there were 1.5 million unemployed in

the East at the turn of the year, the same number of workers on short time and some 500,000 enrolled in "employment associations" (training programmes). Together with the around two million unemployed in the West, this adds up to some five million people without a real job.

I will leave aside the whole issue of hidden unemployment — the official figures paint a horrifying enough picture. Only the Great Crash of the 1930s, and, from the point of view of social misery, the immediate post-war period, were worse.

The public is united on one point when they look at the state of the public finances: "It doesn't add up" (*Der Spiegel*, no. 37, 1991); "Who is going to pay?" (*Wirtschaftswoche* no. 26, 1991); and "Can our marks hold out?" (*Stern*, No. 32, 1991). The course has been set towards accelerating indebtedness.

This was shown yet again at the time of the presentation of the proposed budget for 1992 at the start of September. The overall state deficit — which includes the hidden subsidies for the railways, posts, special payments and so on — is rising each year by about DM 200bn according to the SPD's figures. The payment of interest on the state debt had already gone over DM 100bn in 1991 and will grow to DM 200bn by 1995.

To draw a comparison: the Federal state will have an income of DM 425bn in 1992. The major part of the new debts arise from non-investment tasks; for example, in 1991 DM 100bn will go on interest repayments on the state debt, DM 93bn to finance unemployment, insofar as it comes within the purview of the federal budget and a further DM 60bn will go on sustaining the highest level of arms spending since the war.

Such policies must mean inflation. This was 0% in 1986, but had risen to 4.5% by mid-1991 in the West — it is higher in the East.

This inflation will be further accelerated on a governmental level — besides the tax rises announced this summer, there is already talk of a 16% rise in VAT.

Huge anti-cyclical programme

At the moment, such a policy works like a huge Keynesian anti-cyclical programme, that is to say it prolongs the industrial cycle and makes full use of the capacity of at least the Western firms. This is taking place in an overall climate which the *Wirtschaftswoche* (no. 32/1991) has described thus: "everything points to the fact that we are standing directly in front of a recession". This means that a change in the situation in Germany will first of all make the crisis in the East worse.

4 It would seem therefore that the federal government is pursuing a sensible anti-

cyclical economic policy.

However this idea is contradicted by two things; firstly, the present rising pump priming by the state makes no medium-term economic sense. It has nothing in common with the cyclical theories put forward by the economist John Maynard Keynes against the background of the world economic crisis of 1929-32, which envisaged above all investment in, for example, construction, as the economic instrument.

Most of the money in the present case will go for unproductive ends. Under these conditions it is only a matter of time before the growing state debt and inflation put a drastic austerity policy on the agenda.

Secondly, the Federal bank has for a long time been pursuing policies which favour recession. Interest rates are high — they were raised in August and the discount rate renewed.

In pursuing this policy the Federal bank has been going in exactly the opposite direction to the rest of the West's central banks, which have been cutting interest rates, thus making it cheaper to borrow with the aim of counter-acting recession.

The bank's policies anticipate the coming austerity drive — on July 19 the *Wirtschaftswoche* wrote: "The Bundesbank must defy Bonn [the government]"; the article says "Now is the time for iron austerity".

The same note is also sounded wherever the wise burghers put their heads together. "Our only help now is to save" according to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) on September 4, 1991. *Stern* addressed its millions of readers in similarly drastic terms a few weeks ago: "FDP leader Graf Lambsdorff sees in a few months a 'volume of guarantees' of DM 390bn for which the state must be ready" (above all as a result of the above-mentioned hidden debts and unforeseeable risks such as the disintegration of the USSR, which owes some 35 billion marks to German banks). And *Stern* goes on: "without a policy of iron austerity, nothing can be created."

Capitalists pursue class policy

It cannot be said that the capitalist class is hiding the fact that it will use the crisis to pursue a class policy. It can however be criticized for, as usual, concealing this fact in small print.

Thus the main headline in the FAZ's economic section on August 16, 1991 reads: "Business expresses understanding for the interest-rate rise." This means that an increase in the price of credit, something that is greeted with dismay by business people everywhere else in the world, is "welcomed" in Germany.

Indeed, the president of the employers' association, Murmann, praised the Bundesbank for its policy. On June 23, 1991,

the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported: "Murmann on higher interest rates: 'We must keep them high!'" A predecessor of Murmann's, Sohl, spoke in the same vein when the Bundesbank set a similar course towards recession in 1965.

All the papers are agreed that "stability" is now more important than growth. This, however, means that they are not bothered about the already profound recession in the East.

The previously quoted editorial from *Wirtschaftswoche* has already formulated the matter clearly: "If capacities in the West are not at full stretch then readiness to invest in the East will also suffer."

In the long term it seems hard to imagine that Germany can remain economically divided in the way it is at the moment — with growth in the West (accompanied by 1.7 million unemployed, now considered as a "norm" and a socio-political non-entity) while in the East there is a massive and worsening crisis.

In what way this crisis will affect the rest of Germany, what role will be played by the growing number of East-West commuters and the increasing levels of illegal and part time working, at what point the tendency towards wage unification strikes the West, remain unknown.

Explosive social situation apparent

The explosive social situation in which we find ourselves is already becoming apparent. And it is also already apparent where the government and the capitalists want to get to through a change in the relationship of forces.

According to the FAZ: "a spiral is underway; given the loss of purchasing power and the higher taxes, the unions will respond with higher demands in the next wage round."

This spiral must be stopped: "The only help now will be iron austerity. Every contribution to international relief actions must be paid for in cuts and savings" (September 3, 1991).

This is nicely put — German military involvement in the Yugoslav war implies a war on the domestic front against wage earners and the unions.

This is spelt out in the new domestic budget for 1992 — cuts in wealth tax and trade tax counter-balance the rise in VAT. According to Economy Minister Möllemann there must be big reductions in social spending and the elimination of subsidies be proceeded with.

Then the campaign against "shirkers" and the elimination of "resting days" which has been kept on the boil for months will be unleashed on a broad scale. ★

FROM the beginning of 1991 you were in East Germany as an official of the IG-Metall trade union. What were your impressions of the development of the union in terms of its membership base and its structures?

There was a very large influx of members. By May we had about 22,000 members in Rostock and the surrounding district. This is less than the old East German IG-Metall, but is nonetheless a good level of organization. The members are mainly in the big plants such as Neptun-Werft, Warno-Werft, Schiffelektronik, Dieselmotorenwerke. Here we have so to speak taken over most of our members from the old East German union.

The origin of the officials is a more complicated matter. Since the changes there has been something of a revival of trade union activity in most of the big plants in Rostock. There had been attempts at change in the framework of the Northern Region of the IG-Metall-DDR.

In February 1990 it split from the centre and founded its own regional centre from which developed a series of initiatives in the plants. New elections for representatives and leading instances were held to establish new structures and put new people into the leading positions. It is these circles that are mainly responsible for forming workers' councils in the big plants.¹

These people were not wholly inexperienced. However they were ill-prepared for dealing with Federal German enterprise law and the new daily reality — like, for example, West German managerial methods which were now being energetically applied.

This began with apparently small problems. Already in the summer of 1990 there was propaganda flying around, largely instigated by Western enterprise advisers, concerning the reduction of the costs of production. Individual departments were hived off if they were not considered necessary for that particular plant. They were then handed over to foreign and Western firms and to some extent sold to groups of employees as private property. This, naturally, called into question a whole series of social benefits. Canteens were closed almost at once and cleaning staff fired.

Then there was the question of how to work out the rules for short time working — unemployment still being illegal at that time. Then there were questions which come under the heading of organization, such as the organization of payment of wages, and issues relating to the confidentiality of personal data.

These are all issues that we in the West had had years to grapple with, while these people had to get to grips with them in a few months, apart from dealing with the destruction of entire sites, the sacking of

entire workforces, the abandonment of social plan negotiations and the issue of the "employment associations".

■ **Can you tell us about what happened in the region's biggest enterprise, DMS?**

There were of course problems in all of the region's enterprises, but the dominant industry in the region was the German Machine and Ship Building Company (Deutschen Maschinen- und Schiffbau-Gesellschaft — DMS), which in the last years of the DDR's existence was changed from a Kombinat into a licensed company employing 54,000 people. It took in all the big shipyards along the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern coastline on the Baltic, including small inland shipyards, machine building plants and engineering, research and trading offices.

■ **Owing to the agreements made, people were not sacked but put on no-time working. What effect did this have in the Rostock region?**

It should be remembered that, owing to orders from the Soviet Union and the West, the shipyards were at full production; thus there was overtime and short time running side by side.

■ **The press said about these orders that the proceeds would only cover half of the costs of production. What are the prospects for the region's industrial structure?**

As far as the mentioned orders are concerned, the share-holders will get their money. It is impossible to be certain about the perspectives.

From early on we have reckoned that the situation for the ship-building industry is critical and have made no secret of the fact that there will not be 54,000 jobs here and that it is quite likely that only half will remain. Precise figures and the exact nature of the changes remain controversial.

■ **Thus there is no sign of a Western firm?**

No, no one wants to come in. On the

contrary there have been declarations by all the shipyards that they do not intend to take over either DMS or its parts, even in partnership.

Presumably the calculation is that they can get their hands on DMS' orders and capacity when DMS is finished. IG-Metall has taken a position against this, saying that the outfit should be kept together and that the individual — inevitably smaller — units should continue to build ships rather than merely performing secondary functions for the Western yards.

■ **What role did the "Wessis" play?**

The advice which we gave was well-received. The problem is that there always comes a point at which our colleagues would give in to the immediate economic power in the plant, who would come up with very plausible arguments about the market and with promises about the future. Then our advice would be questioned.

When, however, the situation in the enterprise got hot, then conflicts broke out between what we believed possible and what the people concerned felt capable of doing in the plant. Often we arrived too late; the agreement had already been made and signed.

■ **What is your estimate of the readiness to resist? You have been able to mount quite successful mobilizations but often the opposite has occurred.**

Both are true at the same time. By this I mean that there was for a time a great readiness for political resistance. This was shown by the big demonstrations that we were able to mount in the region and also by numerous actions at the workplace level.

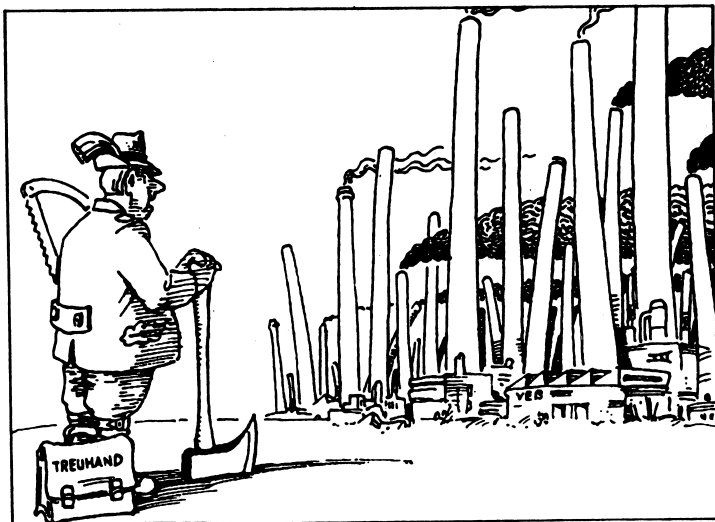
At the same time this has gone together with a readiness to swallow all kinds of things in the workplaces.

This is not wholly a contradiction. It took place under the motto: if we can only shake things up in the workplace then we

1. Factory councils are legally recognized institutional structures in Germany.

Resistance and resignation

BETWEEN November 1990 and May 1991 Dieter Reinken, the secretary of the IG-Metall trade union in Bremen, was sent to the East German port of Rostock in order to assist with the administrative re-organization there. This interview with Dieter first appeared in *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the weekly paper of the German United Socialist Party (VSP).



can meet the demands of the market and be ready for the world market. Thus plans by the Treuhand² and the government for dismantling entire production sites were met with great indignation.

The political opposition then ended up in a blind alley, because it became clear that the course of the capitalist world could not be halted by demonstrations, even if these had been enough to get rid of Honecker.

■ The expression of this political opposition were the regular Monday demonstrations.

These played almost no role in Rostock. We concentrated the whole discussion on the issue of the ship-building industry. This was relatively successful, because it provided a concrete goal and people knew what it was about. A role was also played apparently at the time by the fact that a wage round was underway.

■ But then the movement fizzled out. The trains for the central demonstration in Berlin in April from Rostock and other towns of the ex-GDR were empty.

My impression is that people had become disillusioned about what was possible in terms of an alternative economic policy. They were experiencing the full force of the wave of sackings. While until June 30 there was statutory protection against dismissal, nonetheless what was going to happen was already clear.

Expectations had changed in the IG-Metall to such an extent that nobody really believed any longer that the basic economic development in the ex-GDR could be changed. In my view IG-Metall, and the DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) as a whole, were from the beginning very hopeful, far more so than the parties.

I believe that this is still true but the scope has been reduced to that of enterprise and wage negotiations. I myself

mate.

■ I had the impression that the formula "clean-out not privatization" was, for a time, a popular and striking slogan on the demonstrations. However double-edged, was this not a way of expressing opposition to the logic of the Treuhand and the business circles?

It certainly played a role. Less because of the content of the slogan than as a striking anti-Treuhand slogan. In our region privatization has not played such a big role because the big morsel is the DMS and Western interests have thus far not got involved. No one wants the thing and this leads to constant anxiety that, if this remains the case, the whole complex will collapse. The opposition is not to "privatization" but to the Treuhand's devastations.

■ An important topic has also been the discussion on the "employment associations". What have been the experiences in Rostock with these, and what do those who go onto them expect?

The practical value of these associations is that people are not immediately thrown into poverty; they are kept together and given training. But of course there is no question that it also makes it easier for the entrepreneurs to sack people and for the workplace councils to accept restructuring. A further practical consequence could be that it could promote the development of a local government economic policy.

■ An opposition cannot really be developed with such a policy. What you have described is the classical position in favour of social cushioning, that is, the best possible social plan, that we have often criticized.

Then, how can this potential for opposition be developed?

■ It is quite clear that such actions mean that the entrepreneurs are no longer viewed as the direct problem or the logic of the market challenged.

I start from the view that this conception allows the strengthening of the positive demands of the employees, and in any case, there is no basis for any other conception. Here everything is submitted to the market. This is the universal posi-

tion.

This is also true for the left; even the PDS³ has nothing but the market to offer. Where the market outlook dominates we should be glad that these employment associations deflect the full force of the market for a time.

■ Do you not also think that the dramatically negative experiences of the market that have already occurred could strengthen the readiness to challenge the pro-market ideology?

Over there I learnt little else than that everybody considers conformity to the market as the normal state of things. There is a different attitude to the market there than the usual one in the West: people think; our production will be competitive if only we can get rid of a few political burdens. If we were allowed to get things right, then we would be as competitive as the enterprises in the West.

■ How do people respond to the argument about the feeble managerial capacity in the enterprises?

It is widely believed among the white-collar workers, in particular near the top, that the cause of the bad developments lies in inefficiency and sloppiness: the workers perceive things differently; they say we have already given our work, the problem is above all the hugely inflated administration and the bureaucracy. However they all share the feeling that, if things were "properly" taken in hand, then all would be well.

First of all they want to be shot of the old baggage. They put much of the blame for the crisis on the old functionaries responsible for mismanagement who engaged in false accounting and bad organization.

There can be no question that people's viewpoints on the present developments are strongly influenced by the preceding course of economic development in the ex-GDR.

There are a series of people in the workplaces and elsewhere who are abandoning themselves to nostalgia and consider that what existed before was not so terrible. The unifying point of such ideas is a very positive assessment of the services provided by the firm, in terms of housing, kindergartens and facilities for women. However in my opinion everything depends on the kind of people who will be the final winners out of the developments underway.

Even if a third bemoan the passing of the old times they are not a real political force.

■ Do you not believe that the impact of mounting social misery in the coming period will throw pro-market thinking into crisis?

This is not really my impression. Nor is it true from a world political point of

view. Even if you go on and on about the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, nonetheless at the moment we are going through a phase when all alternatives have been smashed. And demonstrating that the market system leads to ecological catastrophe and worldwide poverty cannot overcome people's absorption in their own problems.

■ **How do you see the immediate future of a "general representation of interests"? IG-Metall has become significantly bigger due to the influx in the East, but the interests of those in East and West are very different.**

The main problem is that we have to deal with a divided reality and that up till now we have not taken this sufficiently into account. I also believe that we must not lower our sights from what we have been discussing in the framework of the perspectives discussions and the "Wage policy 2000".

It is first of all important that we here should take into consideration what is going on there and grasp it as an element in the balance of forces. It is clear that people in the East have other ideas to the themes of "car, environment, transport". They first of all want cars and decent roads. What matters, however, is that we do not stop the discussion that had begun here.

■ **Unemployment remains the main issue in the East. The unemployed associations in the ex-GDR are planning a day of action for September 27. It will remain a purely Eastern event. It is hard at the moment to see common actions developing. How do you see this conflict?**

What I think is that union circles in the West have hardly begun to take in what is happening in the East — what is really happening, not what one might wish to be happening.

The workforce's interest in the developments there is in the sense of finding everything terrible and feeling sorry for the people there, and not much more than that.

■ **But the opposite feeling is also apparent — fear of the threat of competition, in any case where the threat has become concrete, as for example with Siemens in Gladbeck, when it was learned that a part of the production was to be transferred to Leipzig.**

This is true, although it is exceptional. The main trend is the belief that nothing will be made there and that in reality (rather than in propaganda) the East does not represent competition.

Naturally the notion of "solidarity contributions" deducted from wages for the East that are being raised in the discussion are obviously unpopular, and nobody wants them, for different reasons.

Immigration debate fuels racist violence

IN MID-SEPTEMBER public opinion was shocked by violent attacks on a hostel in Hoyerswerda, East Germany, housing some 250 immigrants, mostly asylum-seekers. The attacks went on for two weeks. They were organized by groups of skinheads and fascists from other towns, since in Hoyerswerda itself there are no organized fascists. The population supported the attacks, whether by silently observing what was happening or by openly expressing their sympathy for the expressed aim of the aggressors: to "clean out the immigrants from Hoyerswerda" and make it an "immigrant-free zone".

Stones and firebombs were used in the attacks on the hostel, but the police did not intervene. The town's mayor declared that he could not protect the hostel, since there were only nine police in the whole town. Some of the young perpetrators of the crime were interviewed on the television, where they said that they did not feel at all in the wrong, that they had the support of the population and that they were going to continue their physical attacks on immigrants until there were none left in Eastern Germany. And that they calculated that some would be murdered.

The fascists have strengthened their position in the town to the extent that the mayor could find no other solution than to move the immigrants to other towns. The fascists have already promised that they will not leave the immigrants in peace wherever they go. This is the first time for many years that a racist attack has been carried out so openly and with such success.

It has been taken as a signal: on the first anniversary of German unification, October 3, a wave of several dozen attacks took place throughout Germany. Since then the attacks have been increasing, most of them in western Germany, and in areas under social democratic administration as much as in those governed by the conservatives.

They are organized by a multitude of fascist groups that developed during the 1980s. Until now they have only mounted very small actions, but with the change in the climate in Germany since unification they feel that their time has come. The fascist cadre operating in the East are, furthermore, of Western origin — on the pattern of all the other political parties.

It is not possible now to go into all the reasons for this explosion of racism. But it can be said that the ground was laid by the months of debate between the government and opposition on the need to restrict the right to asylum (guaranteed in the constitution) and to close the frontiers to prevent new immigration into Germany.

Within the working class, union activists and the majority of the population that considers itself non-racist, the prevailing feeling is: we already have five million immigrants, the boat is full, we must close the frontiers and integrate the foreigners already living here. The Christian democrats want to do away with the article in the constitution guaranteeing the right to asylum and are awaiting a European ruling that is stricter than the present German law.

The social democracy wants above all to act at the administrative level and speed up the process for recognizing an immigrant as an asylum seeker. The Greens repeat the distinction between political asylum seekers and "economic" immigrants used by all the other parties and demand an unconditional right to asylum but a quota for "economic" immigrants. It will be the foreign ministries of the imperialist countries who will decide in what countries there is political persecution and thus whether people from these countries can be considered asylum seekers. — Angela Klein ★

Many people here in the West do not understand the brutal pressures bearing down on union and workplace activity in the East, and they see the "readiness for compromise" of the *Ossis* [East Germans] in a rather disparaging light.

■ **And how about the debate on the broad strategy for the unions?**

That continues. Much depends on the objective economic situation. I do not go along with those who say; IG-Metall up to now has had a good programme, and now all this happens and everything is thrown into question.

The real worth of the trade unions will

be shown by our ability to deal with the type of problems we have been talking about rather than in having a "Programme 2000".

Getting to grip with the real problems is the crunch question, both for society as a whole and for the future of the trade unions. ★

2. The *Treuhandanstalt* is the holding company set up to dismember the East German economy to the benefit of West German big business. It has been wracked by corruption scandals.

3. PDS — Party of Democratic Socialism: The renamed former ruling Communist party of East Germany, which retains significant support in the area of the ex-GDR.

Government by the speculators for the speculators

ON OCTOBER 27, 1991, the Polish parliament will be elected through free elections for the first time. Two years after the formation of a government originating from the Solidarnosc leadership, one and a half years after the beginning of the pro-capitalist economic reforms, the Polish mood is far from euphoric.

Already, it is clear that the turnout in the elections will be very low; opinion polls carried out at the end of September, as the electoral campaign began, revealed that less than 10% of the population was interested in it. Yet no less than 65 lists are competing for the favours of the electors.

JAN MALEWSKI

THE RESULTS of two years of hard line monetarism, carried out under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by Leszek Balcerowicz, vice prime minister and minister of finance in the two successive governments, defy any commentary.

Between August 1989 and August 1991 industrial production fell by 33.7%¹, investment declined by 24%, productivity of industry by 20%².

Unemployment will be more than 2 million (10.5% of the workforce)³ by the end of the year, whereas real average wages have fallen by 37% in two years.⁴ Even if some of these figures could be exaggerated, nobody can deny that the Polish economy is experiencing the gravest crisis of its history.

Some observers have pointed to Balcerowicz's success in the struggle against inflation. This has been brought down from an annual rate of over 1,000% at the end of 1989 to 80% in 1991.⁵ However, after experiencing a lull in mid-1990, the rate of inflation is increasing again and it is feared that the most pessimistic predictions will be surpassed in 1992.

In September the Diet had to take an emergency vote on a corrective budget authorizing a deficit of 26 thousand billion zlotys for the year 1991.⁶ Polish exports have grown only moderately, and this despite a devaluation of the zloty at the beginning of 1991.⁷ The foreign trade deficit is growing and the IMF has just suspended its payments to the guarantee fund of the zloty.⁸

8 More seriously, the public enterprises — which continue to represent 80% of industrial production and which, in 1990,

furnished more than 81% of fiscal receipts — are experiencing very serious financial difficulties. "For the first time in history, the balance of losses and profits was negative for the public sector taken as a whole"⁹ at the end of the first quarter of 1991.

The collapse of the Soviet market, after the move to transactions in Western currency and the forbidding, under IMF pressure, of barter agreements, is partly responsible for this. But, above all, the public enterprises are groaning under the weight of taxation while the private sector is to a great extent exonerated from paying taxes; it looks as if the government has consciously decided to demonstrate that the public sector is inevitably non-competitive by ruining it.¹⁰

Several hundred public enterprises are today on the verge of bankruptcy. Their liquidation, which could be decided on after the elections, will show the degree of submission of Polish society to the laws of capital. If this milestone is passed, the point of no return will have been reached.

The crisis of the public sector has not been counterbalanced by the development of the private sector, which enjoys a

privileged position and has been carefully protected by the government. The figures show that this sector remains of secondary importance in the economy. In the first quarter of 1991, it represented 19.4% of the value of industrial production, 43% of that of building and public works, 16.4% of transport services, 14.4% of exports and 42.2% of imports.

Finally nearly 80% of commerce was in private hands. The private enterprises are interested primarily in those sectors of activity which do not require the immobilization of significant amounts of capital and in which it is possible to reap rapid profits while largely escaping public control.

Despite the government's efforts in this area, foreign capital has invested little in Poland. The main aim of the handful of joint ventures or enterprise purchases realized until now has been to eliminate competitors from the world market.

Thus the international consortium ABB bought up for next to nothing several Polish electric turbine manufacturers that had shown themselves capable in the past of competing with ABB's own production in a number of countries; these enterprises are today experiencing great difficulties because they have been reduced to the status of subcontracting while the Western owners grab the contracts that they once could have obtained themselves.

No serious Western Investment

The rules of the economic game fixed by the government at the behest of the IMF favour speculation: "No serious Western entrepreneur has invested in Poland. It makes more sense to get credit from a Western bank, for example \$30 million at 15%, then buy television sets in Singapore, sell them in Poland below their cost of production — at the same time killing the Polish industry — then place the zlotys thus obtained in a Polish bank at 80%, so as to draw out the equivalent of \$50 million six months later. Let's not be astonished that it is only speculative capital that flows into our country" writes a Solidarnosc economic expert.¹¹

It is true that such conditions have also permitted the beginning of a primitive accumulation of capital in the hands of some Polish speculators — a beginning only, however, for these latter cannot obtain \$30 million credit from the western banks.

1. *Zycie Gospodarcze*, no. 38, September 22, 1991. The weekly *Nie*, for its part, estimates a fall of 40% between September 1989 and September 1991.

2. *Nie*, no. 39, September 26, 1991. This lowering of productivity is essentially due to the underemployment of the productive apparatus.

3. Predictions of the Central Office of Planning (CUP), cited by *Polityka*, no. 35, August 31, 1991.

4. *Nie*, op. cit.

5. Prediction of CUP, reported by *Polityka*, no. 35.

6. Or around \$2.26 billion. This deficit is more than 10% of the provisional budget.

7. Whereas the maintenance of a fixed rate of convertibility of the zloty was one of the touchstones of the "Balcerowicz plan".

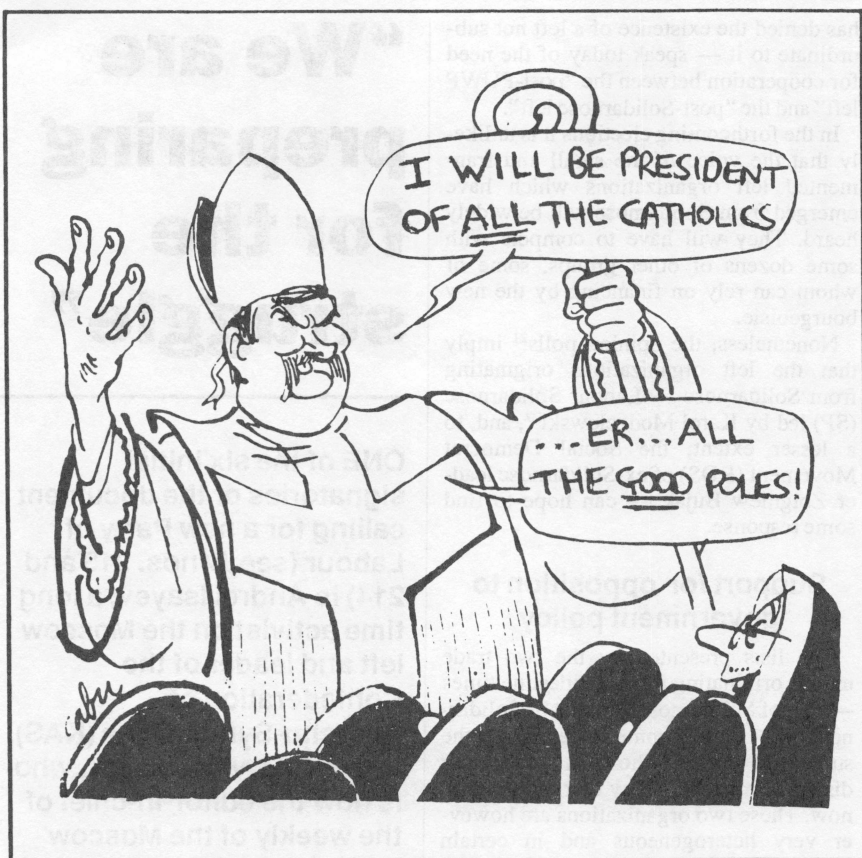
8. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 27, 1991.

9. Jerzy Kleer, in *Polityka*, no. 35, August 31, 1991.

10. Jeffrey Sachs, the principal foreign adviser of the Polish government, said in an interview with *Gazeta Bankowa*:

"My goal was to lead the big nationalized enterprises to bankruptcy", according to *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, no. 39, September 28, 1991.

11. *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, no. 39, September 27.



The virtual absence of Polish capital, the lack of interest of foreign capital, except in exceptional cases that involve the buying up of potentially dangerous competitors, or the purchase, for a derisory price, of industrial premises which can be used as shops for imported commodities, have reduced to nothing the dreams about the rapid privatization of the Polish economy. In June, the government sought to resolve the problem through a plan for general privatization, affecting 4,000 enterprises at once.¹² 70% of the capital of these enterprises was to be distributed under the form of free shares to the whole population. Three months after the vote in the Diet, this law is at a standstill and looks increasingly likely to be forgotten.

In the enterprises this project comes up against the resistance of the workers; they are not inclined to see their trade union and self-management rights¹³ disappear in exchange for control of 10% of the shares. In any case, this plan could never hope to bring in the funds necessary to modernize ruined industries and put them back on their feet.

But the pro-capitalist orientation has had some impact in another area; corruption has become widespread in public life. It is no longer possible to keep count of the number of "affairs" in which the new dignitaries are implicated up to their necks. The administrators of the fund for the management of the foreign debt are in prison, accused of having used their position to feather their own nests abroad, while largely wasting the assets of the fund. The banking system has been shaken

by the revelation of the existence of a combine formed by the new bourgeois proprietors of the enterprise Art. B, who took advantage of the underdevelopment and extreme slowness of the banking system to invest the same sum of money several times over and thus draw multiple interests.

This affair cost the president of the national bank his job and provoked a mini-governmental crisis. Since then, several government ministers have been accused of using their positions to get the public banks to finance enterprises in which they are shareholders. One of the big Polish weeklies published some photographs of Lech Walesa with the Art B. racketeers on its front page and posed the question; how many people have they paid off, and under what form? ¹⁴ They have not subsequently been sued for libel.

These "affairs" are far from being the privilege of the national elites. In each region, indeed in each enterprise, one

finds the little rackets which allow some people to join the ranks of the "middle class", projected by the new official ideology as the foundation of a modern democracy. The former regional president of Solidarnosc becomes the proprietor of a brand new automobile salon, as a representative of the interests of Ford. The former regional vice president of Solidarnosc is head of the entrepreneurs' association. Finally, at a somewhat lower level, the leader of Solidarnosc in a recently privatized enterprise (sold for a song to its direct competitor on the world market) turns up as one of the directors of the new subsidiary, whilst his comrades in claudestinity swell the ranks of those seeking work. All the decision makers, whether linked to the old regime (providing they managed to change their colours quickly enough) or to the new, whether local councillors, parliamentary deputies, trades unionists or priests, can hope to profit from the manna. At worst, they get a bad reputation¹⁵, and rarely do they have to pay anything back.

Lack of popular interest in political life

It is not surprising that the people show less and less interest in political life, or that the hints about a "strong and just regime" or the authoritarian speeches of Lech Walesa¹⁶, and some of his opponents — such as Stanislaw Tyminski, Walesa's challenger during the presidential election, and today the leader of Party X¹⁷ — find attentive ears.

Passivity and demoralization are becoming widespread. Governed for eight months by a coalition of parties who certainly chose the right side during the presidential election, but who appear devoid of any real popular support¹⁸, subjected to a formidable propaganda campaign which eulogizes capitalism and rules out any other form of development, suffering the effects of the "construction of capitalism", the people take refuge in abstention.

The trade union organizations are suffering the consequences of this, losing members and gains won in the past. Sociological surveys reveal a worrying rupture between the "elites" — trade union and political party leaders, new middle classes and directors of the state

12. See IV 211, July 22, 1991.

13. A privatized enterprise is considered as a new legal entity; the agreements made with the old management are no longer applied and the trade unions themselves must be reformed. Moreover the workers' councils disappear.

The only advantage is that wages are unfrozen, but experience shows that what the workers gain in increased direct wages they lose through the disappearance of the social wage.

14. *Nie*, no. 39, September 26, 1991.

15. The president of Solidarnosc in the Bialystok region has thus lost his position (but not his capital) after having played a controversial role in the privatization, to the benefit of himself and some of his cronies, of one of the rare profitable enterprises in the region (see *Glob* 24, September 27, 1991).

16. The latter sent one of his aides to Washington in June to find out about possible US reactions if he decided to resort to emergency legislation.

17. This party, which employs a classic reactionary populist discourse, has just been de facto forbidden from participating in the elections, for in a majority of regions the signatures that it claimed to have received have been judged to be false. Cynics say that the electoral commission has not taken the trouble to verify many of the other lists. Party X thus appears as the only one excluded from the electoral battle, something it is likely to stress in the future.

18. The Liberal Democrat Congress of prime minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki had about 300 members when its leader took over the reins of government. It now claims to have 2,000.

19. See IV 211.

administration — and the rest of society¹⁹. Little by little, the traditional division in Poland between partisans of the old regime and its former opponents blurs over, to be replaced by a new division between the profiteers and all the others, cutting through the old camps.

The forthcoming bankruptcy of the enterprises has provoked numerous strikes. In September workers at the Star truck factory, after six weeks of occupation, managed to block the immediate liquidation of their enterprise. The 50,000 workers in the aeronautical industry have struck — their enterprises, dependent on exchange with the USSR and government orders, have been on the brink of bankruptcy since the beginning of the year. The railworkers have restarted their hunger strikes, as have the peasants.

But these movements rarely end in victory for the strikers. Most often, when the situation is explosive, the authorities make a gesture, then everything begins again some weeks later. More seriously, on September 1, the bus drivers of Białystok, who occupied their depot to protest against the liquidation of their enterprise and the bringing of transport under the control of private companies, were attacked and evacuated by the police. A precedent has thus been created, without any wave of solidarity against the attackers. The members of the municipal council which called the police in were found to be among the shareholders of the new private transport enterprises.

Frequent strikes express growing resentment

Although strikes against the policy of the new government are becoming more frequent and more bitter, the resentment of the workers finds no political expression. Nearly all the organizations which emerged from the struggle of Solidarnosc are under the control of the partisan of a pro-capitalist orientation. The Solidarnosc trade union itself seems divided between its apparatus, in its great majority still loyal to Lech Walesa, and its rank and file, inactive and atomized.

Such a paradoxical situation allows the organizations once tied to the old regime, purged of a good part of their careerists by the process of transition to capitalism, to appear as a potential point of support. In the workplaces the two principal trade unions — those linked to the OPZZ federation, set up under the state of emergency, and those linked to Solidarnosc, rebuilt under clandestinity — today enjoy equal status in the eyes of the workers. And they are increasingly found side by side (though not yet arm in arm!) in the struggles.

Inside the Diet, those deputies of Solidarnosc origin who tend towards the left sometimes vote with the Social Democratic deputies²⁰ to the point at which the latter — who originate from a tradition which

has denied the existence of a left not subordinate to it — speak today of the need for cooperation between the “post-PUWP left” and the “post-Solidarnosc left”.

In the forthcoming elections it is unlikely that the voice of the small and fragmented left organizations which have emerged from Solidarnosc will be widely heard. They will have to compete with some dozens of other groups, some of whom can rely on financing by the new bourgeoisie.

Nonetheless, the opinion polls²¹ imply that the left organizations originating from Solidarnosc — Labour Solidarnosc (SP) led by Karol Modzelewski²², and, to a lesser extent, the Social Democrat Movement (RDS) of ex-Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Bujak — can hope to find some response.

Support for opposition to government policy

The lists presented by the two trade unions originating from clandestine times — that of Solidarnosc and that of Solidarnosc 80 — may, in some places, attract the support of workers who wish to take their distance from the policy carried out until now. These two organizations are however very heterogeneous and in certain regions have formed electoral blocs with reactionary formations.²³

The struggle for the reins of government will doubtless be fought out between the Democratic Union, led by ex-prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and the forces grouped around the president, Lech Walesa (Liberal Democrat Congress, Catholic Electoral Action and the Union of the Centre). The two coalitions essentially agree on the economic policy carried out over the past two years. They carry the principal responsibility for the current crisis. The lack of popular interest in the elections is by no means astonishing in these circumstances.

The beginning of the transition to capitalism has provoked an intense crisis, at once economic, social and moral. But, in the absence of a credible alternative, the restoration of capitalism continues. The electoral campaign now underway does not seem to be capable of leading to significant changes. ★

20. SDRP — Social Democratic Party of the Polish Republic — was formed by former members of the Polish United Workers' Party (the Stalinist party in power during the four preceding decades) at the beginning of 1990. Its leader, Aleksander Kwasniewski, told the weekly *Polityka* (no. 40, October 5) that his party would consider it a success if it gained 10% of the votes.

21. Whose unreliability should be taken into account.

22. The Labour Solidarnosc electoral list includes members of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and, in Wrocław, of the MKK — a local left tendency within Solidarnosc — and the Socialist Political Centre (SOP), which identifies itself with the Fourth International.

23. Thus in Wrocław, the Solidarnosc list has made an alliance with Catholic Electoral Action and the Union of the Centre.

“We are preparing for the struggle”

ONE of the six initial signatories of the document calling for a new Party of Labour (see *IV* nos. 213 and 214) is Andrei Isayev, a long time activist on the Moscow left and leader of the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS). In this interview Isayev, who is now the editor-in-chief of the weekly of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, *Solidarnost*, comments on some of the developments after the appeal was launched on August 28 and outlines the next steps towards the founding conference of the party. The interview was given to Poul Funder Larsen in Moscow on October 1.

WHAT has been the general tenor of the reactions to the initial appeal for a new Party of Labour?

In the liberal press — that is the press of our opponents — there were several comments. *Nezavisimaja Gazeta* and *Moskovskije Novosti* ran articles suggesting that this was just another “Communist” project and that of course all the other parties wanted to protect working people. In *Komsomolskaya Pravda* the Party of Labour was dubbed the “heir of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union)”. In my opinion all these attacks are factually wrong.

The people who have signed the first declaration were actually all in opposition to the CPSU when it existed. People like me and Kagarlitsky were not members of the party but of opposition groups and the leaders of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP) who signed the declaration left the party in the spring — before its general secretary dissolved it.

Neither is it correct to say that we are just another party defending working people. All the other parties that have so far been set up either claim to defend the rights of the people as a whole (as did the CPSU) or the interests of private enterprise. If there were other parties defending the workers we would have participated in their foundation.

However we have also had many positive reactions from people who have read or heard about the party and want to do something. An initiative group in support of the Party of Labour has been formed in the trade union of aviation workers. We have also received information that similar groups have been founded in Moldova and Donetsk, while the idea of founding a group in the Baltic States is also being discussed. But those groups must act independently because they operate in independent states. Therefore we will stay in touch, and if our positions turn out to be close we can aid them. But these groups won't be branches of the party. The Party of Labour is being founded as a Russian party.

■ **The call for a new party was signed by leaders of the MFP, the Socialist Party and KAS — does this mean that these organizations as a whole support the initiative? And what has been done to attract other forces to the project?**

The first declaration was signed not by the organizations but by individuals. None of the organizations has so far discussed affiliation. Some activists from the left wing of the Social Democratic Party, such as Rakitsky, have supported and cooperated with the project. There are also links with the Green Party; we are now discussing the possibility of forming an electoral bloc between the Green Party and the Organizing Committee of the Party of Labour, if elections for the soviets are called for this November. The question of the Green Party entering the Party of Labour has not been touched upon, but we see the Greens as potential collaborators.

Many former Communists want to take part in setting up the party. This is a difficult question; on the one hand there are rank-and-file Communists who sincerely believed in the building of communism and wanted to protect the social rights of working people. They may be somewhat biased but they are honest people; in any case far more honest than the leaders of the party bureaucracy now jumping on the capitalist bandwagon. I support these people being allowed to join the party, although we need to debate with them. For a long time we have been on different sides of the barricades, and it will take time to overcome this.

On the other hand there is a danger that many former CPSU functionaries will join the new party. I don't want the Party of Labour to end up like the PDS in Germany. I am nervous that there will be an



influx of party functionaries, because after all the only thing they know how to do is work in a party apparatus. Personally I think there should be a limit on the admission of former party functionaries, but this is a view that not all activists share.

■ **A key factor in the formation of the party is winning support from trade unions and workers' organizations. Have there been any reactions on the part of the independent workers' organizations, for example the Independent Union of Mineworkers (NPG) or the Confederation of Labour (KT)?**

As with most other major trade unions, the NPG is now a conglomerate of widely differing political forces. I think it is unlikely that the new leadership of the NPG will endorse the Party of Labour, but we hope that the project will attract support from the group in the NPG which in July opposed corruption within the union and demanded a purge of the leadership and an extension of trade union democracy. These are people like Sergeyev and Cherkisev — most of them from Eastern Ukraine. In the very near future a Russian Independent Union of Miners will probably be set up and we think it will be possible to have closer relations with this union.

Unfortunately the KT is in decline. This is linked to the role that the KT played giving all-out support to the Yeltsin camp. Now that this camp has in reality won, new contradictions are shaping up;

but it is very difficult for an activist in the workers movement suddenly to oppose Yeltsin if he has been supporting him all the way through. On the other hand they can't go on supporting Yeltsin as he attacks the rights of working people. Meanwhile the local clubs, the activities and internal links within the KT have declined and they are now seemingly unable to convene the congress of the workers' movement scheduled for this autumn.

■ **It seems that the centre of gravity of your initiative is situated in Moscow, drawing support both from leaders of the MFP and prominent figures within the Moscow City Council. Do you see any immediate possibilities of gaining additional support from elsewhere, for example through the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR)?**

It is likely that the Party of Labour throughout the next period will be a child with a big head and small limbs. That is; a strong branch in Moscow and weaker supporting groups in other cities. In my opinion this is unavoidable, because it is primarily in Moscow that the intellectual left wing groups have been formed, and it is only in Moscow that the leadership of the trade unions have so far supported the project.

The MFP is not going to participate in the Party of Labour as a whole, but we are working to set up some structures within the MFP which can become collective

members, as the party will have both an individual and a collective membership. The Committee for Political Action within the MFP — which is today a political discussion club uniting trade union activists on different levels — could become such a collective member.

The leadership of the FNPR is strongly pro-Yeltsin; but they are the type of followers who could as well endorse Gorbachev or whoever else is in power. The Yeltsinites are advancing the concept of a "strong executive power" which the Party of Labour must reject because we want a strong representative power and the protection of the rights of workers during the privatization process. For that reason the leadership of the FNPR is opposed to our project. They have issued demagogic declarations saying that we are using trade union structures for political ends and claiming that we have a Communist conception of the relationship between trade unions and party.

■ **There have been contradictory statements concerning the character of the Party of Labour, some of which have suggested that it will be a traditional parliamentary-type party. What type of party do you envisage?**

It will be a party with the character of a movement, where there is the possibility for collective membership and where the decisions of the leading bodies are not binding for the local organizations. It will be a federalist party, not built on democratic centralist lines. In principle the whole society is still based on centralistic structures — for example, the "strong executive power". Our party must demonstrate a new type of social relations even in its structures.

■ **The call for a Party of Labour comes at a time when there is no strong radicalization within the working class, when struggles are sparse and the independent workers' organizations — and other progressive movements — are still embryonic. Do you have any thoughts about the relation between these conditions and the time it will take for the Party of Labour to become a real political force?**

For the time being, the formation of a powerful mass workers' party is not possible. But in the very near future the government of this country will unleash a very strong attack on the rights of working people. The number of unemployed may reach 40 million, a considerable number of enterprises will be closed resulting in mass sackings, and the standard of living will drop while work intensifies.

Under these conditions there will be outbursts among the workers. We think it is important that there are structures to which the workers can turn when the

resistance to these anti-popular policies breaks out. I think that in the next few months there will be an economic crash, which can be the beginning of this movement.

■ **What are the next concrete steps in the process of setting up the Party of Labour?**

The initiative group for the Party of Labour has approached the leadership of the MFP with a proposal for an offensive putting strong demands on the government of the Russian republic and the city of Moscow. A very considerable part of workers in Moscow have wages below subsistence level, which is officially 300 roubles a month, but which the MFP fixes at 410 roubles a month.

Therefore the first demand is that the minimum wage should be set at at least 300 roubles a month. We also demand that in the case of privatizations at least 50% of the stocks should be handed over to the labour collective in order to control the policy of privatization.

If the privatization means that more than 30% of the workforce gets laid off, the labour collective should have the right to take over the property. Finally we unconditionally demand of the mayor of Moscow that he ensures employment for school-leavers and for soldiers being demobilized this autumn. Most of them have gone directly from school into the army and are now given a benefit which can be as low as 25 roubles a month. There will be tens or hundreds of thousands of these people in Moscow, and no particular employment programme has so far been worked out.

We are proposing these demands as a package to the MFP and we suggest organizing a mass demonstration on Red Square at the end of October or the beginning of November in support of these demands and in defence of the soviets, which are being deprived of their influence by the strong executive power. This doesn't imply that we are content with the present form of the soviets, but we defend them as a principle.

In the middle of October the MFP will consult with the trade union centres in the major cities and discuss, among other things, the question of support for the Party of Labour. We think most of them will reject this, but probably three or four trade union centres — in Leningrad, Kazan and maybe in Sverdlovsk — will express their support for the party. The Organizing Committee for the Party of Labour will be set up by mid-October after the consultation with the trade union centres, so that it will not consist solely of Muscovites. Our initiative group has only called for the formation of a party — the actual foundation is the task of the Organizing Committee. Until that has been set up it is difficult to know when the founding congress will take place, but it will probably be at the end of this year. ★

The Macedonian temptation

GIVEN that the Serbo-Croat war is not going to stop, most observers believe that it will tend to spread, firstly inside Yugoslavia and then beyond its frontiers.

In our view this is quite likely. In fact one can already perceive the signs, above all to the south east, that is, in the very heart of the Balkans. As was the case 80 years ago, the Macedonian question may well be the detonator, holding out the threat of provoking conflicts, even armed conflicts, that could throw us a century backwards.

N. CHAMPI

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, a lot will depend on the evolution of Belgrade's war of aggression against Croatia. If the Serb troops are able to break Croat resistance and incorporate the regions of Krajina, Bajina and Slavonia in the "Serbia of all the Serbs", then there will be no end to Great Serb appetites. Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Montenegro and Macedonia will follow and will be incorporated in one way or another into the new "Yugoslavia" which will be in fact a Serb mini-empire.

However, even if Belgrade's armed forces fail to realize their strategic project, it will be very difficult to avoid an escalation and extension of the war. In fact both the Muslims of Bosnia and the Kosovo Albanians are not going to let the Serb military machine walk over them.

The majority of the threatened populations have already expressed in referenda (clandestinely in the case of the Kosovo Albanians) their support for independence, and local parliaments have

enshrined this decision. Thus it is evident that Belgrade's plans will run up against fierce resistance. We may well see not one, but several wars in Yugoslavia.

The governments of the neighbouring countries are already behaving as if they take these possibilities seriously. After a period of indecision, the Greek government is now aiming to establish close links with Belgrade, with the aim of catching the fledgling Macedonian Republic in a pincer movement. It can by no means be ruled out that Serb dictator Slobodan Milosevic has promised the Greeks "something" — for example the region of Monastir, if we are to believe some Athens newspapers. In return the Greeks will close their eyes to the Great Serb *faits accomplis*.

One is all the more disposed to believe in such trade-offs in that Milosevic has just signed a "protocol of understanding" with the secretary of the Italian neo-fascists (MSI) Mr. Fini, in which the issue of the secession of the Istrian Peninsula, currently divided between Croatia and Slovenia, is sympathetically examined.¹

The threat of a Greater Macedonia

Athens continues to loudly proclaim that, not only does it not threaten the Macedonian regime, but on the contrary it is that regime that poses the threat to Greece.

Two months ago almost all the big parties in Greece, from the right through the Socialists of PASOK to the Communists, cried wolf every time the words "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" were used by the government in Skopje [the Macedonian capital]. And it does seem that some elements of the political class in Skopje — sometimes with encouragement from Belgrade — had stirred the pot with talk of a "Greater Macedonia" which would take in the neighbouring regions of Bulgaria, and above all Greek Macedonia, including Greece's second largest city, Thessalonika.

Despite having repeated for decades that the "Slavs" had nothing else in their head than finally descending to the Aegean Sea, the Greek bourgeoisie took some time to take in what was really going on on the other side of the Yugoslav frontier.

However when it finally grasped that the Belgrade regime had a real interest in coming to an agreement with Greece, rather than encouraging Macedonian territorial demands, hypothetical or otherwise, Athens' tone began to change.

This is a recent development and is at present restricted to the most "modern" and ambitious fringes of the governing New Democracy (*Nea Dimokratia*) and the opposition Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). Suddenly the spokespeople for big capital and US

interests discovered that the wolf in Skopje might be a good way of brow-beating Greek public opinion, but geopolitical constraints forced them to be more "realistic".

This "realism" can take two forms: either to form a solid alliance with Belgrade with a view to the eventual dismemberment of Yugoslav Macedonia, or the acceptance of Macedonian independence with the aim of exploiting its wealth. In both cases, the accent is put on the fact that the small and poor Republic of Macedonia will be too weak to resist.

At any rate, this change in outlook has percolated through the political system and the official Greek position is becoming increasingly aggressive. Thus the government of Constantin Mitsotakis, supported for once by the entire opposition, tried a month ago to bring together a Balkan mini-summit in Athens to discuss, not the Serbo-Croat war, but the "Skopje regime"². At the beginning this initiative amounted to inviting Serbia's Milosevic and the Bulgarian leader Zhelev to Athens. This latter is something of an acolyte of Mr. Mitsotakis — the cadres of Mr. Zhelev's party were trained in the offices of Nea Dimokratia and his electoral campaigns have been financed by secret funds from the same source.

However, as soon as this conference was announced, the other Balkan governments began to show an interest, or at least their alarm. Soon the Romanian prime minister was on the invitation list. From the point of view of the Macedonian regime this conference looked quite simply like a conspiracy against their young, in principle independent, republic.

Apart from the Bulgarian refusal to take part, owing to the strong pro-Macedonian sentiment in that country, which had been brought to life in the run-up to the general elections, it is clear that

the failure of this conference to take place was largely due to intense pressure from Bonn and Rome.

The final blow was delivered by the Italian foreign affairs minister, Gianni de Michelis, who, supported by his German colleague Hans Dietrich Genscher, first belaboured the Greeks for ignoring his warnings and then told them to leave Balkan manoeuvres to big powers such as Italy and Germany. To make things absolutely clear, de Michelis added that Yugoslav Macedonia should be considered an Italian protectorate.

Evidently, Mitsotakis knuckled under, even if the mass pro-government daily headlined across eight columns "de Michelis — the new Mussolini". Suddenly the Greek leaders had found that they had other enemies than the Turks; this time it was their dear allies and partners in NATO and the Common Market.

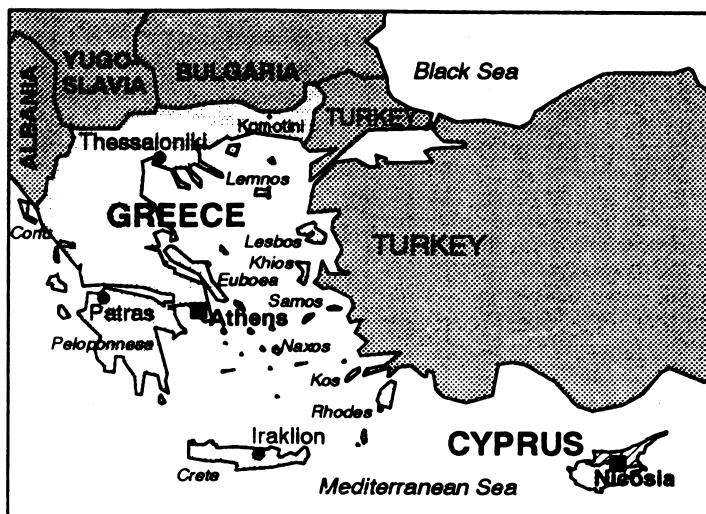
Spectre of International Isolation

It would nonetheless be wrong to draw the conclusion that all these Balkan ambitions of the Greek bourgeoisie have ended once and for all in utter humiliation. Perhaps the prime minister and his clan have taken fright at the spectre of international isolation at a delicate moment in their political careers.

However, many leaders of the government party, allied with a substantial tendency in the leadership of PASOK, are continuing to work towards the creation of a sort of "cross-party party" which does not shrink before talk of "historic opportunities" of a kind "that a nation only has once or twice in a century".

1. *II Manifesto*, September 17, 1991.

2. Just after the referendum on independence in Yugoslav Macedonia, the Greek prime minister was quick to declare that Greece would never recognize this state which had abusively usurped the name of Macedonia.



The message is clear. In the name of the most idiotic nationalism, there is a tendency in the Greek political class which goes so far as to envisage military adventures to "profit from historic opportunities".

This tendency would not merit being taken seriously except for the fact that the times are ripe for such leaps in the dark. Despite having no political alternative, Greek society is in turmoil. Despite extraordinary sacrifices by the workers, the economy continues to plunge into the abyss. This last month, towns and whole regions have been in a virtual state of insurrection. At the same time the cohesion of the government and its small parliamentary majority are under threat, and the prime minister's popularity is lower than ever.

What could be more tempting than a foreign adventure? This would not be the first time that the Greek leaders have been tempted by such a solution to their problems. Furthermore it is rather the Socialist and Communist oppositions who are pushing for confrontation, baptizing as "agents of the Americans" both the Skopje leaders and the heads of Greece's national minorities.

Serbian dictator admired in Athens

This is why the Butcher of Belgrade has so many admirers in Athens. And it may be that a bloodbath in Kosovo and Macedonia perpetrated by the Serb army will be greeted with "anti-imperialist" joy by the Greek left which is completely losing its sense of direction.

However the second wind that this whipped up chauvinism can offer to the government and other demagogues may well not last long. In particular it carries the danger of isolation from European and Atlantic partners.

The expansionist fantasies of Athens go beyond Skopje. In Albania there is also a big Greek national minority. However in this case Greece will run up against Italy, with its historic claims on the country.

Thus the more "realist" wing of the Greek ruling class is inclined for now to rein in its ambitions, which it considers out of proportion to the country's real resources — which does not mean that it intends to abandon its "protective role" over new rightist regimes in Sofia and Tirana. At the same time it stresses the "stabilizing role" of Greece — the only Balkan country which is a member of the EEC and NATO — in the region.

Finally, the Greek bourgeoisie is slowly but surely drawing the lessons of the divisions provoked by the Yugoslav crisis in the EEC. It is no accident that Athens is showing a propensity to align itself on the British positions inside the EEC, which have the merit of counterbalancing the Bonn-Rome axis. ★

A house beset by demons

BOGDAN Bogdanovic is Yugoslavia's best known contemporary architect. His reputation extends well beyond Yugoslavia's borders. A Serb born in Belgrade in 1922, he fought with the Partisans during World War Two. A former Professor of Architecture at the University of Belgrade, he was also the Mayor of Belgrade for a brief period in the early 1980s. A member of the central committee of the Communist League of Serbia, Bogdanovic was expelled from the party when Milosevic came to power. The following interview with Bogdanovic was conducted by Nedjeljna Dalmacija in Split on September 15, 1991.

YOUR entire architectural opus is dedicated to the victims of World War Two. Your monuments can be found in every part of Yugoslavia: Prilep, Krusevac, Mostar, Sremske Mitrovice, Jasenovac and Vukovar. It looks as though your services will be needed after this war too. Have you any idea what shape that might take?

I cannot predict the outcome of this tragedy so I cannot anticipate the kind of memorials that will commemorate today's victims. Perhaps they will be sacral objects, or perhaps a new kind of realism will be appropriate. I don't know. I continually review my past, the way in which I carried out my previous work, asking myself whether what I did was right or not. Most of my monuments are Partisan monuments dedicated to the victims of fascism. They are never of a triumphalist or victorious character. They all reflect the enigma of death and the complexity of our feelings in the face of historic events. The very fact that I was never willing to use the five-pointed star — which resulted in my always having problems with veterans' associations — reflects my view of the last war in its horrible entirety.

Every day I listen to reports of the battle of Vukovar and fear for my Vukovar monument at Dudik, because it is one of the best I have done. Either side can destroy it — I make no distinction here. The issue of *World Architecture* I have in front of me printed a photo of this monument on the cover of the issue dedicated to my work. I don't know whether the monument is still standing or not. I do know however, that the Vukovar museum which is housed in a beautiful Baroque building has been hit. Watching the beautiful center of Vukovar being

destroyed bit by bit sends shivers down my spine.

What do my monuments mean? After completing them I discovered things about them which I have trouble admitting even to myself. It is as if they anticipated the present. They marked that earlier drama with a premonition that it could all happen again. This is particularly true about my last two monuments, the ones in Vukovar and Cacak. The one in Cacak caused me lots of problems with the people from the war veterans' association who couldn't understand it. It was an allegory — a house attacked by demons. It was completed in the 1980's when I was already daring to suggest that fascism could return. When you look at the Cacak mausoleum, with its granite monsters biting into the construction, you feel that you have been transported from the past into the present.

■ For some time now you have had more of a public profile in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, than in Serbia. Although the Serbian media spoke of the liberation of public expression, you were not present. Why was that?

Though I am a citizen of Belgrade and Serbia, the fact is that I communicate more freely with the other parts of Yugoslavia. I don't speak in Belgrade because I am not allowed to. I am under the strictest censorship. My name cannot be mentioned in the press. The silence about me was broken a few months ago though by the publication *Vreme* with a small quotation by me. They also recently published my open letter to Dobrica Cosic.¹

I think this is because Milosevic has much better advisors now than he did a year ago, and also because after the March 9 events², he realized that he had to allow at least a semblance of democracy. He

now permits all kinds of public criticism of himself. You can laugh at him, tell jokes about him, but don't ask him where Kosovo is!

For him Kosovo does not exist or is somewhere on the moon. You certainly can't ask him what happened to those "easy promises"³ or what will become of Kosovo. These questions are taboo. Though some democracy exists, there are a number of people who are muzzled. I had the honor of being one of them.

■ Why the silence about Kosovo? What is it about Kosovo that Milosevic wishes to hide?

Milosevic came to power by saying he would resolve the Kosovo crisis. Not only has he done nothing about it, he has made matters worse by heightening the tension there to a fever pitch. But we in Serbia have a right to know about the future of Kosovo; will we remain there and under what conditions?

How can we communicate with this people who number not a few hundred, but two million? I assume that the media ban on my name is partly because of Kosovo, because on several occasions I publicly stated that we must accept the fact that Kosovo is not ours. If we accept the ethnic principle as the only modern principle, then Kosovo is no longer Serb. Do we need a De Gaulle to explain this to us? If we had only found the courage to say this ten years ago, we could have left Kosovo as friends and acquired new friends there in some political constellation acceptable to Europe. But instead, Milosevic made enemies there, sowing ever-lasting seeds of evil between Serbs and Albanians. He has done the same for Serbs and Macedonians, and is now doing the same with the Hungarians — not to mention of course, the Croats.

■ You have described this as "Serbia's road to self-humiliation and self-destruction".

It is no secret that Milosevic is psychologically a self-destructive, suicidal type, but the trouble is that he is transferring his suicidal madness onto the nation as a whole. He does not want to fade away from the scene. If he has to go, then the whole Serbian nation must disappear as well.

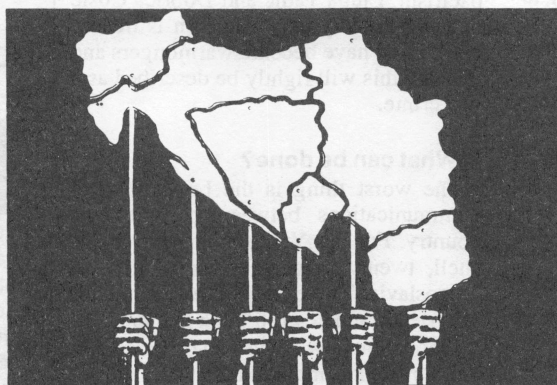
■ Is there a force in Serbia that can stop this?

The occult power of dictators doesn't lie in the fact that they're clever — they're frequently limited, and I think Milosevic is a very limited man — rather, their power lies in the fact that they can bring into the circle of their mad ideas a great number of people and even whole nations. Hitler also had the brains of a gnat, yet he managed to bring the great and wise Ger-

man nation to the point of madness. I think there is a sense in which the Serb nation is under the spell of Milosevic's madness.

In the streets, cafes, and homes of Belgrade you can hear constant war cries and appeals to hatred and killing. All of this is the result of a grave psychological malaise. We have some politicians who are also psychiatrists.⁴ They should try and cure this malaise — provided that they themselves are not consumed by hatred. But I personally deeply suspect the sanity of these psychiatrists turned politicians.

Your question is a very difficult one. The intelligent young people feel a great sense of betrayal; even those who first believed all this. Unfortunately, they are few in number. They are mainly young



intellectuals who might have had a career, but now cannot. They have this potential within them — this power to do something — but are horribly suppressed and frustrated. I no longer count on the Serbian opposition. Such as it is, it provides Milosevic with a cloak of legitimacy.

■ How?

At the moment there is a litmus test for every Serb; Kosovo. If a party like the Democratic party cannot say a word about Kosovo, then that party is not conducting real, honest Serb politics. It may mumble this or that, support this or that *carsija*⁵ mood, but de facto it only supports Milosevic. Its leaders frequently say in a more moderate and benign way the same thing that Milosevic says sharply and brutally.

■ As far as I can tell, only the "Reformists" have not avoided the Kosovo issue.

I not only support the "Reformists"⁶ but consider myself a member. Theirs is a tragic party; the only one that could foresee what was going to happen, the only one who knew what had to be done, and the only one who had a chance of turning what Europe had to offer into a reality. But you can see how much they are hated; they are the most hated people in Serbia.

■ Why do you say that Serbia has lost the war?

Serbia has lost this war. When I say "this war", I am not thinking only of the current one, but of all our modern wars and our entire modern history from the Hatt-i-Sherif to the present day. One hundred and seventy years have passed since the proclamation of the Hatt-i-Sherif⁷, and in the course of all that time a state like Serbia, in Europe, should have made a far greater civilizational, cultural and economic leap.

Today we should be at least where Hungary is, or where the Czechs are. A feeling of failure lies at the very heart of Serbian nationalism, and with it come all the various justifications for this failure: all the various Cominterns, Vaticans, Free Masonries and their unbelievable plots. There is indeed a sense of having missed out.

This century and a half of wasted history can be described as a lost war. But when I speak of the lost war I am also speaking of the events taking place today. Whether we like it or not, when we watch TV and see the various maps showing Serb and non-Serb villages, and we see how far the "defenders of Serb" towns have advanced, we see that these "defenders of Serb villages" are attacking towns! The "defenders" are surrounding Vukovar; the "defenders of Serb villages" are attacking Osijek. The area of destruction is widening. The irresponsible, indeed disgusting, Belgrade press presents this as some kind of victory. They write about advances, liberation, and so on, and the ordinary, already deeply indoctrinated people acquire the feeling that we Serbs are winning the war. This is a terrible misconception.

Firstly, from a political-military point of view they cannot possibly win since nobody sensible would allow anything to be changed by force at the end of the twentieth century. Sooner or later, those who are there will be forced to shamefully withdraw unless they are thrown back by the Croat defense effort which, if the war spreads, will be aided from the outside. Secondly, this war has been lost at

1. *Vreme*, an independent weekly founded at the end of the 1980's is the only significant dissenting voice in the Serbian media. Dobrica Cosic is the author of works celebrating Serbian national history.

2. In March 1991, there were mass demonstrations against Milosevic's regime throughout Serbia.

3. A reference to *Easily Promised Speed*, the book by Dragisa Pavlovic, once head of the Belgrade branch of the Communist League of Serbia, who in 1987 was thrown out of the party because he attacked Milosevic's Kosovo policy and Serb nationalism in general.

4. Reference to Jovan Raskovic, an early leader of the Serb Democratic Party in Croatia, and to Vuk Karadzic, current leader of the same party in Bosnia-Herzegovina, both of whom are psychiatrists by training.

5. Literally "bazaar", but also refers to the informal system of public opinion manipulation.

6. "Reformists" here refers to the members of the Alliance of Forces of Reform who support Ante Markovic, Yugoslavia's Federal Prime Minister.

7. The Hatt-i-Sherif (Imperial Decree) of 1829 established Serbia's autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

another, even more terrible level — it is destroying our Serb belief that our wars were just wars, and that we behave honorably. The war now being waged is not an honorable war. I say “fuck this war”, a war in which the “defenders of villages” carry out a skirmish and then army tanks and personal carriers come in to protect what they have done. From this angle too, this is a shameful war.

■ How would you characterize the army's behaviour?

Negatively, horribly so. Those fanatics [the Serb irregulars] may be waging war for some mad reasons — in the name of a sick, morbid and fanatical nationalism. But the army is making war not out of any fanatical nationalism, nor, as it is frequently accused of, out of ideological fanaticism. The army is simply fighting to maintain its privileges!

The other day I walked through Dedinje for the first time in a long time. I felt as if I had entered a completely unknown part of the city. I saw illuminated spaces, heard music, and I felt I was in another world — maybe somewhere in Switzerland.

There are tennis courts on which the children of high officers and generals play tennis during the night. At that moment I understood that the army in the field with its tanks aiding those madmen and these pitiful people defending their immediate right to life are not defending anything that can be described as a social or national cause. They are simply defending their own caste interests. This caste army is oppressing us greatly.

■ Why have you called this an “old man's war”?

It is a well known fact that this is an old man's war. It is based on old men's ideas, old men's ideals and frustrations. I am talking about the Belgrade connection — of the old men in the Academy⁸ who wished to complete Serb history because it seemed to them that it had not been properly completed back in 1918.

When this old man's ideology starts to be transmitted into literature, and from literature into popular writings, and then into the press and the mass media, it begins to slowly form the opinions of the people. The young people infected by the madness of war are in fact, prisoners of this old man's mentality which has seduced them.

Unfortunately, many wars in history have been old man's wars. I doubt that these young men, had they been able to form their own world view and their own understanding of national history, would have voted for this bloodshed. Those who bear the blame are the old men — men who know what war is like. But the young people don't know, which is why they are often its victims.

This war began quite innocently — with roadblocks whose guards drank a bit

and joked a bit; “We'll ambush the Croats, then they'll try to do the same to us.” It looked almost like a tourist attraction. But now there is a real war, autumn is here, then winter will come.

The intrusion of the old man's spirit into the inexperience of young people is a great crime. When I wrote about this in my open letter to Dobrica Cosic, I focused on him because he is the person most guilty for this Serbian drama. He has charmed and educated this nation. He has succeeded largely because for the past fifty years we have produced no real history, and in the absence of such real history people read historical novels and learn their patriotism from them.

Look at those coffins on both sides! No young man can remain untouched by them. The old men attack such wretched pacifism. Ljuba Tadic and Dobrica Cosic of the Academy cry “Pacifism is treachery”! They have become warmongers and one day this will rightly be described as a war crime.

■ What can be done?

The worst thing is the breakdown of communications between parts of the country. For me Yugoslavia is, in a nutshell, twenty great friendships all over Yugoslavia. These people have remained my friends and I can still talk to them.

I think that now all we can do is remember our friends, maintain contacts, and see what we can do together politically. The situation is being internationalized which is a good thing; the great leaders may yet sign something, and then again they may not, but it will take time before this filters down to the little leaders, the little commanders, the little bosses.

I fear a fragmentation into ridiculously small statelets. There's that idiot who'll say “I, President of Eastern Slavonia. . .” I might as well go into the street and say “As President of the Republic of Cubura⁹, I demand half of Cubura”. It's crazy and that is what is so frightening. This war has another side. I have said that it is a miserable, dirty, and very bloody war. But it is also a meaningless war. I come from a family many of whose members fought in the last war — but at least that was a serious war. Now we are confronted with a war that has no aim from a Serb point of view.

The Croats are defending themselves, their aim is clear. This war, apart from its lack of aims is also undefined from a military point of view.

There is a great deal of destruction. It has become a war of all against all, which makes it so horrific. ★

8. The Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences groups together many of the so-called “Fathers of the Nation”. In 1986 it drafted its “memorandum”, which was the first systematic revision of the terms of the post-war inter-national settlement in Yugoslavia, and opened the way to the Great Serbian expansion of 1987-91.

9. A Belgrade neighborhood.

Socialist position on Yugoslav crisis

WE publish below the resolution on the Yugoslav crisis adopted by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the worldwide Trotskyist organization, at its meeting in October 1991.

DOCUMENT

THE Fourth International:

- Denounces the aggressive war against Croatian sovereignty and the hypocrisy of the arms blockade imposed by the European Community and others, which makes no distinction between the aggressor and the victim, and fails to highlight the inequality of the armed forces involved.

- Supports a confederation of national states. Such a confederation cannot be imposed by force, and is impossible so long as a Great Serb policy is dominant in Serbia. There is a distinction to be made between Serb nationalism and that of the other republics, because of the transformation of the Yugoslav army into a Serbian one.

- Supports the right to self-determination — that is to say of independence — against the army intervention, without any preconditions about the social character of the regime created by self-determination. But this right should be generalized and never imposed against national minorities within republics. In ethnically mixed territories like Bosnia-Herzegovina the attempt to impose “ethnically pure” states is profoundly reactionary.

The real solution to avoid permanent wars is the withering away of frontiers, increasing the rights of minorities scattered in the different republics, and building Balkan and Europe-wide links.

Sovereignty means full national rights — it should be opposed to chauvinism or a social and economic system imposed by the IMF.

- Opposes armed intervention in the conflict by foreign powers supporting one or another side. A solution to the conflict can only be found by the peoples directly concerned. The sending of foreign armed forces would only consolidate the Great Serbian front. Such a force would not be restricted to a “peace-keeping role”; it

"We will be the winners from the events in the East"

Interview with Tomas Borge

COMMANDER Tomas Borge is the sole survivor of the founders of the Nicaraguan Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) and a member of its current national leadership. He was the country's interior minister between 1979 and 1990.

The following interview for the French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge* was given to Cecilia Garmendia in Paris on October 11, 1991.

THE main gain of the recent congress of the Nicaraguan Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) was the preservation and reinforcement of the organization's unity, and the development of internal democracy. However, a reading of the conference documents leaves one unclear as to the Front's present policy. The intense debate that took place in the runup to the congress was not repeated at the conference itself.

Both the programme and the statutes, already discussed for many months by the rank-and-file, were again dealt with in the commissions in order that the documents should arrive in finished form at the congress. Even so, the sessions were very long; there was a desire to discuss everything down to the last detail, which was not in my opinion entirely satisfied.

The maintenance of the FSLN's internal unity has been essential for us; it was the backbone of the revolution's survival.

Despite committing very serious mistakes, we have been able to maintain a coherent and strong organization with a very wide social influence.

■ As we know, the FSLN is the strongest party in Nicaragua. This leads to a strange situation; while the FSLN has the necessary social support, it cannot allow itself to take power. Is this not frustrating for its social base which is suffering every day the social and economic attacks of the rightwing

UNO government?

On the contrary, I believe that it is inspiring to know that one has the means to decide; the political strength of the FSLN and its big possibilities are being used to defend popular interests and the gains of the revolution. Besides, the government (I mean the government and not the UNO as a party) is not now trying to dismantle the gains of the revolution; for example, the government has vetoed property laws passed by the Assembly, thus defending the gains. The government does this because it understands the relationship of forces.

■ To return to the balance-sheet of the revolution that you began to draw at the congress; in 1979 the FSLN could count on the wider revolutionary upsurge in the region, and this was before the collapse of the so-called socialist camp.

The Panamanian president Omar Torrijos said that the Nicaraguan revolution



would change the geo-political situation in Central America, and I believe that we did indeed change it. In the 1980s the revolutionary movement in El Salvador developed broadly, and the revolutionary movement in Guatemala was also a significant force at that time.

Furthermore, the Nicaraguan revolution had an influence on revolutionaries throughout the world, and above all in Latin America.

It was impossible to repeat our victory in other countries. The United States made a huge effort to avoid change in El Salvador, without succeeding in wiping out the revolutionaries. For us El Salvador was essential; now the changes in the international situation and Central America have made it necessary to seek a political solution there.

Reagan, representing a violent and expansionist option, came to power at the same moment as the victory of our revolution and this complicated the prospects for change in Central America.

The events in the East did not have a big ideological impact in Nicaragua. However they did have an economic effect, and they have had political implications for most of the international left. The FSLN's electoral defeat coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall only at the level of the date. We did not lose the election as a result of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Personally I am overjoyed at what has happened in the East. We have won the right to start again, but this time we will start from correct positions and will avoid taking false paths. Revolutionaries have no incentive to adopt a false strategic outlook as they did in the past. We will be the winners from the events in the East, where the time of bureaucracy, authoritarianism and the absence of freedom of expression is over. Socialism can wash off the colour grey; the time has come to weave lovelier clothes for our ideas, starting with the nappies! Socialism must undergo a rebirth.

Imperialism is evidently more aggressive, and believes it has won. It does not realize that the fall of the Berlin Wall does not represent its victory but, in the longer term, a defeat. The fall of the Berlin Wall ushers in the stage of the destruction of imperialism, even if it seems crazy to say this today. The first stone of the capitalist edifice fell along with the Berlin Wall. ★

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Continued from previous page

would face political choices such as the issue of the "autonomous territories" conquered by the Serbs.

● Calls for the withdrawal of the army from all the areas of conflict and supports the refusal of officers and soldiers to intervene in these conflicts; supports the fight to break up the Great Serb alliance; calls for the desertion of Serbian soldiers and for the defence of deserters; and for the political mobilization of the Croatian population for the defence of their territory – as well as for a fight to win the Serb minority

in Croatia to the cause of Croatian sovereignty.

● Calls on all forces in the republics that are really interested in sovereignty to unite and use their positions in Federal institutions, to stop the war and defend all national minorities – whatever their position on the future of Yugoslavia. For this reason we support the anti-war movement in all the republics who oppose the chauvinist manipulations of the media and who are trying to promote citizens' initiatives against the war. ★

French farmers confront free market

OVER 200,000 marched on Paris on September 29 in one of the largest demonstrations of aggrieved farmers that France has ever seen. The demonstration, called by the National Federation of Agricultural Unions (FNSEA) and the National Center of Young Farmers (CNJA), was organized to protest a series of developments that threaten to eliminate tens of thousands of small farmers.

KEITH MANN

BEEF producers, whose complaints were particularly well publicized, were protesting declining prices paid for beef. There has been a crisis of overproduction in this sector as a result of relatively high rates paid to beef producers in recent years, as well as a fall in grain prices. Meat production rose over 5% in 1990, while the amount of livestock prepared for consumption in the first half of 1991 is over 18% higher than for the corresponding period the year before.

The agricultural commission of the European Economic Community (EEC) claims there is an overall crisis of overproduction with meat stocks currently at 110%. This crisis is partially the result of increased imports of cheap beef from Eastern Europe and the decline of exports to the Middle East following the Gulf war.

In addition, consumption has fallen of late, due in part to an increase in the consumption of pork and chicken at the expense of beef consumption, as well as widespread fears of growth-inducing drugs injected into livestock.

However, the stated goal of the organizers of the demonstration was merely to "sensitize" Parisians to the problems facing rural France.

The vague demands of the demonstrators reflected the failure of the main farmer and agricultural workers' organizations to reflect the sectoral and social differences amongst those who work on the land. Grain farmers, vine growers, cattle farmers and sheep herders, small-time farmers and large land holders marched together, and are for the moment all represented by the same leadership.

Accordingly, the system of subsidies

which has favored large farmers at the expense of small time farmers for the last forty years by paying across the board sums to all agricultural workers, was not criticized. The prices paid for agricultural goods has been lowered without a corresponding rise in consumer prices. Likewise, the mechanisms which allow intermediaries to reap huge profits have not been attacked.

The rapidly declining number of rural inhabitants has meant that farmers and others whose prime pursuits are agricultural now represent only four percent of the French electorate. However, according to one study, fully 17% of all voters

have some connection to the land whether as retired farmers, their spouses, or those who work part of the time on the land. It was not surprising, therefore, that French political parties, mostly the mainstream bourgeois parties like the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) and Valéry

Giscard D'Estaing's UDF, as well as the far-right National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen, but also the Communist Party, claimed to support the farmers, though their real interest in reaping the fruits of the next electoral harvest was obvious. The ruling Socialist Party was absent from the demonstration.

Right-wing manipulations

The RPR was particularly interested in the possibilities of winning farmers to their banner. In 1988, farmers voted for their Presidential candidate Jacques Chirac, head of the party and current Mayor of Paris, at twice the rate of other voters. The week before the demonstration, the RPR mobilized their supporters to organize welcoming committees for the marchers. The far right National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen did the same.

The parties of the right with their liberal programs have little to offer farmers and agricultural workers in the way of solutions to their problems. However, the vagueness of the slogans proposed by the FNSEA and CNJA and the lack of any specific appeal to the poorer layers of the rural population means that the right and far-right could make inroads amongst the farmers.

Worse yet is the possibility of farmers turning their anger against their counterparts in other countries. Yet in spite of the

Socialist government's support crumbles

THE farmers are not the only part of French society currently taking militant action. They have been joined in recent weeks by nurses, demanding higher pay and more staff, social welfare assistants, protesting against "the degradation of their working conditions", artists (including theatre workers) calling for a better social security deal and teachers. Furthermore, disturbances, often violent, have continued in the countryside. The Force Ouvrière union confederation has called for a general, cross-sectoral strike on October 24, a call that has received the support of France's largest union confederation, the CGT.

This wave of protest comes at a time when the ruling Socialist Party, which has pursued a "social-liberal" policy combining neo-liberal economic policies with relatively high social spending sustained by high taxation, is sinking in the polls in the runup to the 1992 regional elections, which will be followed by full legislative elections in 1993. As is the way with governments seeking to be re-elected, a number of gestures have been made towards stilling social discontent, including a new 7.5bn franc "anti-unemployment" programme and plenty of meetings with union leaders.

However, aware that there is little likelihood that it can retain power alone, the SP leaders have been floating a new centrist "Federation for Progress", perhaps drawing in the Greens, dissident ex-Communist Party currents and anyone else who is interested. European Commission president Jacques Delors is seen as a possible leader of such a coalition.

The ideological cement for this alliance may well be provided by the rising threat of the far right National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose voters are being wooed by the establishment rightwing parties. Recent racist outbursts by the leaders of the two biggest such parties, Mayor of Paris Jacques Chirac and former President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, should be seen in this light.

The big unknown is whether the evident social militancy in France can find a political form able to impose an alternative policy economic and social on the government. Only thus can the creeping influence of Le Pen's xenophobic agenda be counter-acted — **Colin Meade. ★**

vagueness of the demonstration's demands there are indications that the farmers understand, however vaguely, the dead end that support to the right and far-right could represent.

In his speech, Raymond Lacombe, President of the FNSEA, attacked the trend towards "free exchange being considered as the final dogmatism", the "danger represented by the USA which is trying to assure its world wide supremacy", and finally that "the collapse of Marxist totalitarianism must not give way to the dictatorship of profit".

Likewise, a representative of Polish Rural Solidarnosc warned French farmers not to fall into the trap of competition with their fellow farmers in other countries. The "savage liberalism that has been imposed on our agriculture since the fall of Communism" he explained, "has plunged it into a deep crisis." Philippe Mangin, President of the CNJA, implicitly attacked the contradictions of the free market when he explained that "we are reproached for producing [too much] while people go hungry in the East, in Africa, and in Asia."

Government response

The following week, the Minister of Agriculture, Louis Mermaz announced a government plan to deal with the agricultural crisis. This included a ten percent tax cut for farmers, which represents an aid of 290 million francs, as well as the cancellation of 100 million francs in back taxes.

Both the FNSEA and the CNJA issued statements calling these measures insufficient but a step in the right direction nonetheless. For their part, the EEC commission on Agriculture claimed on the eve of the demonstration that the solution to the problems of the beef producers is to raise the quality of their meat.

While the sheer size of the September 29 demonstration and the anti-market statements of the leaders of the two main agricultural organizations point to the potential of French farmers to defend themselves against the effects of the capitalist crisis (which will be aggravated by the Single Act of the EEC scheduled for 1992), family farmers and agricultural workers need a more detailed program that corresponds to their specific interests. Market prices and identical subsidies paid to all farmers regardless of the size of their holdings contributes to the elimination of the family farmer.

A system of differentiated subsidies and price supports which takes into account the number of people working on each farm, as well as energetic measures to help fight against desertification, is clearly needed.

Likewise, measures are needed to obtain social legislation for farmers like vacations, sick leave, maternity leave and the other social services that urban wage earners have won. ★

Finnish workers fight austerity

SOME 40,000 people filled Senate Square outside the Finnish parliament on Thursday October 3, 1991. Their demonstration was a reaction to a government austerity programme unprecedented in Finland's history. The protest was also historic in that the four Finnish trade union confederations, organizing both blue and white collar workers, held a joint rally for the first time.

PETER LINDGREN

THE governing bourgeois coalition worked out the austerity programme in cooperation with the employers' organization. The new budget is part of a plan whose main element is a 10% cut in workers' wages. The other proposal from the employers' organization — accepted by the government — is for a 50 hours a year increase in working time without compensation.

Before the trade union demonstration the Finnish minister of finance, Viinanen, appealed to the workers to leave their unions. Also included in the package are laws prohibiting strikes in key sectors of the economy, and a change in the law which currently makes collective wage agreements binding on all the employers concerned. The aim of this latter measure is to make it possible for individual employers to do even "better" than the main proposal for a 10% cut in wages where the local relation of forces permits.

Pea soup and hard bread

Workers came to the demonstration from all over Finland in trains and buses. In the square they were symbolically served with pea soup and hard bread without butter. The main slogan, taken up spontaneously by the demonstrators, was "work! work! work!". Unemployment in Finland is now touching 10% and it is estimated that the unemployment fund will be empty by November. The government is also proposing that the trade union members rather than the government fill the empty funds.

All categories of working people came to the demonstration, including pensioners. The government's budget plans include stopping the index-linking of pensions in line with inflation. Public sector workers have a special reason to oppose the government plans, since there is a proposal to lay off 700,000 public employees for two weeks next summer.

The leader of the Finnish LO federation, Lauri Ihalainen, got the loudest

applause from the crowds when he attacked the government. "They are trying to attack the workers and not the economic depression. Their hostile attitude to the trade unions has led the bosses to raise impossible demands."

Ihalainen described the trade union demands as "extremely modest". Nor is he wrong; the trade union paper *The Wage-Earner* proposes the prolongation of already existing contracts, and Ihalainen himself says that almost all trade union leaders agree that there must be a cut in real wages.

Split in bourgeois coalition

Already on the day of the demonstration a small split could be seen in the bourgeois coalition. A special decision on new taxes on travel was postponed and on Friday three of the trade union leaders that had spoken at the demonstration decided not to go on a trip to Malta which had been criticized by many as an attempt to bribe them. While many of the demonstrators I talked to were thinking in terms of a general strike, many of the trade union leaders are hoping for a contract to be agreed next month.

However, there has been no sign of concessions from the employers' organization. They argue that Finland is in a worse recession than any other industrialized country. A drop of the share of the Soviet Union in Finland's exports from 45 to 5% has rubbed salt in the wounds of the recession. In projections for 1991, Finland ends up in last place among industrialized countries in terms of GNP, production prices, stock market index and private consumption.

Meanwhile, one of many financial scandals is throwing sand into the employers' propaganda machine. The Finnish central bank has been forced to pump in several billion Finnish marks [1 billion Finnish marks = \$200 million] from the state budget to save a small bank from bankruptcy and prevent the collapse of the financial system. Such scandals are one result of the

Women and the intifada

THE outbreak of the *Intifada* in December 1987 was marked by the entry into action of new participants in the struggle of the Palestinian people; youth and women. The role of the latter in the struggle has shaken the traditional organization of Palestinian society. The weight of tradition, and the rise of the fundamentalist movement, have however created an increasingly difficult situation for women. We publish below an article by Lashar Khalife, taken from *El Fanar* ("The Lighthouse"), the newspaper of a Palestinian feminist group in Haifa, followed by an interview with a member of the group.

DOCUMENT

TWO significant stages can be distinguished in the changes in the status of Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The first period opened with the outbreak of the *intifada* in December 1987, and continued throughout the first year of this movement.

The first three months of the *intifada* were characterized by a wave of spontaneous and massive popular mobilization, affecting social layers which had previously hardly participated in action and political struggle; women, workers, peasants, inhabitants of refugee camps and so on. This participation was reflected by the self-organization of the masses in the framework of popular committees, charged with the management of everyday life, which expressed the will of these sectors to emancipate themselves, take control of their affairs and establish a new scale of moral values.

Challenge to patriarchal traditions

Women challenged patriarchal traditions and customs which confined them in the role of passive and weak creatures whose essential task was the care of children and the house.

In the context of the *intifada*, Palestinian women began to participate fully in all areas of political action, breaking down patriarchal traditions, taking part in the non-traditional tasks assumed until then by the men (participation in and taking of responsibility for leadership, guard committees, and so on).

At the end of the first three months, when the popular committees were brought under the control of the different political factions, the mobilization of women continued in spite of everything, but with a certain regression, marked by the return of women to their traditional functions. Their activity in the popular

committees and the neighbourhood committees was then reduced to teaching and household economy; women took no part in the vigilante committees and in the constitution of what later became known as the Popular Army.¹

The gains of this first period of the *intifada* could be summed up thus; the emergence of popular organizational structures at the initiative of the people, which allowed broad participation; the emergence of a new scale of values which favoured the participation of women in non-traditional areas, and, consequently, the waning of a number of traditional attitudes; the weakening of the absolute power of the father, the domination of brothers over sisters and the appearance of more democratic relations inside the family; the beginning of a withering of fidelity to the family in favour of a national fidelity; the dislocation of the social order which existed before the *intifada*.

The second stage of the radicalization of women in the occupied territories dates from around the end of the first year of the *intifada* and more precisely the banning of the popular committees in July 1988.

Struggle shifts to clandestinity

The struggle then shifted from the general popular mobilization to clandestinity², reserved for the cadres and the main political factions; groups specializing in specific forms of struggle (the throwing of stones) appeared.³ This has led to a dangerous social and political phenomenon; the glorification of militarism in all its forms in place of popular mobilization.

The decline in the level of mobilization has obviously engendered an overall regression in the participation of women, marginalizing them and setting back the

democratic evolution opened with the beginning of the *intifada*.

One of the aspects of this regression has been the appearance of the "culture of the *intifada*", characterized by austere behaviour — the forbidding of feasts and leisure activities, which have been reduced to watching the television. These norms of conduct obviously affect women — who are subject to control of their behaviour and dress.

Finally, what could be called the "culture of the veil"⁴ appeared, which has set women backwards and reinforced their social and political isolation. This emergence of the "culture of the veil" is also due to the respect shown by all tendencies of the political leadership to reactionary customs and traditions and to their incapacity to impose a political and social programme for the democratic transformation of the social structures, an unavoidable condition for genuine national emancipation.

Field free for fundamentalists

This incapacity has helped to leave the field free for the fundamentalist movement — it has a clear political and social programme, which has become an alternative because of the inconsistency, indeed the non-existence, of the secular national movement and the mass movement.

Women being a pillar of the traditional patriarchal order, the fundamentalist movement understood that the consciousness of the latter had evolved because of the struggle.

They were conscious of the energy of women and the menace they represented to the former retrogressive order. They launched a virulent campaign to exclude women from social and political life and relegate them to the household and the home, launching appeals for the control of the conduct of the women in the family, forbidding them to mix with men, proscribing all permissiveness and calling for the reinforcement of the power of the head of the family (his control over behaviour, his right to constraint, coercion and the use of violence).

The fundamentalist movement enlarged its influence through appealing for the wearing of the veil, presenting this as a national duty — the proof of respect for the martyrs.

The wearing of the veil was officially imposed in Gaza in the summer of 1988, by slogans and communiqués, as well as

1. Rima Hammani, "The *Intifada* and the Woman Question". Conference; "The Participation of Palestinian Woman in the *Intifada*", Bissan Centre of Research and Development, Ramallah, 1991.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Fathia Nasra, "The *Intifada* and the Woman Question". Conference; "Report on the Activity of Women and Teaching", Bissan Centre, 1991.

6. Islah Ahd El Jawad, "The *Intifada* and the Woman Question". Conference; "Social Relations in the Family During the *Intifada*", Bissan Centre, 1991.

by the use of terror, physical aggression perpetrated by groups of children and adolescents against women who refused to do so.

This setback of the second period of the *intifada* can be illustrated by several phenomena: the decline of popular participation in general in political action, and of women in particular — only a small minority of politicized and organized women have persisted; the number of early marriages is growing and the age of marriage has dropped from 21 years before the *intifada* to 17 years; the desertion of the primary and secondary schools and universities, for several reasons — amongst others, the closure of these establishments — but also because of the early marriages and the lack of family help; measures of encouragement to motherhood⁵; imposition by terror of the wearing of the veil; reinforcement of the family unit and the role of maternity to the detriment of the political organization of women.⁶ ★

"A fight for equality"

MANA Hassan is a founder member of the Haifa-based feminist group *El Fanar* ("The Lighthouse"). *International Viewpoint* spoke to her about the work of her group and the situation of Palestinian women within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

CAN you describe the circumstances in which your group was created?

El Fanar was founded by five women eight months ago in Haifa, in the part of Palestine occupied since 1948. The condition for being a member of *El Fanar* is participation in the weekly meetings and debates, as well as the payment of dues. Today, there are 20 of us, not counting sympathizers. The group intervenes in Haifa and our project is to create groups in

the villages of Galilee, the Triangle¹, and the Negev, which will require a lot of energy.

■ What were the reasons for its creation?

First, because of our conviction that women must organize themselves in an autonomous feminist context. Until then, the majority of women's organizations on the political scene in Palestine were not autonomous; worse still, they depended on political parties, they were only a section of, or the showcase for these parties.

■ How were these organizations conceived?

When these organizations or "women's parties" were set up, their goal was not to fight for the liberation of women but rather to uphold the existing traditions that forbade the adhesion of women on a basis of equality with men. The woman was integrated in a special structure and her work was not the same as that of the other members.

■ Did these organizations have an orientation favourable to women?

These "women's parties" are subject to the programme of the mother organization, but the Palestinian political parties, including those of the left, have no progressive social programme so far as the status of women is concerned. The submission of these organizations to the programme of the party results in their adaptation to the status quo and not action for the liberation of women.

We are convinced of the need for the construction of an autonomous feminist organization, where women can express their interests and struggle on the basis of those interests. Unhappily, until now this has never been done, the existing political parties refuse to confront the patriarchal traditions which oppress women. They have, rather, tried to accommodate to them.

■ Does that mean that it is not possible to work with these organizations?

No, one of the objectives of *El Fanar* is common action with all the women's organizations in Palestine, in spite of the criticisms we make of them. We have tried to do this from the time of the first demonstration that we organized, on June 24, 1991, against the assassinations of women known as "crimes of honour". A little before the demonstration, we appealed to all the women's political organizations, proposing that they participate. Unhappily, none of them responded, not even to the extent of sending a representative.

They explicitly refused to participate for fear of "moral decay"! We obviously replied that when we went into the street against this criminal phenomenon, it was a moral act! Our organization struggles to

put an end to forced marriages, arranged by the fathers, against the will of their daughters. This also has a moral significance for us.

We have attempted other initiatives, such as a demonstration in Tayibe in the Triangle, to protest against the murder of a woman and the attempted murder of another, but unhappily the response of the women's organizations and the reasons invoked were the same.

■ What has been the impact of these demonstrations?

One of the objectives of *El Fanar* at the first demonstration was to start a debate in Palestinian society on these killings, specifically, and on the status of women, generally. To our great joy, we succeeded in opening a serious and positive polemic. For the first time in the history of the Palestinian press, following the demonstration of June 24, 1991, articles appeared regularly over a two month period in all the newspapers of the territories occupied in 1948 (not those occupied in 1967) — of course, this debate had two sides, those who supported us, and those who attacked us.

We have succeeded in shaking the general consensus on this taboo of "family honour". Beforehand, there was total silence on the problem, as if it was something natural, which should continue. This time the debate is posed clearly and publicly.

■ What kind of activities does *El Fanar* prioritize?

In its programme, *El Fanar* announces that it will struggle against all laws or customs, against all traditions, against everything that oppresses women. The field of intervention of the group is thus very broad.

The situation of the Palestinian woman is very bad, both within the frontiers of 1948 and those of 1967, particularly following the social repercussions of the *intifada* (the cause of this is obviously not the *intifada*). The Palestinian woman is oppressed at the level of work as well as those of education and the family.

Take some examples at the level of the family; I will begin with the question of "family honour". In general, the existence of such a phenomenon in Palestinian society is denied, and yet the facts are there; according to the statistics, 40 women are killed each year for this reason.

But the statistics are not reliable because most of these deaths are recorded as suicides. Research in the Negev has concluded that last year 20 women were murdered. In the Negev alone, I am not even talking about the Galilee, the Triangle or Gaza...

According to our estimates, this phenomenon is surging forward, because of

1. The name given to the group of villages to the west of the "green line", to the south of Wadi and to the north of Petah Tikvah.



the degradation of the economic and political situation in Palestine.

■ Can you give another example?

Forced marriage or the constraint of marriage on women or young girls against their desire is another common example. There also we do not have accurate figures on the percentage of forced marriages. According to our estimates, this percentage is high and affects educated women, indeed students, as much as those who cannot read or write.

The social pressure which is exerted on these young girls is such that they feel totally alone in a terrifying universe. In Palestinian society there is no link, no centre where women can find refuge. So many of them approach El Fanar, but we do not have the material means to create this centre where we could help women, support them psychologically, and so on.

The marriage process is linked to another phenomenon, that of the abandonment of studies by girls, whereas there are laws on this subject inside the 1948 frontiers. According to the law, education is obligatory, fathers are supposed to send their sons and daughters to school. This law is not respected in the case of girls; they are obliged to end their studies at adolescence.

■ How do you explain the non-application of the law?

In this area, we believe there is collusion between the authorities and the patriarchal habits and customs of our society. The law should be applied.

The authorities close their eyes to the fact that families withdraw their girls from school; they wish to maintain them in an inferior status, this facilitates their domination of the society inside the 1948 frontiers.

The Palestinians of the occupied territories are not considered as citizens, whereas the Palestinians of the 1948 territories are Israeli citizens and the law applies to them — the same laws are supposed to be

applied to them as to the Jewish society.

■ And the women workers?

In the absence of all precise data concerning the employment of women, I restrict myself to citing the feminized sectors of Palestinian society — teaching and health, which are traditionally considered as women's work.

The woman worker suffers, in our view, a triple oppression: a national oppression, a class oppression, and a socio-patriarchal oppression. Work is a necessity for women, but, whether they are married or single, they have to give their wages to the family.

I know of many cases of women who work outside, and work in the house; they do the housework, the cooking, look after their husbands and children, and they increase the wages of the husband by adding their own.

This oppression is double. In itself, work does not liberate women. In our opinion, even if women have found work and won economic autonomy, this is not enough; what is needed is an organization or a framework where they can organize themselves and raise their level of consciousness.

■ What are your projects currently?

Currently our action is situated at two levels; to win women, and then develop a periphery of women of which we will be the centre. It is very important. We will try to build sections in other Palestinian towns and villages.

Our project is also to initiate studies on all subjects, to deepen our knowledge of the life of married or divorced women in Palestinian society.

■ What difficulties do you come up against?

The biggest difficulty resides in the fact that El Fanar is a "new idea" inside Palestinian society, an idea which could be characterized as revolutionary; El Fanar constitutes a threat to current dominant and backward ideas, and menaces the existing political organizations and frameworks. Following our demonstration on June 24, we received numerous threats, that we would be killed in the same manner as the young girls already assassinated, to "preserve honour"!

Some movements, like the fundamentalists, spread rumours to slander us. They attack El Fanar under the pretext that it stands for "moral depravity" and sexual liberty.

A Palestinian newspaper published within the 1948 territories wrote false and misleading articles claiming that we were not autonomous, that we were exactly like the other women's organizations. We reject this kind of allegation: our organization is feminist and autonomous in relation to any party or political programme; on the contrary, our only concern is to raise the level of consciousness of Pal-

stinian women.

We wish to have more members, but we have no illusions, it is not going to be easy. Very many women who have expressed the wish to contact us have done so in secret. We are aware of these difficulties and we know that today our organization cannot mobilize on a mass basis, but the fact is that very many women join us on a clandestine basis, in spite of everything.

The political organizations are not very keen on us — they apply pressure using the carrot and the stick. One day, their members seem friendly with us; the next, they use means of indirect pressure. Only the fundamentalist movement attacks us directly.

■ You said that women were oppressed at three levels. What part do you play in the national struggle?

We make the link between the national and social struggles. In this respect, we suffer pressures from all sides, first from the political organizations, who respect tradition in their frameworks, and on the other hand from the Israeli authorities, when we take part in the national struggle.

By social struggle, I understand feminist struggle. At the level of our activities, there is an equilibrium, from the point of view of the importance accorded to these two types of struggle. For example, we struggle against the crimes of honour which affect women, and we struggle at the same time against the expropriations and against all form of oppression in Palestine.

For example, on August 7, 1991, the day of international solidarity with the families of the village of Ramleh, in the west of Galilee, where lands have been seized, following an expropriation, it was our duty to take a position; so we distributed a leaflet, criticizing the policy of the leaderships.

■ What conception of internal democracy do you have in El Fanar?

From the organizational point of view, we think that El Fanar is democratic, but also from the point of view of the type of struggle that we lead. Our fight is a democratic one; it is a fight for equality. The feminist struggle is in our opinion, a democratic and national struggle.

All these decisions are taken by majority vote. We have weekly assemblies in which all the members participate. Each week, there are around 20 women present. All the decisions have first been debated in the presence of everybody and by everybody. Moreover, there are more specialized commissions, like the finance commission, and so on.

But democracy is one of the foundations of our organization. There is no contradiction between democracy and feminism. If there was, our organization would not be feminist! ★

Nibbling away at the right to choose

THE struggle for a woman's right to choose to have an abortion suffered a setback when the US Senate confirmed Judge Clarence Thomas, a Black conservative, in his appointment to the Supreme Court by a slim 52-48 majority. I spoke to two American socialist feminists, Claire Cohen from Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Camille Colatosti from Solidarity about the history and current state of the struggle for a woman's right to choose in the United States. The interview took place in Amsterdam in mid-September.

CAN you give us some background to the rise of the anti-abortionists in the USA?

Claire Cohen: There was a general development of an anti-feminist agenda on the far right in the 1970s. Roe v Wade, legalizing abortion, was passed in 1973, and was opposed from the beginning by these groups; in 1977 they were successful, when Congress passed the Hyde amendment to take away Medicaid funding for abortions (States also contribute so it wasn't an end to all funding).

On the basis of this victory Operation Rescue came into being, in reality headed by a man, Randall Terry. This was a vicious group, who went in for bombing clinics.

I went to an interview with Terry and it was quite clear that for him this wasn't a single issue; he saw it in the context of turning back the tide for women's rights. He thought that women had got "too much leeway" and should be put back in their place.

Camille Colatosti: Terry is a fundamentalist preacher who wanted to capitalize on this issue and gain a lot of fame. At first it was mostly Catholics that were anti-abortion, but Randall Terry has been able to mobilize a broad coalition. He has an ideology, but most of his followers — the people who block the clinics — look much the same as the people who are demanding abortion rights, and a lot of them are young women.

Operation Rescue had some success in shutting down clinics. However their fame was short-lived since there were a lot of arrests and funds were depleted, although they can still mobilize as was shown by a big anti-abortion demonstration lasting many days that took place recently in Wichita, Kansas, at which they vowed they would shut the clinics down.

Claire: Many of these clinics are not just abortion clinics but are women's health clinics, which offer pregnancy or

contraceptive advice and often broader counselling services. In Pittsburgh, for example, these are the places that women under 18 would go to for advice about things they didn't want their parents to know about.

In Kansas they were doing things like lying children down in the street in front of cars — this was a gamble by Randall Terry trying to make a comeback by doing something spectacular. There was a big uproar from the community about this, and the anti-abortionists hurt themselves. Some of the methods used by the pro-abortion camp could backfire.

For example lawyers used an act relating to conspiracy, saying that since Operation Rescue carried out bombings, their demonstrations were criminal conspiracies. I went to a debate about this, since, although it had been very effective against Operation Rescue, it could be turned round against the left.

Camille: Reagan had a much more clearcut position against abortion than Bush. The ruling class is split on the issue; there was a moment during the Reagan administration when the Republican Party itself split on the issue, with people considering that its anti-abortion line might be a liability. This did not mean that they came out for women's rights, but they did not come out with the same extreme rhetoric on the question.

While Reagan made a big deal out of appointing anti-abortionists to the Supreme Court, Bush has tried to appoint people who have never taken a position and who won't attract the same response from civil rights activists.

Claire: The anti-abortion movement is still strong. In Pennsylvania the anti-abortionists have perhaps a slight majority in terms of public support. But they have become more sophisticated. They concentrate on issues such as minors having abortions, and parental consent. Then there is the false charge that some of these abortions are to get rid of female



foetuses — this is not a problem in the United States.

Pennsylvania has a case moving towards the Supreme Court; the state has made a law according to which a woman has to get the permission of her husband, even if she's divorced, to have an abortion. There is also a 24-hour waiting period after signing that she wants an abortion — to prevent women from making "snap judgements". During that time people would have the opportunity to influence them.

The big problem here is that Pennsylvania is a large and mainly rural state with two big cities — Pittsburgh and Philadelphia — in which more than half the population lives. Women have to go to the cities to get an abortion; it can take them hours to get there and then they have to find somewhere to stay for 24 hours.

Camille: The anti-abortionists have a sophisticated strategy; first of all they attacked poor women through cutting off Medicaid, now the target is young women, with the issue of parental consent. Then there is the "rights of the father" business. Then you can insist on additional tests, which need extra equipment that the clinics might not be able to afford.

Claire: Poor women can get an abortion on Medicaid in cases of rape, incest and deformation of the foetus. However the rape or incest must have been reported to the police within 48 hours, and the police must have decided that this is a case worth pursuing in the legal system. In fact, most cases brought before the police are not proceeded with. Thus, it is now legally the case that if the police do not pursue a case of rape or incest, they would have the option of charging the woman with welfare fraud. This hasn't happened

CANADA — Legal stalemate leaves choice free

"THERE is a fairly positive situation now where there is no Federal abortion law. In 1988 Dr. Morgenthau went to the Federal Supreme Court to challenge the Federal abortion law, and won. The conservative government decided that this was not good at all. There was also a lot of pressure from the anti-choice camp — in Canada largely the Catholic church with some of the Protestant fundamentalists as in the US.

"In the fall of 1989 the government introduced a bill — different from the previous one — to re-criminalize abortion. It left doctors open to criminal charges, a situation they didn't like! It was introduced into the House of Commons where it narrowly passed, but there was a tied vote in the Senate, which means there is still no law.

"From 1969 on there was a law which allowed 'therapeutic abortions' with the agreement of two doctors. Women mobilized throughout Canada against this law. Then Dr. Morgenthau directly challenged the law; he was brought to trial and acquitted by juries in Quebec — supposedly the most anti-choice part of Canada because of the influence of the Catholic Church — numerous times. It became clear that the law could not be enforced. Morgenthau then set up clinics in other parts of Canada and the process of trial and acquittal resumed. The Morgenthau clinic in Toronto became a focus of struggle, with rallies outside. There was a strong socialist feminist current in Toronto, the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, which still exists.

"There are provincial regulations — but there are no local anti-abortion laws. The clinics have been set up in many different places. There is a Medicare system in Canada. There was a period when Medicare was not paying since the Morgenthau clinics were outside the system; the clinics operated a system where those who could pay paid, those who couldn't didn't.

"However the struggle is not yet over and the government will produce another law, and the anti-choice forces can expect significant help from the USA. The situation is good, but for reasons which may make it temporary."

CATHY BARKER (Socialist Challenge / Gauche Socialiste, Canada) ★

yet, but I am sure that this turns some women away from having an abortion.

■ **Does the anti-abortion campaign have real mass support, or is it a well conducted guerilla campaign largely at the level of the institutions?**

Camille: It was a very well-organized campaign at the institutional level. However, whenever surveys have been done about how people feel about women's right to choose, it depends on the question. People respond differently to different reasons — the right to choose gets less support for example when the reason given is financial, more if a woman says she wants to continue her education. On the whole people support the right to choose, but if you make it look as if the woman is being selfish then support drops.

Claire: Most polls show that the majority of the public believe in a woman's right to choose; however, they also increasingly show that more and more people believe that minors should get the permission of at least one parent.

Camille: Feminist forces have not mobilized in such an effective way as the anti-abortionists, who have operated on a whole number of fronts. There have been a couple of very big demonstrations for

the right to choose.

Claire: From the beginning, from the time of Roe v Wade, the big problem of a lack of solidarity between races has been apparent. When the anti-abortion forces started chipping away at poor women, there was not a big mobilization around that.

Camille: The National Organization for Women (NOW) thought at that time that if they took up the Medicaid issue they would lose Democratic Party support. About ten years later they realized they had made a mistake.

Claire: In Pittsburgh, many of the leaders of the pro-choice movement are middle class professionals. One of the richest women in the USA is involved and she wants to steer the movement towards voting for the Republican candidate.

In Pennsylvania we had a fight to get the movement to call for abortions to be safe, legal and affordable. Black feminists were saying that if it was not affordable it wasn't accessible. At first we were told that the Democrats wouldn't go for that. It took a lot of work to win people away from that line of thinking.

Another problem is the criminalization of pregnancy in women who are drug addicts. This is a choice issue in the same way as the right to have an abortion. Such

women don't plan to get pregnant. In their condition things happen to you, and if you're a woman one of the things that happens is that you get pregnant. If they want an abortion, given the obstacles, they often can't get it together until it is too late. If they don't there is a lack of drug treatment centres.

I'm a doctor and I did a lot of research on this issue for a talk, and I found that nobody even knows if it is a good idea to take these women off drugs when they are pregnant. In fact there is no clearcut evidence that cocaine by itself is a danger to the foetus.

These women's problems are due to their poverty, poor nutrition and so on. These women can be arrested, can be forced to have an abortion, or the baby can be taken away, or the woman put in jail. The point is that the pro-choice movement has not been able to develop a practise that can appeal to diverse groups of women and bring them into the movement.

Leaders of the pro-choice movement often say things that alienate women of colour. One, Molly Yard, President of NOW, got up and said in effect that we want abortion so that all those poor Black women can get rid of their babies.

There was a movie made about a young woman who died of an illegal abortion. She was blond-haired and blue-eyed. It was a good film in many ways, but every time they talked about women dying from abortion, they showed this blond-haired, blue-eyed woman. When they talked about unwanted babies, they showed Black babies. All this repels women of colour from the movement.

Camille: The National Organization for Women is not a democratic movement where you can go in and argue for your line. Make the Democrats toe the line is the policy.

The demonstration in Wichita Kansas got tremendous media coverage. They picked a place where there is little feminist activity. NOW mounted one small action.

The latest thing is the nomination of Clarence Thomas — a right wing African-American — to the Supreme Court. Thomas is opposed to almost every liberal gain over the past twenty years for women. There is a certain mobilization to keep him off the Supreme Court. He has never written a controversial decision on abortion.

Claire: When he was head of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) he left 13,000 discrimination cases to expire undealt with — he didn't even rule against them. Thomas' nomination is a crafty move by Bush, since his opponents can be painted as racists. But in fact he has never espoused Black self-help. He believes in his own career and to hell with everybody else. But his opponents don't know how to appeal to the mass of African-Americans. ★

Premadasa's one-man show runs into trouble

A RESOLUTION for the Impeachment of the president of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, has been presented to the Sri Lankan parliament on the initiative of senior members of his own government and party. The dissidents claim that the president has become a dictator, ruling without respect for parliament. They demand that the system of Executive Presidency be abolished and powers removed from parliament in 1979 restored.

The following article explains the background to the crisis and reflects the point of view of the Trotskyist Nava Sama Samaja Party.

V. THIRUNAVUKKARASU

DURING the local government elections in May this year, minority President Premadasa — elected with a mere 25% of the vote — appealed to the people to strengthen his hand in order to find a solution to the vexed national question which has been threatening to tear the country apart.

His ruling United National Party (UNP) scored a substantial victory. Addressing the annual convention of the Sri Lanka Muslim congress three months later, President Premadasa said that he had not pledged in his 1988 election manifesto, nor during the election campaign, to propose a solution to the "ethnic question" and that no one should expect him to fulfil a promise he did not make.

Bloody war with Tigers continues

Meanwhile, a bloody war which has claimed thousands of lives continues between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north and east.

This war has gone on for 14 years, apart from a 14-month long break during the abortive talks between President Premadasa and the LTTE which ended in June 1990, and now costs about 15% of the country's GDP.

At the same time a veritable economic blockade imposed on the people in the north and east has caused unprecedented hardship, including emaciating malnutrition.

The government has grabbed an opportunity presented by a motion put forward by a right wing MP from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP — the main bourgeois opposition party) for the appoint-

ment of a Select Committee of Parliament (SCP) to devise ways and means of resolving the national question.

The motion gives the regime the possibility of buying time; Premadasa already presides over another futile exercise called the All-Party Conference (APC) which is supposed to resolve the same problem. The SLFP and the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), both of which now boycott the APC, are ready to take part in the proposed SCP deliberations.

Only the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), which boycotted the APC from the beginning, has also decided not to participate in the SCP unless the government calls for a ceasefire and starts talks with the LTTE while pursuing ongoing talks with the other parties.

Divisions within SLFP deepen

In recent weeks the divisions within the SLFP have deepened, with the powerful National Organizer, Anura Bandaranaike, being restrained by his mother and SLFP leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike from pursuing discussions with distrust and peripheral organizers.

Anura leads the right wing group that advocates a liberal market economy. Ex-UNPer and present SLFP general secretary, JRP Suriyaperuma, is one of the leading elements in this group, as is Mangala Moonesinghe MP, the initiator of the motion for the appointment of the SCP.

Meanwhile, Chandrika Kumaranatunga (Mrs. Bandaranaike's daughter), who broke away earlier from the SLFP, with her late husband and film star turned politician Vijaya, to form the Sri Lanka

Mahajana Party (SLMP) — she subsequently disowned that party after her husband's assassination by the JVP in 1989 and its tilt to the right, and formed the Bahujana Nidahas Pakshaya (BNP — People's Freedom Party) — is on the verge of rejoining the SLFP, ostensibly to rescue it from the right wing elements, but really to prop it up from total collapse.

The old left parties, the LSSP and the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) are in a state of political bankruptcy, as has been the case ever since they took the path of coalition and collaboration with the bourgeois parties in the 1960s.

The left wing and progressive masses feel demoralized. While the LSSP seems to have learnt the hard way the futility of any alliance with the SLFP, the CPSL is bent on tail-ending the latter regardless of its liberal pro-market economic programme, which is no different to that of the UNP.

Privatization of state corporations and even government departments is going on apace under the guise of "peoplication". Nationalized and state ventures hitherto accounted for 60% of the economy, including its commanding heights such as the plantation sector which brings in 40% of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

Privatization of transport services

Transport services, which were the first to be nationalized in 1959, have already been privatized. Most state corporations, including steel and cement, are in the process of being privatized.

It goes without saying that privatization means big layoffs and a freeze on recruitment of labour with a corresponding increase in exploitation. Around a third of the workforce will be retrenched. The banking sector is the next to be privatized.

On the one hand, the government is unwilling to devolve powers and grant a reasonable measure of autonomy to regional political structures, which might, among other things, provide a semblance of a solution to the national question.

On the other, it is content to entrust virtually the entire economy to the private sector. Despite Premadasa's boast that those who "lend money to us should not lay down conditions", in fact the IMF/World Bank dictates are being carried out to the letter.

The working class, groaning under the weight of inflation, is restive. The opposition parties however are unable and unwilling to direct the discontent towards the overthrow of the Premadasa regime.

The garment industry, which today brings in a substantial part of the country's foreign exchange, is confined to the so-called free trade zone, employing mostly female workers who are subjected to rapacious exploitation without basic

trade union rights to fight for the most elementary requirements such as adequate toilet facilities in factories.

The tea industry, still considered the mainstay of the country's economy, continues its decline. It is claimed by bureaucrats in the tea industry that private holdings contributed 37% of the national output in 1990, whereas the two giant state corporations, the Janatha (People's) Estate Development Board (JEDB) and the Sri Lanka State Plantation Corporation (SLSPC), contributed only 4.4% of value added to GDP.

If the corporations lag behind this it is largely due to the absence of autonomy for the managements and the lack of worker participation. The corporations are hamstrung by a plethora of bureaucrats, red tape and rigidities.

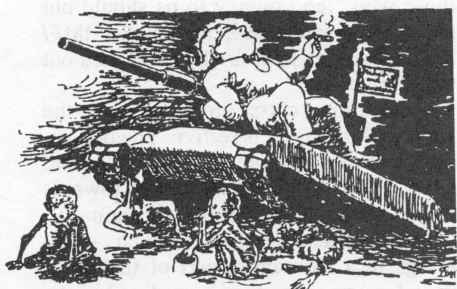
This also accounts for the low productivity — 1,025 kilos per hectare compared to 2,009 kilos per hectare in India and 2,135 kilos per hectare in Kenya.

Promise of poverty alleviation

During his 1988 presidential election campaign, Premadasa held out the promise of a Poverty Alleviation Act, envisaging a payment of 2,500 rupees per month to every deserving family. However in reality a so-called Janasaviya (People's Strength) programme was introduced so as to wipe out the benefit of the limited free rations enjoyed by seven million people — nearly a half of the population — under the food stamp subsidy scheme.

The failure of the UNP government to meet the aspirations of the youth or arrive at any semblance of a solution to the national question led to the 1988/89 rebellion in southern Sri Lanka and the interminable war in the north and east.

This is the political and economic landscape over which Premadasa presides, having concentrated all power in his hands through the Executive Presidency system, which was introduced by former President J. R. Jayawardene, who had become averse to being "dictated to by the whims and fancies of an elected parliament". The time is ripe than ever for an offensive to overthrow the Premadasa regime. ★



Night of the generals

FOLLOWING the September 16 coup in Haiti (see IV 214) Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, elected president of the country by an overwhelming majority in December of last year, remains in exile and the military continue to hold the reins of power. The putschists have nominated a member of the Haitian Supreme Court, Joseph Nérette, as acting president and promised the holding of new elections. Meanwhile, on October 15, Aristide's call for a one day general strike in support of his return was widely observed. The following interview with Arthur Mahon, who was in Port-au-Prince from the beginning of the coup, took place in early October. It first appeared in *Rouge*, the newspaper of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR — French section of the Fourth International).

How does this coup fit into the course of events since Father Aristide's coming to power?

On December 16, 1991, at the time of the elections, the alternative was the following; either a pseudo-democratic transition on the basis of a pact concluded with certain Duvalierist sectors and with imperialism, or a democratic rupture based on a popular mobilization. The choice effectively made then translates itself thus today. Either imperialism will succeed in damming up the tidal wave from the favelas, in wiping out the memory of the vigilante brigades, the day of mobilization on December 16, the barricades on the night of January 6-7 when Lafontant tried to seize power. Or the democratic rupture with the old order will progressively deepen through a series of crises, encroaching upon the power of those who hold the reins of the economy.

One could say that Aristide and his prime minister opened a breach in the edifice bequeathed by the dictatorship. They have been faced with a consistent choice; whether to enlarge this breach through basing themselves on popular mobilization, or to respect the bourgeois institutions, in part inherited from the dictatorship, the army for example.

It has not been possible in six months to profoundly change the judicial apparatus, which has led to popular discontent. On the question of necklacing which has aroused a lot of comment in the press; during the attempted coup d'état, several dozen tontons macoutes or their associates suffered this treatment. Aristide declared then, with some courage, that he wished he existed in a state of laws, with real justice, where people could be judged with all the necessary guarantees.

But since this justice does not exist, he could understand why the people use such means.

What about the "personal guard" which Aristide was setting up prior to the coup?

At the time of Lafontant's attempted coup, a few dozen people were able to seize the national palace without striking a blow. It was clear from then on that the army was not going to assure the security of Aristide when he became President. In power, Aristide tried to organize a personal security service constituted from reliable people. About 50 people were, it seems, being trained, with instructors provided by the French and Swiss states. In fact, it did not amount to a popular workers' militia.

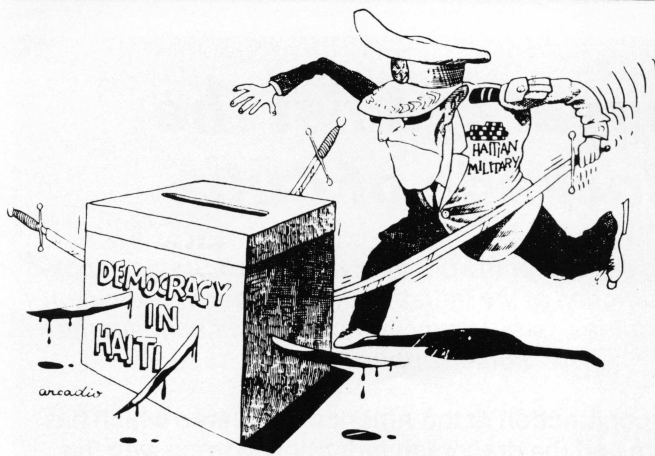
What are the charges that have been made against Aristide by the coup organizers?

He has been accused of having terrorized the parliament. Some weeks ago, the deputies discussed a vote of censure against the government. There was a popular reaction; some thousands of people rallied around the parliament to bring pressure on the deputies.

Beyond this, some small groups tried to go further, physically threatening some deputies and burning a trade union office. It is impossible to say if they were supporters of Aristide who had gone too far or provocateurs. One thing is certain; they were commanded neither by Aristide nor his prime minister.

This coup was organized by people chosen by Aristide himself to renew the army leadership. Obviously his confidence was badly placed.

It's necessary to look at what this coup is about and look at its leader, Cedras. He



Aristide back on the path of a classic bourgeois democracy, of respect for the institutions. But they have been outflanked on the ground.

■ Can you give some details of the actual unfolding of the coup d'état? It seems to have been very

bloody, and it is hard to understand how Aristide escaped with his life.

To modify the relationship of forces was the principal objective of the Americans. That did not mean the liquidation of Aristide, which would have had bad consequences.

Their goal was to impose a defeat on the popular movement, notably in the popular neighbourhoods which had played the prime role in defeating the Lafontant coup attempt. Thus, the target was the imposition of terror in these neighbourhoods. During the first hours of the coup, several dozen people were killed among those who opposed the incursion of the army into their neighbourhoods.

Since, then, terror has been organized systematically. The army takes a popular neighbourhood as its target, invades it and systematically machine guns it. At first, there was some resistance in certain neighbourhoods, from the youth and the popular organizations, who were able, in certain cases, to organize ambushes against the army.

These areas, at the forefront of the resistance, have been particularly repressed. For example, in a neighbourhood called Carrefour, 44 youth were executed and the army made the population dig their graves. In another area, the big shantytown of the city of Soleil, 200 people have been killed. The number of people killed by the army can be estimated at several hundred.

■ How is everyday life continuing in Port-au-Prince?

Haiti has been paralyzed for a week. Nearly all the shops have been shut. The wandering merchants are the only source of food. Contact between Port-au-Prince and the provinces is practically nonexistent. The people are not working, in response to an appeal for a general strike launched by former government members.

Life is then at a standstill, because of the strike, and also because of the risks involved in going out. There is a curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.. People stay at home; often they turn out their lights and await the dawn, hoping nothing serious will happen in the night. ★



PORTUGAL

Revolutionaries campaign in elections

THE Portuguese general election on Sunday October 6 1991 resulted in a resounding victory for the governing rightist Social Democrats (PSD), who won 50.4% of the vote, with the Socialist Party (PS) far behind with 29.2% and the CDU (an electoral coalition dominated by the Portuguese Communist Party) losing almost half its parliamentary seats.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Portuguese section of the Fourth International) ran a dynamic and original campaign which attracted wide support from both the rank and file of the PCP and several national personalities, including television star Carlos Cruz.

The PSR's campaign meetings (particularly in Lisbon, where 1,000 people attended the main rally) demonstrated a healthy level of support for the party, in particular amongst youth.

The axis of the campaign was the election of PSR member Francisco Louça as a deputy in Lisbon. While initial projections on October 6th indicated that Louça would win a seat, ultimately he fell a few votes short because of an electoral boycott called by the inhabitants of Dona Maria, a suburb to the north of Lisbon, in protest against inadequate sanitary conditions and water supplies.

The suburb is to vote on October 20, and the PSR remains hopeful that Louça will be elected. ★

AUSTRALIA

Abortion battle in New South Wales

TWENTY years after abortion became easily available in the Australian state of New South Wales, the fight to defend freedom of choice has begun again. The conservative government of this state (where one third of the Australian population lives) has just lost its parliamentary majority and is now reliant for its survival on the votes of a married couple, Fred and Elaine Nile, who are members of a far right Christian group.

A bill to ban abortion outside certain public hospitals has been introduced, which, since most terminations are carried out in independent women's clinics, represents a major attack on abortion availability.

The bill comes at a time when govern-

ment hospitals in the city of Sidney are being closed, while funding for major public hospitals run by the Catholic religious orders is being increased.

Reaction to the bill has been swift and militant, with a march of 4,000 on August 14 and another of 500 during international abortion rights protests on August 28.

Public sector trades unionists, veteran feminists, and lesbian and gay groups were prominent in the marches, but the ranks were made up mainly of energetic and angry teenage women.

When the bill was introduced into parliament, 13 of the 15 women in the (42 member) upper house staged an unprecedented walkout, and the national assembly of the Uniting Church, the third largest religious current in Australia, has unanimously voted down a resolution supporting the bill.

On October 7, during an annual parade by Pentecostal supporters of the Niles, there were clashes between pro and anti-choice activists, with the latter violently attacking lesbian banners. Police intervened in the fighting, but only to arrest 10 pro-choice activists.

While the bill currently lacks anything near majority support, it is possible, given the instability of the minority government, that an amended bill may be passed as part of a deal between the Niles and the government. ★

FRANCE

Massacre of Algerians commemorated

SEVERAL thousand people marched through the streets of Paris on Thursday, October 17, 1991, in commemoration of the police massacre, exactly 30 years earlier, of at least two hundred Algerians who were participating in a pro-FLN (National Liberation Front — the liberation movement then fighting for Algeria's independence from France) demonstration.

The demonstration, called in defiance of a curfew that had been imposed on French Muslims, was peaceful; the FLN had ordered that none of the participants should carry so much as a penknife. They had, however, reckoned without the murderous climate of anti-Algerian hatred whipped up within the Parisian police force by its commanders over a period of several years.

The demonstration was brutally attacked; while many were killed on the streets, the survivors were taken to detention centres throughout Paris where they were savagely beaten and tortured, many more dying there. The bodies were thrown into the Seine.

The instigators of the massacre have never faced charges of any kind. Government, media and police have con-

Appeal against the blockade of Cuba

THE following appeal for the lifting of the United States' blockade of Cuba, launched at the initiative of a number of prominent French personalities, has already attracted significant international support:

IN CUBA, the conjunction of the American embargo which has lasted 30 years and the draconian reduction in trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has led today to a dramatic situation.

Difficulties in ensuring supplies are increasing. The unquestionable gains in matters of health and education may be put at risk.

Cuba has been criticized in the name of human rights for infringements of democracy. But criticism does not give others the right, even in the name of human rights, to economically suffocate the country.

We have different opinions about the Cuban regime. We are joining together to denounce this attempt to bring down a regime by starving a people.

Such unilateral aggression by the world's leading power can in no case lead to the liberty of this people.

We therefore demand the lifting of the blockade, which is an attack on the dignity and lives of the Cuban people.

SIGNATORIES so far include: *Algeria:* A. Ben Bella. *Austria:* E. Danneberg. *Belgium:* J. Brabant; E. Mandel; Pos. H. Pastoors; E. Toussaint. *Bolivia:* A. Alemrojo. *Brazil:* L.I. Lula Da Silva. *Canada:* D. Heap. *Colombia:* M. Correa. *Dominican Republic:* R. Traveras. *El Salvador:* A. G. Martinez; J. Villalobos. *France:* E. Balibar; D. Berger; Costa Gavras; D. Daeninckx; R. Debray; J. Habel; A. Krivine; R. Lew; A. Lipietz; M. Lowy; F. Maspero; G. Perrault; M. Rasjufus; D. Singer. *Germany:* G. Gysi; J. Moneta; G. Wallraff. *Haiti:* E. Lescauffleire. *Italy:* A. Cossutta; L. Maitan; R. Serri. *Mauritius:* R. Seegobin. *Morocco:* A. Serfaty. *Nicaragua:* T. Borge; O. Cabezas; C.F. Chamorro. *Peru:* J. del Prado. *Poland:* J. Pinior. *Portugal:* C. Brito; F. Louca. *Senegal:* M. Dia. *South Africa:* N. Alexander. *Spain:* J.M. Diaz-Alegria; M. Garcia Oliva; F. Umbral. *Sri Lanka:* C. Gunawardena; V. Nanayakkara; B. Tampoe. *Switzerland:* J. Ziegler. *United Kingdom:* T. Ali; T. Benn; J. Corbyn; S. Hall; P. Heathfield; E. J. Hobsbawm; K. Livingstone. *United States:* N. Chomsky; S. Landau; H. Magdoff; P.M. Sweezy.

Seventy-five members of the European Parliament have also signed the appeal.

Correspondence to Dorothee Piermont, MEP, Boite postale 210 232, D-5300 Bonn 2, FRG or Robert March, 24, rue de la Réunion, 75020 Paris, France.

Financial support: Cheques should be made out to: R. March CCP 6 325 37 W Paris (mention "Cuba appeal"). ★

spired to throw a veil of silence over the events of that evening, and the official death toll remains only two.

The Parisian prefect of police who oversaw the massacre, Maurice Papon, had also been responsible for the rounding up and deportation of Jewish chil-

dren in 1942.

The demonstration took place as part of a week of events organized by anti-racist groups in commemoration of the massacre, including the inauguration of a memorial on the banks of the Seine and a colloquium at the Sorbonne. ★