

International VIEWPOINT

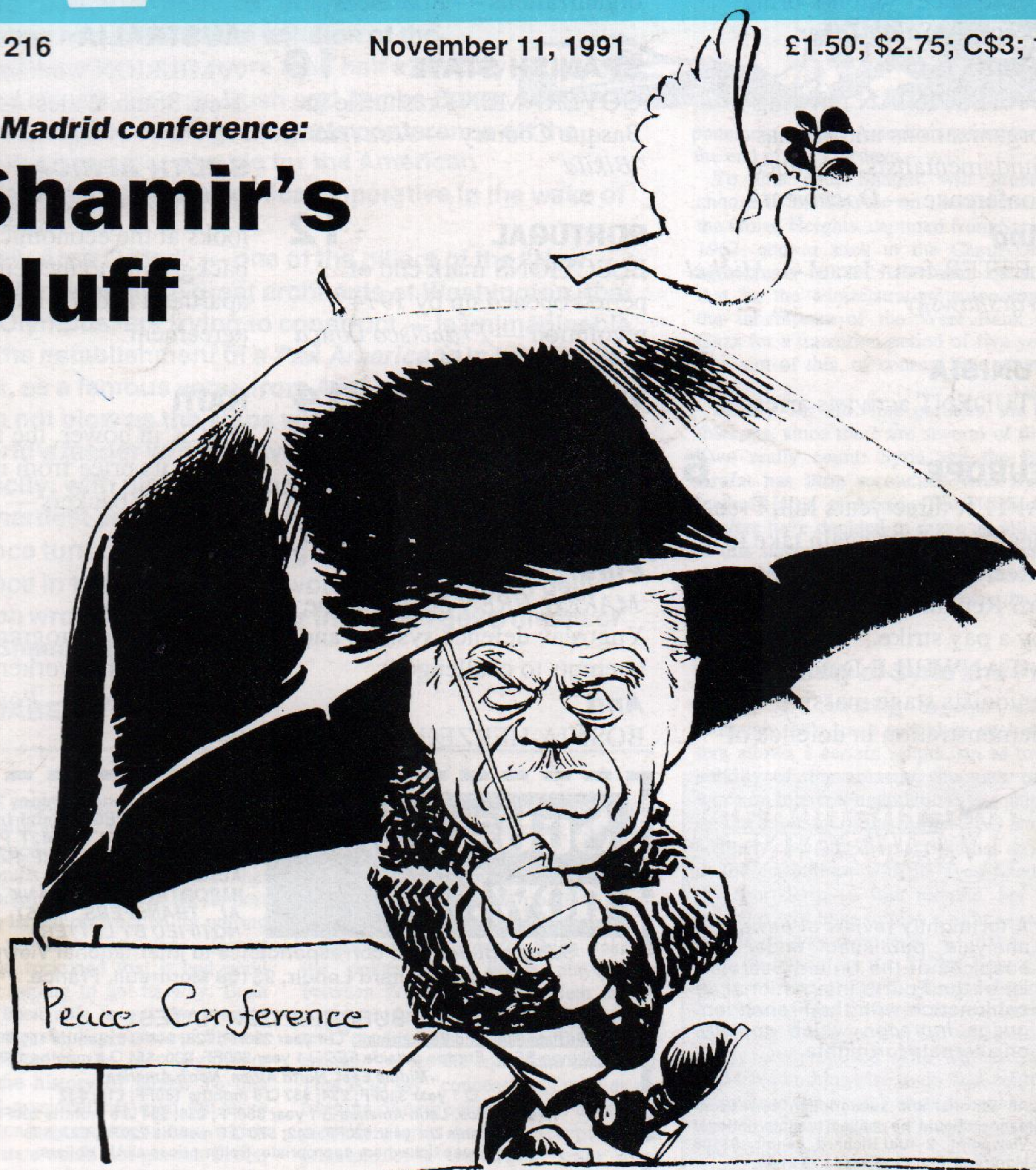
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At Madrid conference:

Shamir's bluff



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International Viewpoint

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Peace conference or poker game?

ON OCTOBER 30, there opened with great fanfare the Madrid "peace conference" intended to explore ways and means for a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, after more than half a century of fruitless efforts. George Bush and James Baker can heave a sigh of relief: getting this conference off the ground has been a big gamble for the American administration, but also a political imperative in the wake of the Gulf War.

The "New Arab Order"¹ — one of the pillars of the "New World Order" which the great architects of Washington, that modern Olympus, are trying to construct — is unimaginable without the establishment of a *Pax Americana* in the Middle East. But, as a famous verse from Arab poetry puts it: "the winds do not blow as the ships wish them".

The world's leader writers have not been lacking in perspicacity: with pleasing unanimity they have pointed out that the hardest part is yet to come. Might not the Madrid conference turn out to be nothing more than the biggest press conference in the history of the world, as the French daily *Libération* wrote? In any case, for the Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir this is all a bluff.

SALAH JABER

THE reason why the Zionist right finally agreed to attend the conference is well known. Six months ago, we foresaw that "the Bush administration will do its best to surmount Israeli obstruction by putting economic pressure on the Zionist regime"² and reckoned that it had good grounds for hoping to get its way. Bush has indeed been able to get the process started, to the great displeasure of Shamir and his acolytes in the most rightwing cabinet in the history of Israel. To this end, the US president has used the issue of Washington's guarantee without which the Zionist state could not get the \$10bn loan that it desperately needs — or, to be precise, the White House persuaded Congress to postpone granting this guarantee for four months.

That is to say, these four months are the period fixed by the Bush administration for the "unblocking" of the process of Israeli-Arab settlement. During these 120 days the issue of the guarantee will remain hanging over the head of Shamir like the Sword of Damocles; if he should

behave in a way that appears unacceptable to American interests, the US administration would have a powerful argument at its command to ask Congress to attach explicit political conditions to the granting of the guarantee.

Here are the stakes for Bush-Baker in the poker game being played out between Washington, Jerusalem and its Arab partners: it is a matter of extracting real "concessions" from the Shamir government before the end of the time limit. That is to say "concessions" such as the freezing of new settlements in the Occupied Territories and the acceptance in principle of a withdrawal from some part of these, which would allow the conference to go ahead rather than sputtering to a probable halt.

Inversely, Shamir's aim is to give away nothing essential while giving the impression of being ready to do so. In other words, to find a way of making it look as if the Arabs are responsible for any eventual failure, and to do this in a way that is sufficiently convincing to rule out any possibility of a new post-

ponement of the American guarantee at the end of the 120 days.

To this end, Shamir will probably choose to be flexible on the question of the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in 1967, and to stick to the Camp David agreements on the Palestinian question, that is, the administrative autonomy of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza for a transition period of five years. The aim of this, of course, is to play for time.

Finally, for the Arab partners, the plot thickens, since there are several of them. Two really count: Syria and the PLO. Arafat has been reconciled with Syrian leader Hafez el-Assad. These seasoned players have decided to make an alliance at this stage: both know from experience that the Israeli government's first and most simple tactic will be to play the one against the other.

Fragile unity of Syria and PLO

They are sticking together today, although their track record in such matters allows a certain scepticism as to the solidity of this alliance. Shamir's insistence on bilateral negotiations is a gamble on the break-up of the Syrian-PLO front.

In any case, the Zionist right has arrived at the conference with its eyes fixed on the short term — four months. For this period it will have to play a tight game. If it gets its way over Bush — that is if it gets its hands on the \$10bn from Congress without giving anything substantial in return — the future of the conference, assuming it has got that far, will be decisively compromised. The United States will have nothing else to do than continue to oversee the *modus vivendi* between its Arab and Israeli allies in much more difficult conditions.

Actually, the whole game is rotten. Shamir goes to the conference not in search of a peace that he does not really believe in — since he does not want to pay the price for it — but to get the \$10bn. But where is the imperative need for this trifling sum, some \$2,500 per Israeli inhabitant, which will result in an external



1. See *International Viewpoint*, no. 206, May 13, 1991.
2. Ibid.

public debt unequalled in the world? This is the key question, and it reveals the extent to which some of the cards are marked in this tricky game. These \$10bn are needed to absorb the million Soviet Jews that Israel is hoping to take in by next year or the year after. That is to say, an increase of nearly a third in the Jewish population of Israel, at a time when the Zionist state has already been complaining that it lacks "essential space".

The Soviet immigration is the windfall that the most militant Zionists have been hoping for for a long time. It will considerably reinforce the expansionism inherent in the Zionist project, increasing the numbers both of potential colonists and soldiers. Thus nothing could be more natural than that, far from a freeze, a further surge in the establishment of settlements in the Occupied Territories should accompany this new immigration. If the process will have been halted for four months, it will certainly take off again with renewed energy afterwards — with the support of the American billions.

Billions of dollars for new settlements

To sum up, Shamir is going to the conference to get the money he intends to use to carry through his rampant annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. He is going to this "peace conference" with the aim of reinforcing a process that implies permanent war. From this point of view the demonstrations of the Israeli right³ do not upset him at all. They can even be useful for him insofar as they counter-balance American pressures and prevent the camp of the Zionist "doves" from occupying the streets.

This last consideration is very important. The parliamentary regime in Israel allows Washington to hope that its pressures will find effective mouthpieces in Israel, and even contribute to a change in the majority and the government so as to allow the Madrid process to go forward. It is therefore a combination of all these elements that will determine the future of the peace conference and of the regional *Pax Americana*.

If we grant that Washington's objectives are very hard to achieve, then it follows that in the best case, the eventual outcome of the Madrid conference will have as much in common with self-determination for the Palestinian people as a bantustan does with an independent state.

And it is this truth, already evident in the Israeli diktat about Palestinian representation at the conference, that explains the tone of the new Palestinian "Rejection Front" formed by the alliance for the first time of the two main left factions of the PLO and the "Hamas" Islamic fundamentalist movement⁴.

4 The joint declaration of the three organizations (see p. 5), leaving aside

concessions to the characteristic fundamentalist vocabulary, gives an overall correct analysis of the objectives that Washington is pursuing at the Madrid conference. Indeed, it is paradoxical that the Zionist right is so blinded by its fanaticism that it is obstructing an American policy that promises much to the Zionist state. This is why "enlightened" Zionists are furious. This is also why, when the Palestinian right stakes all on this same American policy, this is not naivety but pure and simple capitulation and compromise with the enemy. The argument that they have no choice is the same that has been used by all the Pétains of history.

However, the three-party declaration presents three problems that have been and remain important in the debate inside the Palestinian and Arab left: the acceptability of an alliance with the fundamentalists, the legitimacy of the PLO's institutions and the programme of the Palestinian struggle.

Dangers of collaboration with fundamentalists

On the first, we have already had occasion to underline the dangers of any illusion in a political united front with religious fanaticism, whatever convergences in action might occur on the ground.⁵ It is essential never to mix banners with the fundamentalists; it is necessary to march quite separately, even if from time to time we may strike together in concrete struggles.

Even then, it is necessary to be extremely vigilant in the face of such a current, which is basically reactionary on the socio-cultural plane and viscerally opposed to the left, and which will not hesitate to wipe out the latter if it considers this possible and opportune. The Lebanese Communist Party found this out the hard way in the course of the resistance to the Israeli occupation in 1982-85.

A direct political alliance with the fundamentalists works almost always to their advantage. It is inevitably accompanied by an ideological truce that facilitates their recruitment on the same ground from which the left tends to recruit its militants, or even in the ranks of the left itself.

There is also another price to pay: that of repelling all those who have good reason to fear the fundamentalists — in the Palestinian contest, Christians and women⁶ — into the arms of the classical right. And this is not to mention the disastrous effects of such an alliance on anti-Zionist and radical pacifist milieux in Israel.

As far as the institutions of the PLO are concerned, there is a striking similarity between the arguments used in the tripartite declaration and what we have repeatedly said about the bureaucratic

nature and non-democratic composition of these institutions.⁷ The PLO's refrain that it is "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" now rebounds once more against those who have chanted it most loudly — that is to say the two fronts of the left in the PLO, who have signed the declaration. Only yesterday they considered the Executive Committee and the National Council as the exclusive holders of the legitimate representation of their people. Now they are challenging both the exclusivity and the legitimacy of these institutions and demand their democratic recasting. Better late than never!

The third problem is manifested in what is missing from the tripartite declaration; that is, a programme of a transitional nature corresponding to concrete and feasible medium-term objectives. This is the old defect of Arab nationalism and its Palestinian offshoots: maximalism. Under the impact of the accumulating defeats since 1970, this political defect had given way to a series of slip-pages to the right, in the tradition of *Realpolitik*.

The present break with the Palestinian bourgeois right, as well as the alliance with the fundamentalist champions of maximalism (who now have the direct support of Iran), and probably the fear of being outbid by the latter in a climate where raising the stakes is the order of the day, have suddenly sent the left of the PLO back to their political point of departure.

An impasse is just around the corner. The despair that may result could have a demobilizing and demoralizing effect and thus favour the capitulationist bourgeoisie.

Then the left will lose on two levels: that of the "realism" pursued by the rightist PLO leadership and that of the maximalism incarnated by Hamas. It is urgent that the militants of the Palestinian left and the radical wing of Fatah in the Occupied Territories retake the leadership of their own struggle and put forward again the programme they worked out in the communiqués of the first months of the *intifada*, before the PLO leadership imposes its control.⁸ Only if this is done will the *intifada* survive and regain the dynamism of its first year. ★

3. See the comment by Michel Warshawsky on p.6.

4. The third faction of the PLO left, the pro-Moscow Communist Party, is, of course, taking part in the "Madrid Conference" operation.

5. See, for example, the debate with George Habash in *International Viewpoint*, no. 177, January 29, 1990.

6. While Hanan Ashrawi, the notable that the Palestinian bourgeois leadership has chosen to put forward alongside Faisal al-Husseini, is both a Christian and a woman.

7. See *International Viewpoint* no. 157, February 20, 1989.

8. See *IV* nos. 156 and 158, February 6 and March 6, 1989.

"An attempt to liquidate our cause"

WE PUBLISH BELOW the Joint Political Declaration of The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, The Islamic Resistance Movement — Hamas, and The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine on the Madrid Middle East "peace" conference.

DOCUMENT

THE political aftermath of the Gulf War, preceded by America's victory in the Cold War on the global scale, which has made her in fact the only hegemonic great power in the world, has meant that the US is now striving, followed by the dependent and servile regimes of the Arab world, to liquidate our cause and wipe it out of the minds of the Arab and Islamic masses. This is because they know that this open wound incites our Palestinian people, as well as the Arab and Islamic nation, to strive to recover their dignity and cast down the thrones of those who have been bought, whose yoke weighs on the nation. Although America is opposed to the aspirations of the Palestinian masses, has encouraged and supported Zionist intransigence, and given military and material support to its state, the US is now pretending that it is working to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict on its terms, by means of the American liquidationist plot which aims to:

1. Consecrate American imperialist-colonialist hegemony in the region, by setting up a regional alliance tied to it politically, economically, militarily and culturally, of which the Zionist state will be the hard core and the dominant strike force in the region.

2. To consolidate the Zionist cancerous presence in the body of our nation and on our land by the normalization of its relations with the Arab regimes and recognition of a sort that gives it an economic as well as a military function. This state will thus grow in strength, security and stability above all after the opening up of the

Arab and Islamic markets to its products and the opening up of the treasures of the Gulf in order to plunder the oil riches of our Arab nation.

3. To liquidate the Palestinian cause, the heart of the conflict, by emptying it of its content as a cause of a people having religious, national and historic rights in Palestine and transforming it into a demographic problem that can be resolved at this stage by the establishment of an administrative autonomy tied to the Zionist state. In the best of cases, Israeli sovereignty will be replaced by the formal sovereignty of Jordan, serving as a cover for the maintenance and hardening of the occupation through a military and police presence in certain zones of the West Bank and Gaza.

4. To strike at and abort the Islamic and Arab liberation movements struggling against American imperialism and its interests in the region, to consecrate the absolute hegemony of America and Israel and to preserve and root its pliable instruments in the region with all that this implies in terms of the destruction of our nation's identity on the cultural, economic and military levels.

To our militant and resistant Palestinian people!

To all free and honourable men in the world!

Although the reality and the aims of the new American plot are clear, since Amer-

ica does not even try to hide what it is expecting, the preliminary and free concessions and the submission to American pressures have continued and have led to a new unrequited concession that does grave harm to our national rights. This amounts to a blow to the *jihād* and the struggle of our people, to its decades of sacrifice, to the martyrs it has laid down on the altar of its faith in the justice of its cause and its attachment to its rights, and to the pain and suffering of the wounded, the prisoners and those who have been forcefully expelled from their country.

Starting from what all this represents as a threat to our *jihād*, our struggle and our rights we — the Popular Front, the Hamas Movement and the Democratic Front — affirm the following:

1. While respecting freedom of belief, opinion and difference in thought, we do not see in this affront to our historic, religious and national rights, a simple exercise in freedom of political opinion, but the embezzlement of our sacred and non-negotiable national rights. We proclaim



Arrests in Tunisia

ON OCTOBER 13, 1991, six youth were arrested in Sidi Bouzid in central Tunisia while distributing a leaflet signed "revolutionary Marxist high schools students" calling for the formation of a high schools students' union. The six were physically attacked by the police and are being kept in detention. They have been charged under two headings: illegal association and illegal meeting. Among them are to be found two students, Ayache Ammami and Saleh Ammami as well as a teacher, Milad Ammami.

The first hearing of their case took place on Tuesday October 22, without conclusion; the next is set for November 13. The charges carry a possible sentence of five years in jail. At the court exit, Sadri Khiara, a well-known militant of the Tunisian left, who had come from Tunis for the trial, was held. He was released, but his papers were kept by the commissariat at Sidi Bouzid.

At a time when the Tunisian authorities are undertaking a huge offensive against the *Ennahdha* fundamentalist movement (See *International Viewpoint*, no. 208, June 10, 1991) which is accused of wanting to overthrow the regime, intimidation and repression against any democratic expression seem bound to increase. Thousands of arrests have taken place on campuses.

Democratic and progressive organizations throughout the world need to mobilize to demand the immediate liberation of the Sidi Bouzid six as well as freedom of opinion and organization in Tunisia.

Send protests to the Interior Ministry in Tunis, with a copy to the Tunisian League for Human Rights (fax 1-79 54 66). ★

Letter from Israel

THE opening of the Regional Peace Conference on the Middle East this week in Madrid is the centre of attention in the world media. However the affected public, whether Israeli or Palestinian, is less excited.

There is none of the enthusiasm shown at the time of the coming of Egypt's president Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. The Israeli population is torn between scepticism and fear of finding itself in the dock, confronted with a judge in the hands of its opponents.

The 30,000 or so Israeli pacifists who demonstrated last Saturday in response to a call from the Peace Now movement were unclear whether they were for or against Shamir, since the latter seems to be playing the only game that matters for the Israeli left — the one dictated by the White House. The right, who demonstrated two days later in response to a call from colonists' and far right organizations, was certainly clearer; it knows that it can only gain by upping the bidding and denouncing the alleged capitulation of the government. In fact, some members of this government were on the platform at this demonstration, as the crowd shouted "Death to the Arabs!"

Meanwhile the Palestinian population is well aware that it can expect nothing from the Madrid conference. This is even true of those who support the decision by the Palestinian National Council to accept the draconian, not to say humiliating US conditions and attend a conference at which all discussion on Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza is ruled out, knowing that the dice are loaded and that Madrid will resolve nothing.

The mood among Palestinians is a mixture of anger and despair, and a new wave of attacks can be expected, one of whose aims will be to remind those presently negotiating in the name of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories that they have no mandate for bargaining away the *Intifada*. This latter, even if it has marked time over the past year, remains the sole means by which the Palestinians can finally obtain the recognition of their right to self-determination.

— Michel Warshawsky ★

therefore our categorical rejection of the attempts to pass off the American liquidationist project and we oppose it. At the same time we will oppose the attempts to falsify our people's will by pretending that the majority in any sort of body has approved the liquidation.

In reality the make-up of these bodies is submitted to the bureaucracy which is out of touch with the will of our people and does not represent it. In order that these organisms express our people's will, their composition would have to reflect its real will. From this point of view, we demand and consider it necessary that the National Council [the Palestinian Liberation Organization's "parliament"] really reflect all the sectors of our people whether at home or in exile, and that the principle of proportional representation be adopted for its members.

2. We proclaim our complete and outright rejection of the liquidationist plot and the American conspiracy in its totality.

3. We consider that the existence of our people, which comprises nearly six million people, and its just cause, with the support of all free and honourable men in the Arab and Islamic world, are the best support for our struggle and our liberation *jihad*. By giving a decisive "no" to the capitulation plot, our people removes from this conference the power to cover up the liquidation of our cause, and under-

mines it with the aim of making it fail by all means and ensuring the continuity of the revolution and the armed struggle, drawing inspiration from the fighters in Lebanon who overcame the Multinational Force [inter-imperialist forces sent to Lebanon in 1982] and forced the [Israeli] occupation forces to retreat to the frontier strip.

4. The weak-kneed leaders falter and submit to the desires of the Americans, opposed to the rights of our people; but the people does not falter. It is on this basis and with the support of the masses of our people that we assert our determination to carry on the struggle to foil the liquidationist plot, in order to open the way for the Palestinian choice of *jihad* and liberation struggle, until the liberation of our country and the establishment of our state, and until our people is reunited on its blessed land with its capital in Jerusalem, symbol of our national and religious values and of our civilization, our struggle and our *jihad*.

5. The proposed American formula for the resolution of our cause is nothing other than an obvious conspiracy for its liquidation to the benefit of the Zionist project in Palestine, which will prevent the exercise of the legitimate right of return of our people to their country, to self-determination and the establishment of the Palestinian state on its sacred national territory, Palestine... ★

Health has no price

THIS autumn has seen massive mobilizations of French nurses and other health workers. These developments can be seen as the continuation of the nurses' mobilizations that occurred in 1988. Three years ago, a wave of nurses' mobilizations swept across all of Europe. In France, this "white shirt autumn" (so-called because of the uniforms nurses wear) culminated with a demonstration on October 13 that saw more than one hundred thousand nurses and other health workers take to the streets. Apart from its size, scope, and dynamism, three elements of this remarkable movement were particularly notable.¹

PATRICK DEBREST

THE first was the appearance on the political scene of new social groups consisting of a new generation of women wage workers. Their slogan was "Ni bonnes, ni nonnes, ni connes", (We are neither cleaning ladies, nuns [who traditionally worked in hospitals], nor idiots). Behind this fundamental demand of being "recognized", were various other aspirations that cannot be reduced to the simple desire to obtain a stable and recognized professional status. It also signaled the massive entry into the labor market of women wage workers whose jobs had been traditionally considered not only as supplementary incomes, but also as jobs particularly suited to the supposed "nature" of women.

In struggles in sectors as diverse as nursery staff, administrative personnel, social services, or finance and social security, jobs filled mostly by women, this argument had been used to undervalue the worth of these jobs and justify low pay.

The second element of this struggle concerned the crisis in the health sector and its main pillar, the public hospitals. A restructuring of public health services was and is occurring on a European-wide

Waiting for the upturn

IS THERE an economic recovery or not? The optimists have been predicting an easy end to the American recession and thus a possible global upturn. Alas! The American market is not behaving according to plan, remaining mired in stagnation. Sidney Jones, the joint secretary for economic policy at the US Treasury, did not hide his bewilderment when he recently stated that the American economy was in the worst possible situation, in which lower interest rates were failing to raise lending, while the budget deficit, estimated at \$340bn for 1992 would not permit any fiscal relaxation, and household spending, which makes up two thirds of GNP, remains sluggish.

So here we are — after the victory in the Gulf, the "reconstruction" of Kuwait and the great opening to the East. It is the economies of the most industrialized countries that are failing to turn. A new wave of stock market fever is underway, with various alliances, buyouts and fusions on an international scale. This is drawing on the reserves of many firms at a time when other (or even the same) firms have not yet dealt with the financial burdens assumed in the frenzy of the 1980s.

Everything costs money, whether German unification or the broader European unification, with its host of draconian measures aimed at disciplining and homogenizing the different national economies. The costs of the international reorganization of capital consistently turn out far higher than predicted, while the Third World has already been sucked dry and Eastern Europe is far from providing a new fountain of profits.

In this situation, governments are maintaining and toughening austerity policies. All kinds of deceit are used to get public opinion to swallow the bitter pill of the bosses' needs. At a time when capitalism is becoming even more internationalized, the workers of each country are being told that they must tighten their belts so that "their" bosses can be in the best position on the market of reconversions.

Even the union bureaucrats understand that their own fate depends on showing some signs of life to avoid being completely marginalized in the new institutional arrangements. In the Netherlands, France, Italy Finland (see IV 215) and Australia (see p. 22) important social groups are pushing for struggle. The union apparatuses are taking advantage of this to keep up pressure while channeling these revolts into an illusory search for new social pacts, like in the good old times of growth. But those times are gone.

— Claude Gabriel

scale. Under the pressure of the health industry lobby which represents massive investments in this sector, European governments have reduced the social safety-net and promoted the concentration of health services in the hands of a few large private groups who compete with each other. Health has become a commodity, hospitals big business, patients clients. In this framework, the policies of the Rocard and now Cresson governments and their health ministers have been to dismantle public hospitals.

The hospital reform, which has been presented as a delayed response to the 1988 demonstrations, has in fact only responded to the needs of capitalist rationalization in the framework of the market. The crisis of the public hospital is manifested especially by an unprecedented crisis of personnel, which has been amplified by the departure of staff discouraged by the lack of response to the problems they have expressed.

Last but not least was the emergence of a new form of self organization. For the first time at this level, a movement of

wage workers forged a recognized leadership which came out of the movement itself, even forcing the government to accept it as a negotiating partner. The majority of union organizations for their part, were swept aside by this phenomenon. The CFDT (Democratic federation of French Labor) even went so far as expelling from its ranks those unionists — especially in the Paris region — who actively participated in the steering committee. In order to maintain their union organizations the latter formed their own federation.

Today, three years later, another movement is being formed which has drawn on past experiences and their lessons. The health sector is continually experiencing movements among all job categories. They have been answered by

1. See *International Viewpoint* issues #149 of October 17, 1988, and #152 of November 28, 1988.

2. "Cohabitation" refers to the period when Socialist President Francois Mitterand was forced to appoint a Prime Minister from one of the bourgeois parties — Jacques Chirac of the neo-Gaullist RPR (Rally for the Republic).

Strike brings Renault to a halt

A TWO week pay strike has brought the French state-owned car manufacturer Renault to its knees. The strike, although until now confined to the company's main gearbox and engine plant at Cléon, west of Paris, has halted all domestic production in what is France's second largest company in terms of sales. Renault is now losing 5,000 vehicles a day, and the stoppage is estimated to have cost the firm several hundred million francs.

Over the past ten years, more than 40,000 Renault workers have lost their jobs, while wages have declined by 17% in real terms. Cléon has a long history of struggle and a particularly militant CGT (General Confederation of Labour — France's biggest trade union federation, associated with the Communist Party) tradition. A factory management renowned for its arrogance has denounced the striking workers as "terrorists" and part of an "extremist plot", and attempted to organize a number of physical provocations.

The French employers' organization has supported the Renault management in calling for police intervention to allow scabs through the Cléon picket lines — CGT pickets have blocked all access to the plant.

The Socialist Party government of Edith Cresson, increasingly beleaguered as its standing in the opinion polls plummets, and facing pressure from a wave of industrial action in the public service, as well as the continuing revolt of French farmers (see IV 215), appears to be divided on what course to follow. The minister for industry supports police intervention, whilst other sectors of the government are mindful of the possible explosive consequences of this — but the government is united in rejecting the demands of the strikers.

The strike has the support of more than 80% of the 5,000 plus workers at the factory, and pickets are several hundred strong. In addition, the stoppage is massively popular among local people. A support committee of strikers' wives and companions has been set up, and the local farmers' confederation has organized a march to the factory gates in support of the strikers.

Messages of support, donations, and requests for further information: Comité d'établissement RNUR, B.P. 114, 76410 Cléon, France. ★

government refusal. These developments have also revealed the crises of the ruling social democratic majority. After ten years in power, including a two year period of "cohabitation"², the social democratic leadership is in the defendants dock. It has shown itself incapable of satisfying the needs of the great majority of the population concerning both employment and wages. In addition to the scandals that have shaken the government as of late, the entire public service system is in crisis. In such sensitive areas as the social and sanitary sectors their record is truly dismal.

This time all the categories of health personnel have mobilized together, even if the nurses continue to play a leadership role. The demands concern jobs, wages, working conditions, job training and concern all job categories. The movement is still experiencing the difficulties of organizing itself nationally and forging a truly nationally recognized leadership. Although divisions along job lines still exist they have been largely overcome.

The same is not true concerning organs of representation. One part of the nurses movement is today organized in groups organized strictly along vocational lines, like the nurses union or the national nurses coordinating union (CNI), which

are products of the 1988 events. The former, although weakly implanted, managed to take advantage of the fact that it had the same name as the democratic body formed in 1988, as well as the media attention it has received, to occupy center stage with its spectacular tactics like non-stop sit-ins in the ministry. But this group has not sought to build a national movement for which it has neither the will nor capacity. The CGT (the General Confederation of Labor) for its part has drawn the lessons of its marginalization from the 1988 movement. It has participated in the movement without being able to chart an orientation towards building a national organization built upon democratic and representative structures. It continues therefore, to go against the grain of a large part of the health workers' movement for which democratic aspirations remain strong.

The consciousness that has developed out of these past movements has led to the desire to coordinate nationally. The only union organization that has played this role is the CRC (Coordinate, Rally and Construct), but it lacks the forces of the principal union confederations. Nevertheless, through its active role, it has earned the recognition of the most mobilized sectors.

At first the government turned a deaf

ear to the demands of the movement, responding instead with an enormous police presence at the nurses' demonstration on October 17, which it broke up with the use of water cannons and tear gas. This resulted in a great public outcry and forced the health minister to open negotiations. But these negotiations rapidly floundered due to the lack of authentic responses to the demands. It is questionable whether the government will be able to find a union willing to sign an agreement and thus undercut the current mobilizations. The strike continues to spread in the hospitals and a national demonstration of all health workers has been called for November 7, in Paris.

The failures of the Socialist Party (SP) in power are most clearly seen in the health field. Their policies are suicidal and criminal as the current scandal concerning blood transfusions demonstrates.³ Only a strong, united, and determined movement of all health workers can stop the dangerous direction that health services in France under SP rule are heading. ★

3. It has recently been discovered that up to 400,000 people have received blood transfusions contaminated by viruses including HIV and hepatitis over the last several years. The Socialist Party government has been accused of being responsible for this affair.

Massive Dutch trade union demonstration

THE biggest trade union demonstration in the Netherlands since the war took place on October 5. About 250,000 demonstrators came to the Hague for what was the closing event of a big campaign by the main three Dutch trade union federations against attacks by the government on social welfare (see IV 213). Nobody expected such a high turn-out. It showed how angry people are and it made it once again very clear that people want to take action and that there are possibilities for a stepped-up campaign.

That, however, was not the intention of the trade union leaderships. The campaign was a big success, but the centralized coordinated activities were supposed to end with this demonstration. Trade union speakers on the platform closed the second stage of the campaign and announced that the battle will continue later this year and next year, during the regular contract negotiations, to try to repair the damage done by the government measures sector by sector.

Not surprisingly, the government proposals were adopted in parliament the week after the demonstration. More than 80% of the delegates at a special congress of the social democratic PvdA had already voted on September 28 in favour of the plans, which were linked to the political future and the integrity of party leader Wim Kok. This decision had no positive effects on the position of the PvdA in the opinion polls, which continue to point to a loss of half the social democratic seats if elections were to be held today.

After the party congress a small number of members left the party and some ex-members announced that they want to take initiatives to launch a new (social democratic) party. Although it has to be seen what will really come out of this, there is a lot of discontent among a lot of trade union members who voted for the PvdA in the past, with many saying that they will never vote again for this party.

As expected there were numerous problems during the campaign with judges, many strikes being ruled illegal. The good news is that workers in some cases formed committees to organize wildcat strikes. This happened in Amsterdam (public transport) and in an impressive way in the Rotterdam docks, where a five day wildcat strike began immediately after a judge ruled strikes in the port illegal. Employers in the Amsterdam port decided in the light of that experience not to go to court and to accept a two day strike, "to avoid wildcat strikes that lasted longer".

All in all it is clear that more was possible, but the trade union leaderships did not dare or want to continue the campaign that started so successfully in September. The final result was that the plans were adopted by parliament — no important changes were made in the proposed measures — so in that sense the campaign did not succeed.

Two features of the campaign are however important for the struggles to come in the near future. Firstly, contrary to many sceptical expectations beforehand, it was possible to mobilize more workers than expected in a unified campaign. Some groups and sectors took action for the first time, others mobilized once again but for the first time in many years in a coordinated campaign involving wider forces than their own sector. This is important for future struggles, such as in the public sector where the unions are preparing for a big fight over their new contract at the beginning of next year. Secondly, parts of the PvdA electorate and membership have now lost confidence in the policies and leadership of their party, opening more possibilities for discussion and possibly initiatives for a left political alternative to the social democrats — Robert Went. ★

Soldiers demand equal rights

ON SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1991 the 13th European Conference of Conscripts Organizations (ECCO) took place in the Netherlands, the country with the continent's oldest officially recognized conscripts organization, the VVDM. During this conference ECCO discussed and accepted a Social Charter.

RON BLOM

WITH the development of the integration of capitalist Europe, the role of the ECCO will be of great importance. The different Western governments are creating rapid deployment forces that can be sent to all corners of the world to "safeguard the interests of western democracies".

Conscripts are seen as an obstacle to these rapid deployment forces, in the first place because of the short training time and in the second because they are considered less reliable than volunteers or professionals. For example there were a lot of protests from conscripts and their organizations in Spain, Germany and the Netherlands against the compulsory despatch of conscripts to the Gulf.

In the new "flexible" armies, the importance of conscripts will decrease. These military developments are connected with European unification and integration. The EEC wants to be world power, and this will involve the cooperation of different armies — already today there are common manoeuvres and a lot of discussion about expanding the existing Franco-

We will publish some information about East European involvement in the soldiers' movement in the next issue

German brigade into a Franco-German army, to be the kernel of a European army. ECCO is aware of the deterioration of the economic, social and democratic conditions for soldiers to the lowest common level — as is the case with the Franco-German brigade where conditions are set at the lower French level.

That is why 15 organizations from 13 countries adopted the Social Charter. This "Conscript's Charter" has chapters on human rights and democracy, working conditions, wages and working hours and human dignity.

The Charter considers the conscript as a young human being, who only differs from other youth because he's wearing a uniform. Thus all rights of young people should also apply to conscripts, including the rights of freedom of speech and assembly and the right to a fair trial. The Charter also states that boys cannot be forced to serve in two armies.

This is important for example for Turkish boys living in the Netherlands, and even with Dutch nationality, who can be forced to serve both in the Netherlands and Turkey. Besides this, when they want to be exempt from Turkish military service they have to pay more than 10,000 Dutch guilders. Conscripts have to be regarded as workers in uniform with the same rights. For example, in the Netherlands the VVDM in 1990 became a member of the FNV, the Dutch trade union congress. Conscripts should receive a normal salary, be stationed near their homes and have the right to return to their normal job after their service.

One chapter deals with safety, health and well-being during work. The commanders are responsible for safe and healthy work. Well-being is also dealt with in the fourth chapter. This says that a human being can only lead a worthy life in a democratized environment. There has to be a good health service and no discrimination against homosexuals and Black soldiers.

It is more than every important to build up a strong international soldiers' movement against the rapid deployment forces and against the capitalist and militarist unification of Europe. This Social Charter can be a weapon against the power of the authorities and the army leadership. ★

Finnish gremlin news

The last line of the article on the Finnish anti-austerity protest in the last IV mysteriously disappeared. The last sentence should have read: "Such scandals are one result of the 'Casino economy' of the 1980s." Many apologies!

Italian general strike

AFTER giving the employers years of relative social peace, which in turn allowed the latter to register significant advances, the Italian trade union movement launched a general strike on October 22 against a new budgetary law which represents an attack on the living standards of the workers (while at the same time pardoning those guilty of tax fraud).

The most iniquitous aspect of these measures is an increase in the bills paid by health patients for medical and clinical analysis, which reduces to a pitiful level the amount of their reimbursement for medical expenses. All this amounts to another blow against an already deeply troubled public health system.

Unhappily, the platform elaborated in response by the three confederations, the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Free Trade Unions (CISL) and the Italian Union of Labour (UIL), is rather ambiguous and, above all, does not denounce clearly enough another aspect of the anti-working class policy of the government of Giulio Andreotti; the "counter-reform" of the pensions system, which would considerably raise the retirement age.

The trade unions have not only given a rather ambiguous response to the grave threats made by the Employers Confederation of Industry (Confindustria) to indexation of wages, they have also demonstrated their willingness to negotiate and make concessions on this ground. Despite all this, the strike received widespread support nearly everywhere.

On the other hand, participation in the demonstrations and meetings associated with the strike was relatively modest. While the participation of both the retired and public sector workers (threatened with very severe pay cuts) was very high, industrial workers were only involved to a very limited extent. It is true that a certain disarray was provoked, especially in Milan, by the fact that some coordinations of rank and file committees and of the Federation Of United Metalworkers (FLMU — a small trade union born out of a split in Milan from the Federation of the Metalworking Industry [FIM]), had decided to go on strike three days later, independently of the trade union federations — the coordinations then rectified this decision and associated themselves with the October 22 strike.

But the relative passivity was fundamentally the result of mistrust of the trade union leaderships. The workers wanted to give a signal by supporting the strike, but were not ready to turn out for meetings of a purely routine character.

It is interesting to note that, ten days before the strike, the Movement of Communist Refoundation (MRC), which originated out of left currents of the now renamed Italian Communist Party, had called a national demonstration against the new budgetary law under the slogan "The opposition is again in the street". A lively and combative cortege took two hours to pass through the streets of Rome — attendance at the demonstration was estimated at more than 50,000, including numerous youth — Antonio Moscato. ★

In Basque country:

New government, same situation

THE nationalist coalition government in Euskadi, made up of the Basque National Party (BNP), Basque Solidarity (Eusko Alkartasuna – EA) and the Basque Left (Euskadiko Eskerre – EE), has collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. Officially, the crisis was provoked by the refusal of EA to accept the ultimatum put to it by the President of the Basque government (*Lehendakari*) demanding that it cease to support or participate in appeals for Basque independence with the radical nationalist Herri Batasuna (HB) in certain mayoral districts. But the real reasons are quite different; the majority party, the PNV, did not want to continue with this tripartite coalition which did not advance its political objectives. It preferred to orient towards an alliance with the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), in order to have direct links with the central government, as well as a framework of stable alliances in the Basque country itself.

JOSE IRIARTE "BIKILA"*

THE strategy pursued by Basque bourgeois nationalism is not at all based on political affinities with the Socialists, and even less on ideological ones (it would appear strange even in the context of the "national unity" that exists in Eastern Europe); it is rather, a necessity in the current situation, a strategy for political stability and good relations with Madrid. But in order to understand the current strategy of the PNV, it is necessary to recall the events of the last few years.

In 1986 the PNV underwent a split, with one part remaining in the PNV and the other leaving to found EA with the former *Lehendakari*, Carlos Garaikoetxea. Suddenly, the party that had enjoyed a comfortable majority, and was capable of governing alone in the Basque Autonomous Community, had only a plurality and was unable to form a government alone. For the first time the PNV had to resort to a coalition. An alliance of nationalists, which would appear logical from an ideological point of view, was politically impossible. The force closest to the PNV, the EA, had provoked a considerable trauma by leaving the PNV; the other nationalist organization, HB, found itself at the opposite end of institutional politics and has fought for the opening of negotiations between the armed Basque national-

ist organization ETA and the central government.

It was therefore by a process of elimination that the PSOE, the ideological enemy of the PNV with whom there had been much tension during the electoral campaign, became its potential partner. But another factor which had been key in the recent split also weighed in the balance; what attitude should be taken toward the central government and its political representative in Euskadi, the Socialist Party (PSE-PSOE). Aside from the electoral campaign, the majority of the PNV was tired of the conflicts and the hostile gestures towards centralism of the Garaikoetxea government¹. The PNV wanted long term negotiations to stabilize Basque society, avoiding a clash with those nationalists who supported HB and ETA and marginalizing the most radical sectors within the country. It also sought an economic and social accord to ameliorate the economic crisis that had hit the Basque country by revitalizing certain economic sectors, as well as providing business to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sectors, who are nationalist to be sure, but above all interested in the good life and their social privileges. This is in fact how things turned out.

The PNV-PSOE government, even if it did not succeed in eradicating the vio-

lence and nationalist radicalization of a good part of Basque society, nor in politically isolating HB and ETA (which is impossible in the short term), nor in resolving the structural problems of the Basque economy, has succeeded nonetheless in creating a climate of economic enthusiasm in the wake of the international upturn, and a broad front against ETA and HB.

Earlier, all the parties that had supported the law on Basque autonomy also proclaimed their rejection of the ETA and of violence, although this did not manifest itself in united action — on several occasions differences appeared concerning the policies of repression and the central state's actions, which amounted to a veritable boon for HB and ETA². From this time on, a "democratic front" against violence and ETA was formed around the so-called Ajuria-Enea pact (named after the palace which served as the headquarters of the Basque government), which put Basque institutions at the center of the offensive which spilled out into the streets in the form of demonstrations³.

Negotiations between ETA and government

In this context, and in spite of apparent openings, and even attempted negotiations in Algiers between ETA and the Spanish government, the policy of harassing and isolating ETA and HB continued and ended up blocking the negotiations. The Basque government's position is largely responsible for this breakdown of negotiations. It has categorically refused all negotiation between ETA and the central government, claiming that this would undermine its authority and legitimize violence⁴.

Everyone was surprised when, after the 1990 elections, in the absence of big shifts in the political scene, excepting the

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1. The first Basque government, set up following the passing of the Autonomy statute of 1979, experienced numerous political and symbolic clashes with Madrid, which dragged its heels in transferring power to the new government. When the PSOE took over the central government in 1982 and initiated its "law on the harmonization of autonomies", the situation worsened. As a result, the most nationalist sectors of the PNV radicalized, while others turned towards compromise solutions. This provoked, among other things, the split in the PNV.

2. After the murder of Santi Brouard, a lawyer and HB militant, the PNV joined HB in criticizing the State. The PNV and the other parties were silent about the Ajuria-Enea pact. When the HB deputy J. Muguruza was murdered, these parties were noticeably silent.

3. After the Ajuria-Enea pact, the Basque Parliament and the parties that supported it launched an appeal to mobilize against ETA. The recent crisis of the government coalition led to the break down of this unity and therefore relieved the pressure on HB and ETA.

4. During the Algiers negotiations, the aggressiveness of the *Lehendakari* Ardanza was evident. Contrary to the traditional ambivalence of his party concerning negotiations, he came out strongly against any concessions to ETA on the part of the government.

electoral advance of the PNV, a coalition government with the PSOE was not once again set up. The previous one had produced good results; the PNV was able to recover from its crisis and re-make its image as a strong and efficient party, and the PSOE, by registering some successes in the struggle against ETA, and especially by associating itself with a nationalist party, gave a certain "Basque" legitimacy to its electorate. Two things must be kept in mind in order to understand this development: firstly, on the ideological plane, the nationalists do not consider those who are not nationalists as true Basques; secondly, on the political plane, to the degree that the PSE was the Basque wing of the party of central government, which had harassed not only radical nationalism, but bourgeois nationalism as well, this pact implied a reconciliation between the bourgeois parties and Spanish centralist social democracy.

For reasons which are both complex and hidden (partially because the PSOE-PSE wanted to impede the rise of the PNV, and in part because of tensions within the PNV itself which promoted a more nationalist profile), the PNV-PSOE government was not repeated; on the contrary, a tripartite coalition between the nationalists was born⁵.

Sectors in both the PNV and EA who were inclined towards the "unity of the nationalists" were inspired by this, but it rapidly became clear that this unity was totally incapable of clearing the way for a workable program or even of healing the wounds of the split. Those in the PNV who had not approved of the pact quickly began a counter-offensive by tying the hands of their *Lehendakari* and harassing their partners in the government. EA on the other hand, having suffered a setback in terms of support and political image, seemed increasingly fragile. EE divided into two currents — a current that wanted to orient towards the PSOE and another which oriented towards nationalism and especially towards EA, with whom some alliances had been made in several mayoral districts and in the local government of Guipuzkoa (the provincial government).

The pact broke apart during the April 1991 municipal elections because the PNV cynically allied with the PSOE in several places; in Guipuzkoa the PNV and the PSOE united to unseat EA from the capital; the PNV offered the mayoralty of San Sebastian as a gift to the PSOE and the provincial government. This provoked a dual crisis and marked the beginning of a mortal clash between the PNV and EA, bringing the PNV and the PSOE closer together and increasing the tensions within EE.

It was in this context that the PNV took EA's support for independence as a pretext to break with it. The nationalist avalanche that shook what has been called the "socialist bloc" has had repercussions wherever national problems exist. In the

Spanish State, Catalonia and Euskadi had already sparked an institutional conflict a year ago when their Parliaments proclaimed the right to self-determination⁶. The ideological debates, the demands for independence, the question of links with the Common Market and construction of Europe [1992] dominate the front pages of the financial and political press. By affirming that what is happening in the East has nothing to do with the Spanish State, the Spanish government recognizes that similarities do exist — it is not by accident that Madrid has been the slowest government to recognize the independence proclamations in the East.

The events in Eastern Europe logically give support to the arguments of radical nationalism and to the parties (like the EMK-LKI) who think that the right of self determination does not only apply to colonies or countries of the Third World, but also to stateless nations like Euskadi or Catalonia. They provide

arguments and a certain legitimacy to those who, confronted with the national question, think that neither borders nor states, nor social systems, are immutable or unchangeable, and that therefore in Europe what must be built is neither capitalist nor based on the old nation states⁷.

But alongside the winds of self-determination blow other winds which go in the opposite direction. The crisis of Stalinism and the bureaucratic regimes have not brought about a will to deepen economic, political, and social democracy, but rather illusions in formal bourgeois parliamentarism and an irrational passion for consumption and the capitalist market. All this has contradictory effects in societies like Euskadi and Catalonia; far from encouraging national and democratic aspirations and goals of social change, this type of nationalism encourages different attitudes, some of which are very conservative and which have little in common with the positions of the revolution-



5. Aulestia, the Secretary general of EE since 1975, has sought to retrieve the nationalist past of this organization, which had been tarnished by the entry into it of the former leadership of the Communist Party of Euskadi. After the electoral defeat of 1990, Aulestia was replaced by a representative of the so-called Democratic Renovation current. The split in EE is today a fact to the extent that the legalist wing decided to remain in the government with the PNV and the PSOE, and penalize the nationalist current.

6. When the Baltic countries voted for their independence, the Catalan parliament decided to proclaim Cat-

alonia's right to self-determination. The PNV could not remain on the sidelines, but being associated with the PSOE it found a formula which recognized the right of the Basque people to self-determination, but did not go beyond the limits of the autonomy statute and therefore remained within the Spanish constitution (which clearly refuses this right for nationalities).

7. The Spanish state is neither a national state nor a multinational state; it is a state which oppresses nationalities, and which does not even recognize their right to self-determination, nor the right to construct their state in the framework of a multinational state.

any nationalist left or the revolutionary left which supports national independence. The positions taken by ETA in the framework of negotiations are moderate enough — they do not demand self-determination, but rather an agreement that would make possible a new political-juridical framework (which could even be understood in the framework of Constitutional reform), within which political competition could take place in a democratic and non-violent manner. But ETA's outlook is so deeply rooted in armed struggle, exemplified recently by the use of car bombs in particular, that it takes on the character of a break with the norms of the system, albeit placing the confrontation solely on the military plane. This allows the state to solidify its rejection of any dialogue with them.

How long will this situation last? Nobody can tell, but the balance of forces at the level of the Spanish state as well as internationally favors Madrid. The bourgeoisie and rightist nationalists not long ago promoted independence with different arguments (even if they defended independence by stages and by peaceful means). One of the arguments they advanced was economic; Spanish centralism takes more than it gives. This argument was turned around and used against independence. Isolation ruins us. The Spanish state affirmed more or less the same thing, adding that in order to enter the EEC, Euskadi had to remain within the framework of the Spanish state which alone is recognized by the European community. At the center of all these arguments is attachment to the capitalist system, and the desire for a little place in the reorganization of Europe and the avoidance of destabilizing traumas.

The bourgeois nationalists take advantage of the crisis of the Eastern European countries to justify their "toothless" nationalism and their attachment to the system. They hold that the Lithuanian road stems from the fact that communism was profoundly undemocratic and that it prevented the peoples from coexisting under the same roof. Under these conditions, according to the PNV, it is logical that these nations want to separate and also to move towards the West. Although they, the Basques or the Catalans, enjoy freedoms, they also aspire to have their own governments without being deprived of the benefits Europe has to offer. These arguments can be turned around when the nationalists of the right need to make the opposite point⁸.

This counter weight to radical nationalism, registered by bourgeois nationalism, helps it to justify the new PSOE-PNV government (with EE as a junior partner) which, in both its image and its objectives, is the opposite of a nationalist government.

12 There still exists in Euskadi a powerful resistance movement (possibly one of

Elections reveal

Changing landscape of Portuguese society

THE Social Democratic Party (PSD) of Prime Minister Cavaco Silva won the Portuguese elections of October 6, 1991 with more than 50% of the votes. The Socialist Party (PS) of President Mario Soares struggled to reach 29.25% while the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) scored less than 9%.

FRANCISCO LOUÇA

THE right wing government's most significant success, and one which has astonished all observers, has been its ability to survive its four-year term. The PSD has been able not only to stabilize the political regime but also to bring together the whole right — both the more traditional and the more "European" wings —

the strongest in capitalist Europe) composed of diverse elements, even if the nationalist factor is dominant. This manifests itself in the existence of a current with an electoral expression (Herri Batasuna) and an armed wing (ETA) as well as organizations like the EMK-LKI which have a certain implantation in social movements — not to mention the existence of numerous organizations that lead ecological, antimilitarist, feminist and workers struggles⁹. These forces have not been crushed, but they are undergoing a process of change and are experiencing many problems of orientation; they need profound changes in their ideological and political discourse. The crisis in the East has created identity problems and some of these movements need new tactical objectives and new and more original ways of doing politics¹⁰.

The mass struggle against the Leizarran highway is a case in point; the route of this highway has been challenged as much by the ecologists as by the radical leftist parties, and has succeeded in leading to a broad coordinating committee which has organized mass demonstra-

tions. With the entry of ETA into this struggle the question has polarized the political life of Guipuzkoa and all of Euskadi. Other problems remain, like the dramatic situation of the more than 500 political prisoners and numerous refugees, or the latest phase in industrial reconversion. The winds of neoliberalism and strident individualism are obstacles (as throughout Europe) confronting a left which remains determined but which also needs to prepare itself for the challenges to come. ★

behind its system of distributing largesse, support for social lobbies and management by the dominant interests. The PSD's victory in these elections rests on three main factors. Firstly, the end of the division of the right between the more pragmatic sectors (the PSD) and the more traditional elements in the Democratic Social Centre (CDS), which brings together Catholic conservatives and those nostalgic for the times of former dictator Salazar. When the PSD came to power many CDS notables and local officials joined the victors. Now, the CDS only retains five deputies to the PDS' 135 and the CDS' leadership crisis is shown by the resignation of its historic leader, Freitas do Amaral. The third party of the Portuguese right, the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) — which got 20% at the previous elections and had seven deputies) has simply disappeared from the political scene.

Secondly — and this is something specific to Portugal — the gathering in of the right by the PSD corresponds to a period of strong economic development and thus a strengthening of the government's capacity to redistribute wealth. Since

8. The nationalist right and the social democracy often blame terrorism for the economic crises, the lack of investment and so on. Without minimizing the importance of the climate of violence, it is difficult to believe that this, rather than economic motives, explains the lack of investment in the Basque country.

9. The Revolutionary Communist League (LKI) was the Fourth International organization in Euskadi; for reasons connected to its fusion with the Communist Movement of Euskadi (EMK) (see *International Viewpoint* #205, April 29, 1991), the LKI has ceased to be affiliated with the Fourth International. The new party maintains regular and fraternal links with the Fourth International.

10. The resistor movement exists throughout the Spanish state, but it is particularly strong in Euskadi. More than 55% of the resisters are Basque.

joining the European Economic Community (EEC) at the start of 1986, Portugal has benefited from a significant inflow of funds — the “structural funds” which now make up a third of the annual state budget. At the same time national industry and finance have been artificially protected from foreign competition by short-term regulations.

Over the past five years Portugal has seen strong economic growth, well above the EEC average. Among the reasons for this are the EEC funds, the opening up of new markets, the low oil price (in an economy which largely depends on imports for its energy) and the low exchange rate of the dollar (for an economy which imports from the USA and exports to Europe and has a large foreign debt to manage). This growth has provided the government with significant resources allowing it to undertake large-scale programmes such as the modernization of the tax system, softening the blow of its anti-egalitarian policies and restructuring some big economic groups with the help of generous terms for privatization.

Memories of “leftwing” austerity

The relation of forces in favour of the right is also strengthened by memories of the disastrous austerity programmes of the “left” government led by Mario Soares and by his hostility to the popular and workers’ movements.

Finally, the government has made skillful use of the media. It controls the television — despite repeated pledges about democratization or privatization — and organizes a permanent campaign glorifying the activities of the prime minister.

For the first time in Portugal, these elections saw the use of the campaign spectacle on the model of Spain’s Felipe Gonzalez. We saw our prime minister alone on enormous platforms at his party meetings. The campaign, which was strongly centred on personality, emphasized strong ideas such as stability and economic growth. This brought good results for the right. The PSD got 50% of the votes and increased its absolute share of the vote compared to 1987. The CDS fell to 4.4%, but the total right wing vote was 55%.

The Socialist Party, which presented itself as an alternative government, also put the emphasis on stability. It only got 29%, well below the score suggested in opinion polls. These results immediately sparked off an internal struggle for the leadership of the PS; the leader of its parliamentary group has put himself forward as a replacement for the current general secretary, Jorge Sampaio, proposing to introduce an even more right wing line and be even more obedient to President Soares, who is the real inspiration behind the strategy of collaboration with and imitation of the right which has long charac-

terized the PS.

The Communist Party is also in crisis. For the first time it has dropped below the symbolic 10% figure, with 8.8% — at the last elections it got 12% at the last legislative elections and 13% for its presidential candidate Carlos Cavalhas. The CP’s decline shows the cumulative impact of a prolonged internal crisis in the course of which some of the party’s deputies and former leaders have left, as well as some members of its central committee.

Another sign of the tensions tearing the PCP apart is the formation of minority currents, including the so-called “Third Way” which brings together the main leaders of the CGTP union confederation.

And finally there is the crisis provoked by the PCP leadership’s support for the conservative coup attempt in the Soviet Union in August this year. The PCP has been losing votes to abstention, the PSD, the PS and to its left.

The response of the PCP leadership to the crisis has been to step up its sectarianism and self-proclamation, hoping

thereby to gain time. The PCP is awaiting a miracle and has no real strategy.

The recent elections represented a challenge for the revolutionary currents. On the one hand these elections marked the exhaustion of the political currents born in the revolution of April 1974. Four organizations have disappeared from the political scene — the Democratic People’s Union (UDP) and Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), both of Maoist origin and previously dominant on the far left; the Democratic People’s Movement (MDP), which now supports the PCP; and the United Socialist Workers Party (POUS) of Lambertist origin. These elections, furthermore, aroused the usual pressures for a “useful” vote for one of the big parties.

In this context, the necessarily limited but nonetheless real success of the campaign launched by the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Portuguese section of the Fourth International — see box) provides some grounds for hope in an otherwise depressing scenario. ★

Trotskyist campaign in elections

THE Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR — Portuguese section of the Fourth International) put forward lists everywhere, which were open to independent militants. Under the title “a left for the left” it organized meetings in the country’s main towns. With the help of journalists and TV technicians, the PSR organized a media campaign, which allowed it to put out high quality broadcasts with the participation of figures known to the listeners. Thus, in its electoral broadcasts on Radio Renascença, a national station controlled by the Church, the PSR used its time to transmit popular Portuguese and Brazilian music usually censored by this channel — which provoked a lot of discussion and exposed the censorship practised by this station. The head of Radio Renascença decided to suppress the PSR’s radio time, but the channel finally lost its case before the National Electoral Commission. Actors and trade unionists also took part in the PSR’s TV broadcasts. The support of a team of journalists allowed the production of a daily broadsheet sent by fax to all the country’s newspapers.

The most significant result of the campaign was its impact amongst youth, who came in large numbers to the PSR’s meetings. The PSR doubled its score compared to 1987 to 1.2% at the national level; 2 to 2.5% in former PCP strongholds such as Evora Portalegre and Beja; and 2% in Lisbon.

A surprising incident prolonged the election campaign. The small community of Dona Maria in the Lisbon area decided to boycott the vote to protest against delays in installing long-promised water supplies. According to Portuguese law, in such cases, the voting is repeated as often as necessary. The PSR candidate was only 207 votes behind the PSD. The local left militants, both the Socialists and Communists, agreed to call for a vote for the PSR. However, the PCP Central Committee first called for a vote for their own list — which had no chance of winning — and then for a boycott. Furthermore, in a local meeting, a national PCP leader instructed local militants to support the PSD on the grounds that the election of a new right wing deputy would not change much overall, while a PSR deputy would be highly critical of the Communist Party.

Tensions reached such a point that pickets were set up outside the voting booths to prevent the inhabitants from voting. Finally the PSD won the seat. The PSR in these two weeks has formed a new branch in a place where it has had hardly any presence before and where clientelism is very strong — militants involved in the Dona Maria campaign were repeatedly threatened.

Despite the outcome the experience in Dona Maria is valuable in terms of giving us a better understanding of the political landscape and also in terms of gaining broad respect on the left, which wanted to unite in a battle against the right wing. ★

The antiwar movement in Yugoslavia

LJUBLJANA, Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo: four capitals and four radically different situations in each republic as the undeclared war spreads from one ceasefire to another. A coordination of antiwar movements has begun to develop between the republics and the first joint actions have been undertaken. As is inevitable, the groups reflect the substantial differences in context and sometimes outlook of the different republics.

CATHERINE SAMARY

SARAJEVO in Bosnia-Herzegovina is still in a prewar period. And it is easier to mobilize against war before it breaks out, tearing apart old friendships and the ties of mixed families. There are many of these latter in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state of Croats, Serbs and Slav Muslims — recognized as a specific ethnic group. These three nations have lived together for centuries (whether under Ottoman rule or that of the Habsburgs) and people prefer to describe themselves as Bosnian.

Tolerance is evident in the streets of Sarajevo, where mosques stand side-by-side with Catholic and Orthodox churches and synagogues. "If a new union is formed tomorrow, its capital should be here," people say.

However, the formation of a Greater Serbia, supported by the "liberated" autonomous territories of the Serb minorities in Serbia and Bosnia, implies the disappearance of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the hatred that fills the air in Croatia will appear here as well.

The anguish of the massacres of the last war is a barrier to getting involved in the logic of violence. Here, more than anywhere else, "ethnic frontiers" run right through villages, buildings and families. But at the same time there is the fear of not being the first to open fire.

It is thus logical that Sarajevo has been the scene of the biggest antiwar demonstrations. The aptly named "insurrection for peace" last July brought out around 100,000 people, under the decisive

impulse of the movement of soldiers' mothers. Thirty-odd peace groups met here. Then, on August 22-24 a coordination was established in Kumrovec in Croatia, to establish a network and principled bases for action.

At the end of September, on the initiative of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a "peace caravan" was jointly organized by groups from various republics with some hundreds of foreign sympathizers. Despite its small forces, it expressed a reality that has outlasted the collapse of the federation; that of the inextricable inter-dependence of the fate of each nation and nationality on the territory in question. This is why the antiwar movement aims to be active in the long term in a very diverse, decentralized and "non-political" way.¹

This desire to be "non-political" has several meanings: on the one hand, the refusal to set up a political party, and a decision to seek first and foremost to stimulate broad "civil" initiatives (women's movements; independent journals; cultural, religious and lifestyle-related activities with a common antiwar axis). As Ibrahim Spahic, president of Bosnia's Centre for Peace explained: "the different authorities have very quickly extorted appeals from women supporting this or that cause... But women's organizations continue to exist and play a very active role. Overall, despite the proliferation of parties, there is a sort of citizens' revolt against the impossibility of really expressing their point of view on the



basic issues that affect them."

Ibrahim Spahic here touches on one of the leitmotifs of the activists from all the republics who meet here: their denunciation of the prowar media and the manipulation of people's understanding: "It is necrophilia. The corpses of the victims of the war are dug up; which has a powerful political charge. Both the living and the dead are played with, while 'the others' are accused of being at the root of the crisis. Our movement is born out of a rejection of this."

Rebuilding confidence

The function of the antiwar movement, concludes Ibrahim "is not to be a tranquilizer, but to try to rebuild confidence in ourselves and to try to reject a mad dynamic where one has to be either the 'winner' or the 'loser' and where the logic of war hides the absence of answers to socio-economic questions." Whether from Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Zagreb or Belgrade, many antiwar activists have repeated the same judgement: "for the existing authorities the war is a way of consolidating the ranks of a population to which they have little otherwise to offer."

However, the "non-political" character of the movement also expresses the difficulty of establishing a platform expressing a common approach to the conflicts. Debates and differences exist over who is responsible for what in the war, on the role of the army and its nature, and on the implications of the unilateral declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia, at a time when four of the six republics were already leading a battle for the sovereignty of all in a democratic union based on the right of self-determination and for means by which this could be applied.

Some peace activists, such as Marko Hren from Ljubljana, have raised these questions: "it is impossible to put the aggressor and the victim of the aggression on the same plane, nor condemn all vio-

lence in a general way". Is not self-defence against aggression legitimate? "It sometimes seems" says Marko "that the Slovene elites who want to create a Slovene state need the war to make the state". This does not in his eyes mean that they bear the responsibility for the split.

"No real dialogue... could be established between the Slovene government and the Federal authorities, all the more in that the international community persists in taking a position in favour of the mere survival of the pre-existing federation, thus blocking any possibilities for negotiation and pushing Slovenia into a dead-end" according to the Ljubljana Pacifist Centre in a text of July 4, 1991. "Subsequently, without other alternatives, following the logic of the right of a people to self-determination... the Slovene government launched a process of secession." In such a context "the intervention of the Yugoslav army must be considered as an act of aggression."

The right to self-defence

Thus the right to self-defence is accepted — but what type of self-defence? Sonja Lokar, one of the organizers of the "Insurrection for Peace", a feminist and deputy for the (ex-Communist) Party of Democratic Renewal in the present Slovene parliament, insists on the notion of popular territorial defence as opposed to a professional army. "When the Federal army intervened in Slovenia after the proclamation of independence on June 25, 1991, it ran up not against the force of an army with powerful means, but against popular hostility expressed through territorial defence."²

Slovene pacifists denounce the official propaganda that has transformed the army intervention into a real war that justifies a rigorous "war budget" as well as considerable ideological pressure on independent thought and criticism. The army evidently did not expect to meet such resistance in Slovenia, but it is also true that its brief (at least at first) was limited to that of gaining control of the borders: in the videocassette "Ljubljana at the barricades" which is being sold in the streets, the discomfiture of the young conscripts, told that they have to protect the "Yugoslav frontiers against the threat of Austrian or Italian intervention and replace the border signs" is obvious. They had not been prepared for a fight with the population.

In fact there were three dead among the Slovene territorial defence force and three civilians, with the army suffering some dozens of fatalities. The purges and desertions that erupted after the Slovene adventure and the open crisis of the civilian federal institutions forced the army high command hard core to fall in behind the Great Serb projects of the Serb leadership.

The big problem confronting the antiwar movement is the mixing together of sever-

al types of interests in this war. The sovereignty of Croatia has been over-ridden in the name of Serb self-determination. The army's privileges are defended in the name of the protection of the Serb minorities. Milosevic's neo-Stalinist regime conducts his Greater Serbia policy in the name of Yugoslavia — which was not an arbitrary creation and whose dismemberment also tears apart many families.

Whatever the manipulations that they suffer, the uprising of the Serb villagers is a reality against what they perceive as the "Ustasha menace"³ of an independent



Croat state. The hysteria about this fostered by the Serb media is given credibility by the real nationalism of Croatia's leader Franjo Tudjman and his statements describing the Ustasha state as an "expression of Croat aspirations", the repeal of the December 1980 constitution and the explicit reference to the Serb nation as a component of the Croat state, the sabotage of attempts at negotiations by representatives of the Serbs in Croatia, the many symbolic provocations and, finally, the existence of Ustasha groups reinforced by the Croatian emigration. The constitutional amendments and propositions later made by the Croat parliament to the Serbs are perceived by the latter as so much sand in the eyes of the international community.

However, the Serbs of Croatia have lived there for centuries, half of them in the big cities, where they have intermingled with the Croat population. "You can't tell the difference any more; normally the Latin alphabet is used⁴; now, suddenly, the differences are being raised

— both here and in Serbia. It was stupid yesterday to forbid the use of linguistic variants. It is just as stupid now to use them as barriers, and introduce the old Croat in the daily press in a stupid and often ignorant fashion." This is a young playwright, of "mixed" Jewish and Serbo-Croat origin, talking. "In my plays I often use Croat idioms, but I have to be free to use them or not" says this activist in the Society for the Improvement of the Quality of Life, one of the components of the antiwar movement in Zagreb.

Vesna, a Croat student, is also a peace activist. Her father lives in one of the Croat villages of the Banija which is right by the Serb villages. He is a former Partisan. "He has bought a rifle and wants to see the army leave" says Vesna, who has not been able to see her father for several weeks, "but the Serbs are his friends and in many cases remain so: some have taken refuge in his house, having been marked down as traitors by the extremist groups."

Accusations of treason

The Banija, in the Kordun region, is full of former Partisans. The Mayor of Kordun's main centre, Vrginmost, is Dmiter Obradovic. Commander of the district's territorial defence, he has been denounced as an "extremist communist in his political options" and a "false Serb in his national consciousness" in the journal of Milan Babic, the leader of the "autonomous territory" of the Knin Krajina. Obradovic is accused of "having been and remaining a partisan of the cohabitation of the two peoples" who, by this attitude "paralyzes the whole life of Kordun." This is equal to a death sentence; to support the cohabitation of the Croat and Serb is in Serb nationalist eyes to "collaborate with the fascists".

Even the most peace-loving Croats are disgusted by the way in which the Serb propaganda identifies any form of Croat national sentiment with "Ustasha positions", and by the obvious revanchism of the Serb extremists as well as the attacks on towns, ports and historic sites that have nothing to do with the "Serb cause". The pressure to get the military means to wage war is strong in Croatia. However the most radical supporters of armed struggle

1. As I was told by one of the activists from Sarajevo's Centre for Peace, who is furthermore the leading light in a new journal, *Spektar* and a TV broadcast called *Good Vibrations*.

2. The Territorial Defence, created by Tito after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, comprised citizens (including women if they wished) from the various republics undergoing regular training. When the 1989 elections began to show the rise of the nationalist parties and pro-independence currents, the Federal army began to gather in the arms distributed for territorial defence in Croatia and Slovenia. The Slovene leadership, however, hindered this process.

3. A reference to the pro-Nazi Ustasha regime set up in Croatia during the war, which was responsible for massacres of Serbs.

4. Traditionally Roman Catholic Croats use the Latin alphabet and Orthodox Serbs the Cyrillic.

"to the death" are the Ustasha groups.

The incoherence of Tudjman's policies has polarized opinions, on the one side reinforcing far right currents and on the other arousing criticism from the left of the government's anti-democratic practices. The latter are seeking ways which might make it possible to win over the Croatian Serbs to the cause of Croatian state sovereignty.

This is why, if for the moment the Croat peace movement is in an invidious position, its main way forward is in supporting the approach of Milorad Pupovats, leader of the Serb Democratic Forum in Croatia, who is opposed to Slobodan Milosevic's policies and the Greater Serbia programme.

"If you want to oppose this logic, then you have to understand the pivotal role of the Serbs in Croatia" insists Pupovats, who considers himself representative of the views of Serb intellectuals living in Croatia's cities. "The solution proposed for their rights is a key issue for the self-determination and emancipation of the Croats as much as for the Serbs." But how to stop the fighting? "We cannot enforce a ceasefire, because we have neither the arms nor command of the troops. We can only help to turn an attitude of national resistance into political activity. It is no easy thing to do in the Serb villages where the Serbs are, by long tradition, warriors with little inclination to express their point of view in a political fashion."

Approaches to the villages

The Serb Democratic Forum is trying to bring together and politicize wide forces, including Serbs from all social outlooks and from both the towns and villages in Croatia. Approaches to the villages have been made together with the leader of the Croat Peasant Party. "This is a long and difficult path since we are considered traitors by the supporters of both Tudjman and Milosevic."

The antiwar activists in Serbia also live under suspicion of treason. There, even more than elsewhere, the propaganda barrage ravages understanding: the Federal Presidency, reduced to the Serb and Montenegrin bloc, has just explicitly declared that the Federal army cannot withdraw from the "territories in Croatia where Serbs live since this measure would leave them exposed to the danger of their physical liquidation".⁵ It has justified its call for the mobilization of reservists by the "danger of imminent war".

In this context, it is certainly the media attention attracted by the presence of a member of the former royal family that prevented the prohibition of a demonstration against the bombing of Dubrovnik. On October 5, in Belgrade some 3,000 "traitors" marched and signed a petition in defence of young people who do not want to conduct this war. A small number, but, given the circumstances, vital for

the future.

In fact, partisans of a Greater Serbia are also to be found in the opposition to Milosevic, and even in the antiwar movement. This is the case of sympathizers of Vuk Draskovic, the leader of the Movement for Serb Renewal, who supports a Greater Serbia by means of negotiations. But, apart from a desire to oppose Milosevic, such contradictions express the fluidity of positions sensitive to the effects of the war, and a rejection of policies which pit the Serbs against everyone else with the bogus argument that in fact everyone is against the Serbs.

It is normal that in Serbia as elsewhere the broad antiwar movement draws in diverse forces. On the other hand, it could become a genuine resistance front, essential if the trend towards desertion by the young, which is more and more affecting Serbs as well, who feel themselves victims of manipulation by the authorities, is to broaden. It also fosters the expression of pluralist points of view and the dissemination of information about the war that helps people gain some independence from the war psychosis whipped up by the official media.

Promoting democratic methods

The Slovene Marko Hren defines the role of the antiwar movement thus: "it is a question of putting up front democratic criteria and mechanisms for the solution to crises rather than proposing the solutions themselves." That is, the expression of all the interests involved in the conflict without giving priority to one above another, thus the defence of the right of expression of minorities and the struggle for systematic and coherent answers to the totality of inter-related problems. And despite the difficulty of even thinking of "solutions" in an atmosphere where national chauvinism and the logic of war predominate, a common approach does in fact seem to exist.

This is witnessed by the demands put forward on July 4 by Slovenia's Centre for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, which included: "recognition of the right to self-determination of the citizens of Slovenia and for every nation in Yugoslavia (such as the Kosovo Albanians, the Croats and Serbs and so on)".... "The taking into consideration of all the conflicts and the search for overall solutions (for Kosovo, the Serb regions in Croatia, Bosnia) and not only for Slovenia."

There is a clear convergence here with the views expressed by Milorad Pupovats: "each people must be able to express its wishes. But the basic measuring rod must be the principles of self-determination and sovereignty." He is one of the rare Serbs to raise the question of the Kosovo Albanians in the same breath as that of the Croatian Serbs: "The difference between the Kosovo Albanians

and the Croatian Serbs is that the former did not freely decide to join Serbia, while the latter on the other hand, were one of the constituent nations of Croatia and of Yugoslavia, on a voluntary basis. However, in all other respects, the situations are the same and the rights must be the same.

"The Albanians are divided between several states and they must have the greatest possible means for political, cultural and territorial autonomy and for relations between each other — not only with Albania but also with Albanians in Macedonia and Montenegro.

"They must have the means within Yugoslavia and international institutions to protect their rights. The same is true of the Serbs in Croatia. In the republics there should be national-ethnic forms of sovereignty in a framework of sovereignty for all citizens; these are two types of sovereignty for which forms of representation should be found. At the moment, the Croatian Serbs face two ways like Janus; one turned towards Zagreb, the other towards Belgrade. Now people are trying to make them choose one or the other. But the art of politics is all about expressing the whole physiognomy."

In Sarajevo, echoing previous positions, round tables of a pre- (or parallel) parliament are regularly held. It is organized by the founders of the UJDI, the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, of which Pupovats is a member. They were set up two years ago with weak forces from various republics to defend a radical democratic approach to the resolution of conflicts, in the first place that in Kosovo. Representatives of all the protagonists, whether on the government or opposition side, have been invited to the meetings of the pre-parliament.

Some may see this as naivety or an attempt to prolong the life of a dying Yugoslavia. However, according to Pupovats: "Yugoslavia is not an end in itself for the UJDI. The main thing is the search for democratic solutions. On the territory on which we live, unilateral approaches may be legitimate, but they are justified and doomed to end in an impasse."

Rights and frontiers

And by way of conclusion: "It is easy enough to exploit nationalism" thinks Marko Orsolic, a very popular Franciscan monk, a Croat from Bosnia, and a passionate defender of a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina in an Yugoslav framework. "With nationalism it is not necessary to think, you only have to feel."

"And since the regime has not encouraged people to think... barriers between religions and languages are being set up with the aim of consolidating frontiers. But in fact, if rights are respected, so will frontiers be — and will start to lose their importance."★

5. *Le Monde*, October 13/14, 1991.

6. *Danas*, October 8, 1991.

A militarized society — and its critics

THE outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia has severely tested democratic and peace activists in the country, as they try to apply their ideals in a situation of armed conflict and intense nationalist pressures. The following three short articles are drawn from a longer essay by the Slovene peace activist Marko Hren, which first appeared in a special October 1991 issue of the Austrian magazine *Ost-West Gegeninformation* devoted to the Yugoslav crisis.

MARKO HREN

Tito's total defence system

SEVERAL historical factors have to be taken into account in order to understand the role of the military in Yugoslavia. The first union of the South Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) was founded soon after the First World War. The main, if not the sole, motivation for the union was to ensure military security both to the north and the south. The "old" Yugoslav army disappeared at the start of the Second World War — it put up no resistance against the Italian and Nazi occupiers. Some remnants of this army formed or joined extreme nationalist units — the Ustasha in Croatia, the Chetniks in Serbia and the Bela Garda [White Guard] in Slovenia. Others joined the partisans and some went into exile.

After the Second World War, the second Yugoslavia was formed. Apart from security there was now another motivation to bring the South Slavs together: the ideological unity stemming from the socialist revolution and the victory of the Communists. The ideology of the army and that of the Communists were one, and formed, with the political system, a sort of Holy Trinity. All politicians were Communists, many had high positions within the army, while the military had its people in the representative bodies and in all decision-making forums at all levels.

Revolutionaries, Communists, Soldiers — they were all one. A cult of the army of the brotherhood of the South Slav nations was fostered; a positive image of the army that had won the war was disseminated in the schools. The ruling elite had to uphold

an ideological and military unity that degenerated into a highly militarized, totalitarian and centralist system. The name given to the army — the Yugoslav People's Army — was an illustration of this blend.

The break with Stalin in 1948 led to the creation of a total defence system and to the birth of "self-management socialism". This was meant both as a means of defence against a possible attack by the Soviet Union and as a way of showing that Yugoslav policy was different from Soviet-style socialism.

The doctrine of the total defence system was aimed at external enemies and relied on the notion of defence based on the unity and cooperation of the population. All internal political enemies had been removed from public life very early on. In order to efficiently structure the three-tiered defence system (standing army, territorial defence and civil defence) it was necessary that a limited degree of sovereignty for the republics be created and respected.

The Federal army was based on compulsory military service for all males over 18 and, in the case of mobilization, on reservists. The territorial defence system was under the control of the authorities in the individual republics and was formed of reservists who had done their military service and had been conscripted into the territorial troops, which meant that they must show up for occasional mobilizations, additional training and so on.

The civil self-defence was a big network of civilian organizations, structures inside regions, enterprises and so on and was under the command of the army. The Communist Party's monopoly in all spheres and levels meant that the party became the forum where the three layers of the defence system were coordinated, creating what looked like a centralized

system for the militarization of society out of what had been planned as a decentralized system respecting the sovereignty of individual republics.

As we can see today, the Second World War and the struggle against fascism only covered over the internecine struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia. The militarist nature of the culture here was shown in the most brutal form by the fact that a huge number of people died, not at the hands of the Nazi regime, but in clashes of a civil war character. In order to demonstrate the "revolutionary" role of the Communists, all other armed groups involved in the Second World War were designated as "collaborators". Many of these "collaborators" were executed, many emigrated. The totalitarian regime never permitted any discussion of this trauma, although it continued to be talked about in exile and in private. Problems were never brought into the open, but bubbled under the surface, awaiting the moment when the lid would be lifted. Our generation was unaware — was not permitted to be aware — of the gravity of these questions. Now really we stand open-mouthed in shock at the accumulation of hatred under the cloak of the "brotherhood of nations". As soon as a semblance of democracy arrived, the frustrations exploded. ★

Slovenia confronts the army

THE Holy Trinity of the military-ideological-political system was first challenged by the democratic and social movement in Slovenia in the early 1980s. The main demands raised were: political pluralism, the demilitarization of political and social life and so on — in other words, the destruction of the Holy Trinity.

The military were aware that such a destruction also automatically implied the destruction of Yugoslavia. For this reason they reacted strongly, calling our activity counter-revolutionary, anti-state and anti-Yugoslav. However at that time we were not so aware of the implications of our actions, and did not understand that to democratize Yugoslavia was to destroy it. We did not see that Yugoslavia was held together by the military and its ideology.

The consequent work towards demilitarization, human rights and pluralism of social life in Slovenia led to an increasing number of conflicts with the military and the (Communist) Federal authorities. The kernel of activists working in this sphere were subjected to an increasing number of threats and criticisms, which finally culminated in a plan by the Federal army to break the movement.

However, the plans fell into the hands of

activists close to the peace movement and the information was made public. This convinced the hardliners to act quickly and three activists were arrested in May 1988. The military court infringed all basic principles and human rights, including the stipulation in the constitution that trials should be conducted in Slovene.

This led Slovenes to the unambiguous conclusion that the Yugoslav army no longer belonged to them. This was one of the beginnings of the end of Yugoslavia, and the army became Slovenes' enemy number 1. This was happening at the same time as the events in Kosovo. There, the Albanians suffered severe repression when they tried to fight for their rights, and there was a strong feeling of solidarity with their struggle in Slovenia.

The 1988 trial of the peace activists Jansa, Tasic, Borstner and Zarl united the Slovene opposition. The first initiative for a declaration on democracy and pluralism was launched by a coordination of social movements at the start of 1988. The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights started this work in the framework of a round table for resistance against the regime in Belgrade. After all were set free the Round Table was also approached by Slovene officials; in the meantime the hardliners responsible for the case against "the four" had been ousted. The peace movement and the idea of education for peace, demilitarization and the right to conscientious objection had broad support both among the Slovene public and politicians.

Right to conscientious objection

One of the first acts of the new Slovene government in April 1990 was to recognize the right to conscientious objection and to refuse to send any more recruits into the Yugoslav army. Concrete steps were then taken to get control of the territorial defence structures away from Belgrade and increase Slovenia's sovereignty in the military and political fields. Then the struggle for control over military supplies began, which led to a conflict between the Commander of the Slovene territorial defence forces and the Slovene authorities, since the former remained loyal to Belgrade. He was soon ousted, but before that, in October 1990, the Federal army had occupied the headquarters of the Slovene territorial defence.

Relations between Slovenia and the Yugoslav hierarchy deteriorated and by May 1991 had reached the point of armed conflict. The incident in which a civilian lost his life happened after the Slovene territorial defence had called up its first group of recruits to attend a training camp in Maribor; the Federal army surrounded the camp, arousing the opposition of the civilian population.

This conflict was successfully resolved, but the tensions aroused there led to the

first sacrifice for "Slovenian independence". Unilateral moves by the Slovene government made the military hierarchy nervous and led to the worst possible outcome. The Slovene authorities, it now seems, were fully informed of these plans and had made contingency plans before June 26, when they took decisive steps towards independence.

Slovenia set the destruction of Yugoslavia in motion when it stopped sending recruits and making payments into the Federal coffers. During the intervention in Slovenia, the Federal army began to dissolve — losing thousands of men and officers. This was a big test for the army and an experience on the basis of which it reorganized itself to meet the new conditions, in which it is no longer a Yugoslav and no longer a people's army.

After learning that it could not succeed in Slovenia against a united population, the Federal army left the republic. The decision was made at the start of July 1991, in my opinion, largely because of the developing crisis in Croatia, since the army did not feel able to control Slovenia, Croatia and Kosovo at the same time.

The Slovene peace movement arose in a climate of growing independent cultural activity, media and other social movements. The aim of the projects and activities were directed to raising consciousness and establishing a paradigm of non-violence.

The fields of activity extended from pre-school and school education to challenges to the military and political hierarchies. The peace movement demanded the democratization of life, the demilitarization of society and political structures and the de-ideologisation of these spheres. The movement also sought out contacts with peace, human rights and solidarity movements in East and West. Its orientation was more cosmopolitan than national-statist and it had broad popular support.

"Slovenia without an army"

The notion that conscientious objection was a fundamental human right was supported at all levels of Slovene social and political life in the second half of the 1980s, while it was strongly rejected in Belgrade. We were able to get military training removed from the school syllabus while the concept of "Slovenia without an army" also had big support at the start of this year. In February an opinion poll revealed that more people here supported a Slovenia without than with an army. We succeeded in making of the general strategy of a "Slovenia without an army" and de-militarization an active peace policy both amongst the public and at the level of official diplomacy.

The idea was taken up by civil society and in the capital Ljubljana more than a



hundred groups took part in a campaign with the goal of turning military buildings into cultural centres. We systematically attempted to convince all the political parties that sprang up in 1989/90 to support demilitarization and a peace policy. We succeeded in getting five parties (including one in the government and two in the opposition) to support the notion of "Slovenia without an army" and an inter-parliamentary commission for a peace policy has been set up.

The question of an alternative security policy for Slovenia, including the option of a "Slovenia without an army" has been discussed at the highest level in the state bodies concerned with defence, most intensely in the Security Council of the country's Presidium. In February 1991 a declaration was widely distributed and more than 25,000 signatures gathered for a Slovenia without an army. This declaration was signed by, among others, the country's president Kucan, by three other members of the Slovene presidium, by a member of the Federal presidency, Dr. Drnovsek, by several members of the Slovene government and by a number of personalities well-known in Slovenia.

Now it is becoming ever clearer that the pacifist mood in Slovenia was mainly aimed at Yugoslavia. Anti-militarism was conceived as a negative attitude to the Yugoslav army, peace education as an antidote to the patriarchal-militarist culture of the southerners, and conscientious objection as a protest against the Yugoslav army. Now that Slovenes are in a position to consider the issue of their own army, the anti-militarist thinking has disappeared behind the wall of national euphoria, ethnocentrism, elitism and indifference to the fate of the poor south. As far as we can see today, Slovenia has rapidly lost the chance to develop in the direction of an unusually peaceful society, despite its otherwise successful attempt to display its differences with the other Yugoslav republics. ★

Anti-militarism in a time of war

IN 1988 the Ljubljana peace movement, which was the only movement that had concentrated on pacifism and non-violence, initiated a signature campaign on a peace agreement between citizens of Yugoslavia's different nationalities. This succeeded in mobilizing hundreds of people, but did not manage to create a real network. With these and some people from the former Svarun movement, now known as the Green Action (Zelena akcija) group, we took part in the Helsinki Citizens Assembly. But this association was not able to engage in real activity and did not have substantial popular support.

One of the first broadly-supported movements to address military questions was initiated by the parents of soldiers in Slovenia at the start of 1991. At the same time Slovenia decided to stop sending recruits into the Yugoslav army, but some Slovenes scattered across Yugoslavia still had to do their military service. The parents were especially concerned about those soldiers who were doing their service in areas where it was clear that the crisis was going to escalate. Their central demand was that their sons should come back to Slovenia and do their military service there.

There was no anti-militarist ethic involved in this and the parents emphatically avoided any discussion of pacifism, non-violence and a peace policy. They said that they did not want to discuss ideological questions. After the aggression in Slovenia many similar movements sprang up throughout the country. They expressed themselves in various ways but their main official demand was that soldiers should be allowed to do their military service in their own republics. The fact that the parents avoided anti-militarist arguments meant that their movement could be manipulated by right wing forces and draw them behind nationalist campaigns. The meeting of the mothers in the Serbian parliament during the aggression against Slovenia ended up by demanding that the Serb soldiers be withdrawn from Slovenia to fight for the Serbian cause, so that they should not die in a war in which Serbia had no interest.

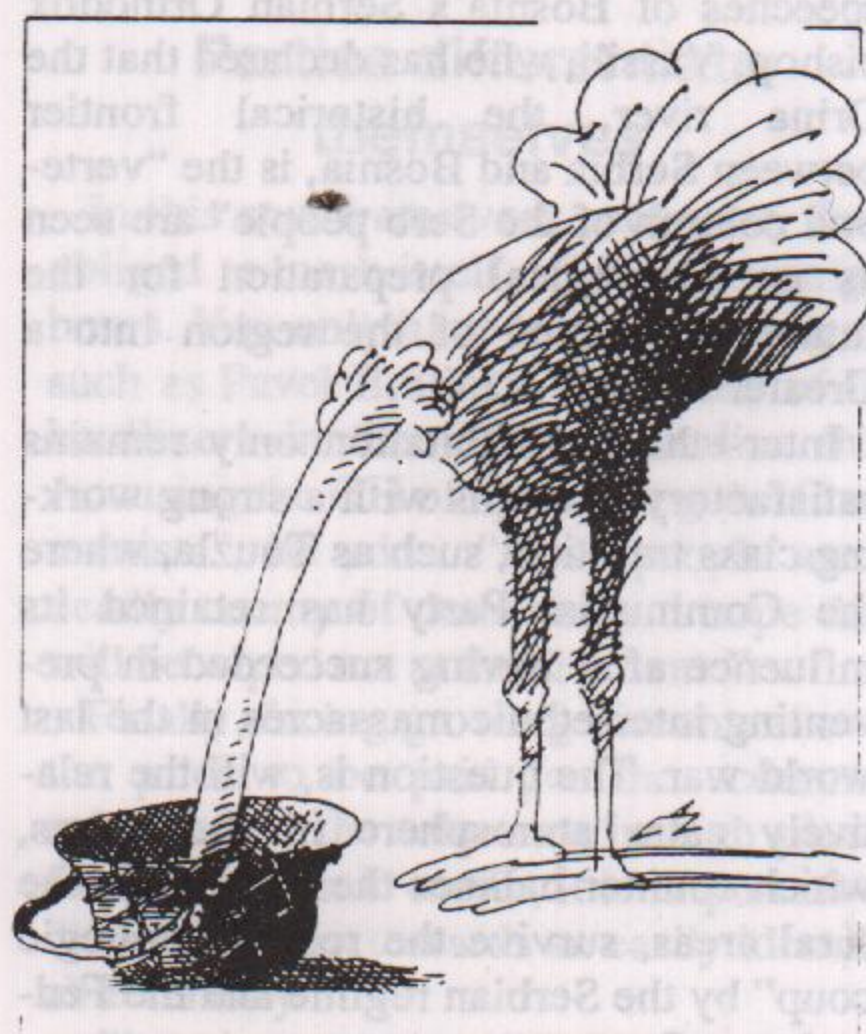
A number of initiatives throughout the whole country were started up by women's groups and movements, and such professional groups as doctors and psychiatrists. Various forms of coordination of these groups have been possible. Thus groups in Vojvodina and Belgrade, for example, cooperated to form the Centres of Antiwar Activity. The only initiative that has succeeded in bringing together all

the groups throughout Yugoslavia is the Antiwar Campaign in Zagreb.

Its first meeting was in Kumrovec [Tito's birth place] to decide on the basic principles for activity. Among these were the choice of non-violent methods and an emphasis on the peace process and political solutions. The participants were agreed in understanding that the conflicts would be protracted and that it was necessary to undertake correspondingly long-term activities. Even before the meeting there had been actions on an all-Yugoslav level, such as the first meeting of Yugoslav members of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in May 1991 in Sarajevo and the meeting "Insurrection for Peace" that took place in the same city in July 1991. However neither of these has been able to call into life concrete follow-up actions. The groups have neither a united political line nor a solid structure. Much time and effort is needed to get the local groups into a condition where they can work consistently.

At the moment peace activities in Yugoslavia have a symbolic value. Many of them appeal to the population not to be drawn into the elite power games. Very many people react positively to this and boycott the call ups and mobilizations. In all the republics people know that the military are fighting against them.

The March events in Belgrade [when Serbian security forces fired on pro-democracy demonstrators], the examples of Kosovo, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia have clearly shown that the military pursues no other aim than its own power interests. Peace activists are often driven out of their own regions by attacks by extremists, since they are considered as people who abstain from the over-riding national struggle. This is specially true in the ethnically mixed regions of Croatia and Bosnia, where many moderately inclined people who have pleaded for dialogue and moderation have had to leave their homes to escape revenge attacks. ★



Next year, Sarajevo?

WITH ITS two scripts (Latin and Cyrillic), three religions (Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim), four main languages used at the University (as well as a dozen other languages taught in primary and secondary schools), five nations (and more nationalities), and six Federal republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia (plus the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina) — Yugoslavia is (or was) a (good and bad) example of multi-ethnic cohabitation.

The most concentrated form of this cohabitation is to be found in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, as the push for a Greater Serbia continues, it seems inevitable that this republic will be drawn in.

SLAVKO MIHALJCEK

IF THE SERB population in Croatia has been considered by the present Croat leadership as a "minority people", both on account of their numbers and their relatively recent settlement in Croatia (18th and 19th centuries), the same cannot be said of the Bosnian Serbs. Whether dominant or dominators, according to the historical circumstances, the Serbs have been in Bosnia as long as its other peoples — the local Croats, the Muslims, the Jews who arrived after their expulsion from Spain and Rusins of more recent vintage.

"Bosnia does not belong either to the Muslims, the Serbs or the Croats but to all those who live there and who like it as it is" as its president Alija Izetbegovic likes to say.

The question now is, will this cohabitation — more than a quarter of marriages in urban districts are mixed, above all among intellectuals and people with higher education — survive the present crisis?

Under pressure from an incessant barrage of propaganda coming from Serbia,

which cleverly mixes up the anti-Serb massacres of the last world war and a beligerent mythology, a whole range of well-armed para-military formations have arisen among the Bosnian Serbs — often equipped from federal army supplies.

In the majority Serb areas in western Bosnia, abutting on the Croatian Krajina, and in eastern Herzegovina, near to Montenegro, power is no longer in the hands of the Republic's legal government. The nationalist groups there have already proclaimed "free and autonomous Serb regions". In September the most powerful radio and TV station in Bosnia was occupied by an "unidentified" armed group, who forced the technicians to cut the radio mast of Bosnia's sturdily pluralist Channel 2. The station — which is located right next to important army garrisons — remains occupied by these "unknown" persons, who broadcast nothing but the version of the truth coming out of Belgrade.

However, judging by the numerous visits by Bosnian deputies, the main threat to social peace is found in the east of Bosnia, on the border with Serbia, where the Serb population is in the minority compared to the Muslims.

Access to Serb villages blocked

All access to the Serb villages has for several months been blocked by barricades and armed men. Radio Sarajevo, as well as the Belgrade newspapers², have reported increasingly frequent incidents. Although they have not been attacked, the Serb militia patrols the surrounding Muslim areas. Some of these expeditions have ended in clashes including fatalities in September.

Even more disturbing is the crumbling of local institutions. In its September 13 issue, the pro-nationalist Belgrade journal *NIN* spelt out the scenario for taking power. Since the collapse of the single party system the Muslim votes have been divided between several parties, some with an ethnic basis (Democratic Action Union — a homogeneously Muslim party) while others remain secular and inter-ethnic (the Communist Party, and the Democratic Reform Party of former Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic).

On the other hand, on the Serb side there is a clear tendency towards unity around one party, the Serb Democratic Union. According to *NIN*, the "political genius of the Serbs" has allowed them to take the majority in the councils of all the main towns in eastern Bosnia. Thus towns such as Bratounats (34% Serbs), Vlasenitsa (Serbs 42%, Muslims 55%), Zvornik and so on are all run by Serbs. Another Belgrade weekly, the liberal and democratic inclined *Vreme*, considers that this political dominance is changing into an intolerable control over the economy and education.



In Zvornik, the main town in the region, whose population is majority Muslim, there are 65 Muslim and 465 Serb teachers — the latter originating mainly from Serbia.³ And, in fact, the first bitter inter-communal political clash arose over the issue of the nomination of school directors. The Muslim party is demanding the nomination of a certain number of Muslim teachers to correct the imbalance. The Serbs rejected this request and the Muslims replied by giving political support to parties based on "Bosnian and Muslim specificity".

The trend towards ethnic and religious homogenization is strengthened by the increased activity of the Serbian Orthodox church in Bosnia. The very militant speeches of Bosnia's Serbian Orthodox bishop, Vassili, who has declared that the Drina river, the historical frontier between Serbia and Bosnia, is the "vertebral column of the Serb people" are seen as an ideological preparation for the future annexation of the region into a Greater Serbia.⁴

Inter-ethnic cohabitation only remains satisfactory in towns with a strong working class tradition, such as Touzla, where the Communist Party has retained its influence after having succeeded in preventing inter-ethnic massacres in the last world war. The question is, will the relatively calm atmosphere in the towns, which counter-balance the tensions in the rural areas, survive the recent "strategic coup" by the Serbian regime and the Federal army?

In reply to the refusal of the Bosnian

authorities to mobilize reservists for the anti-Croatian front, the governments of Serbia and Montenegro have mobilized their citizens, sent on manoeuvres in Bosnia. At the start of October, with the complicity of the army, tens of thousands of reservists, without any structure or supervision, often driving their own cars, poured into towns and villages in eastern Herzegovina.⁵ Here they engaged in pillage or perhaps simply seized supplies in the total absence of any organization, which has infuriated Bosnian Muslims.⁶

It is thus no surprise that Eioup Ganic, a member of the collective presidency of the Bosnian republic, has denounced "a foreign occupation of Bosnia, following on a military putsch [in Serbia]"⁷ and has announced that "Bosnia will be able to defend itself according to the principles of civil disobedience." ★

1. The station at Kozara, in the Bosnian Krajina, occupied on August 1 by 200 armed men wearing the characteristic uniforms of the Serb militia from Knin (the Croat Krajina), covers a third of Bosnia and a significant proportion of Croatia. See the analysis in *Vreme*, September 16, 1991.

2. See *NIN* (Serb nationalist, supports Milosevic regime) and *Vreme* (liberal opposition, pacifist) in September 1991.

3. These figures are from *NIN*, September 13 1991.

4. Radio Sarajevo, August 15, 1991, *NIN*, September 13, 1991.

5. Sunday October 13, 1991, 22h30. Radio Belgrade announced in its information flash a communiqué from the army commander strictly forbidding reservists to move around in private cars in the zone of manoeuvres in eastern Herzegovina.

6. Broadcasts by Radio Sarajevo at the end of September. Reports in *Danas*, liberal opposition weekly, Zagreb, October 1, 1991.

7. Interview in *Danas*, October 1, 1991.

Right turn in Czecho-slovakia

ON FRIDAY October 4, 1991, the Federal parliament of Czecho-Slovakia adopted a law on the purge (In Czech *lustrace*) of the administration and the publication of a list of alleged collaborators with the former political police, the StB. This law applies to members of the Communist Party, from secretaries of local branches up to Central Committee members, and to all collaborators, agents and informers of the StB. The *lustrace* bars them from occupying any post of responsibility in the administration, the army, national enterprises and agencies or in universities for a period of five years.

SLAVINA NOVAK

THIS LAW, the only one of its kind in Eastern Europe, is similar to the *Berufsverbot* that has existed in West Germany since 1949, which forbids any member of the Communist party from holding an official position.

According to the parliamentary deputies, the law will affect 250,000 Czechs and Slovaks, but former reform Communist leader Alexander Dubcek has estimated that it will involve around a million people. These figures are similar to those caught up by the purge which followed the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czecho-slovakia in 1968.

The debate on the *lustrace* took place in an extremely tense emotional and political atmosphere in parliament. It ended with the right wing deputies applauding their victory. The vote was passed by 148 to 31—the latter consisting basically of the Communists and social democrats. The liberal Civic Movement (OH) called for the vote to be "ignored".

Why are the right so bitter against the Communists two years after the Velvet Revolution? The first thing is to place the vote in the context of the approaching legislative elections in June 1992.

Slowdown in economic reform

The slowdown in the economic reform, whose results are not yet evident, has placed its most ardent supporters in an uncomfortable position. These proponents of the pure Thatcherite gospel find it hard to explain their slow and prudent policy, why the privatization programme is so slow and why investments by foreign capital are so parsimonious.

Furthermore, to look at the thing a bit

more closely, it rapidly becomes clear that the distinctions between the parties on the conception of the reforms and the manner of their implementation are fine. Leaving aside the shades of difference between the various right wing outfits, the only difference between the liberal project promoted by the OH and the project of the Thatcherite Vaclav Klaus, supported by the Democratic Civic Party (ODS)—both groups are offshoots of the old Civic Forum—is over the speed at which the reforms should be implemented; there is no argument over their content.

Furthermore, the forthcoming elections will for the first time no longer turn on the issue of "for or against the old regime". This time, rather than big umbrella formations such as the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence, a large number of parties will be competing for the seats.

Parties differentiate themselves

In this new framework each party feels obliged to mark itself off from its neighbours. You only have to listen to a figure such as Pavel Bratinka, the leader of the hardliners in the ODS, to realize this. Accusing the OH of "protecting the Communists", he adds: "these people are a deadly enemy of democracy. I hope they will be wiped out at the elections."

Finally, facing growing discontent over the price to be paid for the economic reforms and the tolerance in high places for the economic mafia, it is important to divert criticism towards an easily identifiable "enemy".

Since it cannot possibly be the case that the pro-capitalist policies cause anyone

any problems it must be the fault of the Communists, who continue to undermine the advance of reform.

So, the argument runs, they must be prevented from doing any more harm. Thus the *lustrace* and also the revival of the debate on the confiscation of Communist Party property.

This offensive by the right in general and the ODS in particular, at a time when this party is on the rise, is not limited to the *lustrace* and the attacks on the Communists. There is also a law on political parties and associations toughening the conditions for the obligatory registration of any party, movement or association by the Ministry of Culture.

Thus, two years after the "velvet revolution" led by movements which thus established their existence as accomplished facts, there is a rapid move towards controls on political freedom.

At the same time, the recent attacks on the Social Democratic party, considered by Klaus as "the greatest danger for democracy and reform"; the symposium on Communist crimes that has just taken place in Prague, in the course of which the notion of a rerun of the Nuremberg trials was raised, and which was graced by the presence of Klaus and his acolytes; or even the aggressive tactics of the ODS in the town councils in an attempt to seize all the key posts, sometimes even at the expense of other right wing parties—as with the sacking of the Mayor of Prague in favour of a Klausite technocrat; are all signs of the right's slowly but steadily strengthening grip on society.

No violent rise of anti-Communism

However, it would be wrong to paint everything black and become over-pessimistic. The parliamentary debate, which was transmitted live on TV, has not been accompanied by a violent rise of anti-Communism.

Although the *lustrace* strikes a certain chord in the population, there have been no public demonstrations in support of it or urging that it be pushed through faster. Furthermore, the more optimistic among the deputies insist that in reality this law will not be seriously applied and will soon fall into disuse.

Reactions inside and outside parliament have not been long in coming. Nonetheless, they have been as feeble as the resistance in parliament.

The liberals (not the OH as such) have sent a letter to President Havel asking him

NO ONE SHALL BE PERSECUTED ON THE GROUNDS OF HIS INTELLIGENCE.



not to ratify the law, pointing out that figures such as Dubcek could be affected by it, while the "return to Europe", and therefore the international reputation of Czechoslovakia will be compromised.

Thus the Vice-President of the Federal Assembly Zdenek Jicinsky: "this will make us look bad in the eyes of the international community." However, Havel, who cannot veto laws, has made it known that he will sign it, insisting that "I cannot allow myself a gesture of opposition that could lead to confrontation and chaos."

According to Daniel Kroupa from the right wing Democratic Civil Alliance (ODA), "this law is a means not for attacking rival parties but for purging our new-born democracy". However, in fact, the *lustrace* is not only an attack on human rights but a sign of the authoritarian character of the current leaders.

It is enough simply to appear on an StB list — with only that agency knowing why and how — for a person to be considered guilty unless they can prove otherwise. Two protective clauses — one calling for the punishment of anyone publishing the StB list, and another calling for proof that a human rights violation had indeed been committed by an accused person — were chopped out of the law during the parliamentary debate.

The affected person has two weeks to leave their job, and does not even have the right to defend themselves in front of a commission. The appeal will only establish whether or not the name really appears on the StB and Communist Party lists.

Furthermore, private sector employers will have the right to ask their employees to produce an Interior Ministry certificate proving that they are "clean".

A law in the interests of the right

This law serves the particular interests of the right, at a time when the Prague Spring is increasingly presented as of no historical importance and its character as a genuine revolt against the Stalinist regime is denied. However, ex-Communists and collaborators continue to sit in the parliament and the right will protect all those who have rapidly changed their spots and who now vote for the right.

According to the law's supporters, the idea is to create a "climate of moral pressure". In reality however, while the green light has been given for a witch-hunt, the former political police has been reconverted into the Commission for the Defence of the Constitution and the economic mafia continues to work.

The constant demands for controls on the "dirty money" flowing around the privatization process have always run up against the opposition of Klaus and his allies. ★

General strike in New South Wales

ONE million workers took part in a 24-hour general strike in New South Wales on October 23, called by the state's Labor Council to protest the introduction of anti-union laws.

KEN DAVIS

FERRIES, buses and trains were stopped. Industry, mines and ports were silent. Schools, both state and religious, were closed. Post offices and large shops went unstaffed. Banks, colleges, libraries, museums and theatres were shut.

Despite court rulings against the public sector unions, government offices, both state and federal, were on strike. Community sector welfare and education agencies were closed. Radio broadcasts and daily newspapers were produced by managers while journalists struck.

Not since 1917 has New South Wales seen a general strike.

The mass media, now controlled in Australia by only two right wing press barons, Murdoch and Packer, went to great lengths to deny the effectiveness of the stoppage.

Employer spokesmen initially estimated 800,000 on strike, with a loss of \$500 million in profits, only to revise the figure of strikers down to 400,000 in later media releases.

Newspapers and television featured managers and strike-breakers who had walked or cycled great distances to get to workplaces, or promoted the delights of car sharing to beat traffic jams.

Television and radio ran endless interviews with disgruntled individuals claiming the strike would achieve nothing and denouncing union tactics.

Vast majority support the strike

But the truth was that the vast majority of unionists supported the strike, leaving Sydney and the other New South Wales cities quieter than any Sunday or public holiday in memory.

In Sydney, to the surprise of union members, no mass rallies or marches were called.

The New South Wales Labor Party opposition failed even to endorse the strike call. Instead of rallying hundreds of thousands of workers to demand the ouster of the minority conservative government, the streets were deserted. No picket lines were set up to prevent scabbing, and union leaders went to great

pains to exempt as many federal sector or "emergency" workers as possible.

The union leaders were pushed into the general strike "as a formality", due to the evident anger shown in major sectoral stoppages in recent weeks.

On September 17, 15,000 workers rallied outside parliament in Sydney, during a strike by manufacturing, waterside and mining unions against the new law.

On October 15, 10,000 nurses demonstrated at parliament, during a stoppage of 80,000 health sector workers against hospital closures and under-funding of the health system.

The general strike served to bring to a head growing militancy and frustration in the union rank-and-file and the community in general, without allowing any ongoing strategy for defeating the New South Wales government or the capitalist offensive.

Right wing push through new laws

Although re-elected without a majority in May, the right wing Liberal-National coalition government led by Nick Greiner has been able to push through the new legislation, relying on the votes of conservative "independents" in both houses of parliament.

The laws are designed to dismantle the current industrial court system which sets awards on pay and conditions after disputes between representative unions and employer federations.

They seek to break union power by outlawing "closed shop" workplaces and industries where all workers have to belong to the union.

Industrial awards will be replaced by a patchwork of fixed term "voluntary employment contracts" and enterprise bargaining, disadvantaging part-time and poorly organized sectors. "Women and migrant workers will suffer most" according to the official strike call.

By excluding unions from the negotiating process and encouraging company unions, the laws will leave individual employees negotiating with the bosses on wages and conditions.

Union officers will have to give seven days notice before entering any workplace and strikes during the time of an enterprise agreement can be punished with fines of \$10,000 per day for each worker.

Union decisions must be taken by costly and slow postal ballots, not by elected delegates or mass meetings.

The new laws are a charter for employers to sack unionised workers and abolish penalty rates for nightwork, overtime pay, the 17% pay loading on the four weeks annual leave traditional in Australia, redundancy payouts, sick leave and job security provisions.

The New South Wales laws are designed as a model for national legislation, if the conservatives defeat the Hawke labor government at the next federal elections.

Already, under a federal Labor government and with Labor governments in all states other than New South Wales, wages have been lowered much faster than in other OECD countries. Unemployment is over 10%.

Unions leaderships have collaborated on seven official (and almost annual) austerity "Accords" with the federal Labor government and employers.

The week of the strike, the federal industrial relations minister repeated that the Accord strategy remained in force — unions should hold down wages and accept mass unemployment in order to boost profits and allow re-investment in manufacturing.

Sell off of public assets begins

The state and federal governments, both Labor and Liberal, have begun to sell off public assets. Airlines, banks and telecommunications are being privatized. Gone are the promises to maintain the "social wage".

Fees have been re-introduced for tertiary education, unemployment benefits are disappearing in favour of compulsory (and temporary) "retraining" programs, welfare services and pensions are being cut, and new patient charges and hospital closures are whittling away the national health system.

Despite the sacrifices by working people during a decade of Labor governments, profits have risen enormously in many sectors, without any re-investment in manufacturing industry and job creation.

The wealth boost Labor gave the capitalists has allowed fruitless speculative investments and imperialist investment in super-exploitative industries in South-East Asia, Chile and the Pacific.

The only strategic difference between Labor and Liberal-National opposition is on how best to squeeze the workers — through agreements with the union leaders or through smashing the unions outright. ★

Apartheid's transitional program

IN THE course of the 1980s South Africa experienced a series of social and political confrontations of a breadth unprecedented in the country's history, in the course of which some tens of thousands of women and men engaged in the assault against apartheid. After several years of struggle, of repression, of hope and of fear history suddenly seemed to accelerate — the regime decided to negotiate with its eternal enemy, the ANC.

PETER BLUMER

FOR most activists this turning point could only appear, at first glance, as the fruit of their struggles alone. And it is true that the debate inside the South African ruling class was, from 1984 to 1987, profoundly affected by fear of the generalized social disorder which threatened the racist institutions as much as the productive apparatus.

But once the first negotiations had started all seemed strangely changed. The regime, which had appeared to be reacting with its back to the wall, took a series of initiatives, itself accelerating the pace of reform, while the ANC for its part seemed entrapped in contradictions.

To understand this apparent paradox, it is necessary of course to take into account the new international situation, the pressure of the Soviets and the winding down of the struggles from 1987 onwards, as we have already done previously in these columns.

But the current political process can only be fully understood by recognizing that the apartheid economic system had already entered its final crisis at the end of the 1970s.

A new economic model

The regime is thus currently only exploiting the political factors mentioned above to implement a new economic model which has been objectively necessary for more than ten years.

The combination of a political conjuncture which is hardly favourable to the popular movement, on the one hand, and the capacity of South African capitalism to bring about its own transformation, on the other, has allowed De Klerk to keep the initiative in the current context.

At the beginning of the 1980s, South Africa entered a grave recession, despite the profits accumulated thanks to the sharp rise in the gold price in preceding years. This recession continued throughout the decade. It has a double origin.

Firstly, it is the product of the international crisis. South Africa is a country which exports primary products and the world conjuncture is one of falling prices and falling demand. Secondly, this recession is — and this is what disconnects the South African crisis to an extent from international fluctuations — the result of the contradictions of the socio-economic system of apartheid itself.

The general structural constraints of apartheid are well known: weakness of internal demand, lack of a qualified labour force, insufficient productivity and thus a weak capacity for the export of manufactured goods.

But it is also true that this did not stop the system from continuing without too many problems until the 1960s and the 1970s. At that time, while liberals like Oppenheimer (head of the Anglo-American multinational) were already protesting against the rigour of the system, the country still attracted foreign capital on a massive scale and experienced an important industrial boom. Profits were at their zenith.

South Africa could well have broken with racial segregation after the Second World War, at the time when the mode of imperialist domination in the Third World was beginning to change.

It is the considerable weight and constraints of the mining sector which, together with other sociological and political factors specific to the country, explains the maintenance, until "late" in the day, of a national capitalist economy regulated in this way. That is why apartheid, as a specific mode of accumulation, still had some life in it until the 1960s.

System not anachronistic

There was then nothing anachronistic about the apartheid system from the point of view of capitalist exploitation, in spite of the rigidities and costs of the system. However, these problems began to seriously weaken the edifice once a certain

level of accumulation had been reached. The growing development of manufacturing industry, then of services, implied little by little new needs and new openings that the "separate development" of the races and the costs of organizing apartheid could not satisfy.

This turning point is difficult to date accurately. A number of analyses have been put forward. However, what is certain is that the recession which began in 1981 was marked by the exhaustion of the system. Thus, between 1980 and 1985 bankruptcies increased by 500%. The discount rate went from 9.5% to 17% in the course of 1981 alone; it reached 18% in 1982 and 25% in August 1985.

The total of investments fell from 2,346 million Rands in 1981 to 1,408 millions in 1984. The foreign debt reached a peak in 1984 of \$24.8 billion, of which \$13 billion was short term. Manufacturing production fell in volume, wage costs increased, unemployment grew and the volume of exports diminished.

The recession continued despite the international upturn in the mid-1980s. It even got worse under the impact of the trade union mobilizations, South Africa's loss of credit in the eyes of international investors, and the crisis of the gold industry.

The structural crisis of apartheid thus preceded the social explosions of the 1980s. There had already been, before this, the Natal general strike in 1973 and the youth uprising in the Transvaal in 1976. Several para-state commissions had moreover begun to ponder the need for reform.

A series of changes had begun to be applied in the field of labour law at the

turn of the 1980s. But the regime dragged its feet. Nothing appeared decided and repression remained the principal means of surmounting the contradictions of the system.

In the mid-1980s the debate between the regime and the liberals (in reality the expression of the interests of the big financial and industrial bourgeoisie) could be summed up thus; the first claimed that too many reforms would lead to revolution, the second responded that not enough reforms would lead in any case to revolution.

The recession of the 1980s accelerated the process and definitively undermined the positions of the regime. The current situation can only be understood if this combination of the social pressure of the recent struggles and the new needs of capitalist development is grasped.

South Africa has experienced, throughout a whole period of its history, what could be called, by analogy with certain South American countries, a process of industrialization through import substitution. This has taken the form of a very strong state sector (energy, steel, and so on) upstream from the mining and manufacturing industries, and the production of manufactured goods whose markets have been essentially concentrated in the white population.

A dual system

It amounted to a "dual" system which came up against two problems; its growing technological dependence on foreign countries and the limits of the internal market.

To transcend these two constraints South Africa has to become capable of exporting manufactured goods on an infinitely greater scale than today. It should, for example, be capable of exporting high quality stainless steel or catalytic rather than ordinary steel exhaust pipes. To achieve this, it is necessary to achieve significant increases in productivity, to improve competitiveness dramatically and to lower the costs of production.

South Africa exports 14% of its manufactured products against 70.5% of its mining products. It imports, on the other hand, 36% of its manufactured products and 27% of its machines and equipment.

It needs then to reduce its dependence on exports of primary products. The price of gold has been depressed for many years now. Gold has lost its function as a store of value and 70% of South African production now goes to jewellers.

Whilst the current price oscillates between \$360 and \$400 an ounce, the South African authorities estimate that at \$320 the country's gold industry would collapse for lack of profitability. Profitability is moreover markedly inferior to that of the Australian mines, with veins increasingly deep and the grade increasingly reduced.

Mining industry employers claim that 40% of gold is currently being extracted at a loss. They dismissed 40,000 miners in 1990 and plan 75,000 more redundancies in the future.

The Central Bank has applied a classical monetarist doctrine in relation to the South African currency, the Rand, seeking, it is true, to lower a rate of inflation which was still at 14.7% in 1989. Since 1988 the regime has opted for a policy of adjustment so as to dampen internal demand. This might appear surreal given the poverty in which the majority of blacks live.

But this would be to forget that the system produces, in spite of everything, a significant demand for luxury products, overspending on defence and energy, enormous indebtedness in relation to an overprotected agriculture, and so on. Thus, those responsible for the economy have openly sought to limit the growth of GDP to 1% per year for 1990 and 1991.

The contradiction is here; in order to begin to reduce the enormous disparities between "races", that is in order to break with the social policies of apartheid, a minimum growth of 5% per year over a very long period would be required.

This is the nub of the problem for the regime. It is necessary to begin a transition from the old mode of accumulation. It is necessary, in order to achieve this, to find both a political consensus with the regime's old adversaries and to apply a policy for getting out of recession which — at least at first — will not aggravate the public deficit, increase the debt or weaken the Rand.

The regime must then anesthetize its adversaries in a complex constitutional debate and gain their agreement that the "democratic" transition is dependent on a controlled reform of South African capitalism.

Numerous reforms

Numerous political reforms have been undertaken or announced. They imply, without any doubt, profound institutional change; but they seek also to preserve the final political authority of the white ruling class. On the economic plane, on the other hand, the government's plans do not, for the moment, go further than giving aid to the black informal sector and small enterprises.

The only way the regime can hope to redistribute some supplementary revenues amongst the dispossessed of the towns and countryside is to undertake a reorientation of public expenditure to the detriment of the white population. This would be in line with the monetarist policy of seeking an exit from the crisis through a no-cost operation.

But from all the evidence this would have to be done with extreme prudence to avoid the regime's cutting itself off, at a delicate moment, from a great part of the



New unity moves

A CONFERENCE was held in Durban from October 25-27, after the two accompanying articles had been written. It led to a unitary declaration of intent, signed by the ANC, the PAC and several other parties from the Bantustans, under the rubric of the Patriotic Front. This declaration recalls the principal objectives of the negotiations currently underway, namely, among others, universal suffrage and the perspective of a Constituent Assembly; it denounces the hypocrisy of the regime. The conference has not however led to a genuine structured front, organizing real mass campaigns with the aim of modifying the relationship of forces. It was simply announced that a new meeting would take place in six months time. Judging that the conference was essentially about pursuing the negotiations, through an all-party conference and an interim government, organizations like Azapo and WOSA did not put their names to the final declaration. ★

white electorate. In other words, the rhythms are going to be very slow and the eventual social effects will be small scale.

A final possibility would be the creation of social conditions which would encourage the return of foreign investment, and political conditions for an inflow of foreign financial aid going to diverse social projects. But here, the principal problem would be that of the world conjuncture.

Faced with this, the ANC and the COSATU trade union federation defend a Keynesian policy of redistribution of revenues, increasing the purchasing power of the masses so as, they say, to favour internal demand and break down social segregation. It would amount, moreover, to defining a new system where the state would continue to play an important regulatory role, but this time with a progressive perspective.

Some trade union leaderships have gone as far as to advocate the improvement of the foreign competitiveness of South African industry as a means of resolving the crisis, and thus of abolishing apartheid. They propose, furthermore, the involvement of the trade unions on the boards of directors of the big South African companies.

The employers, meanwhile, hold to a project of rationalization through redundancies, wage controls and social peace. For them, it is sufficient to let market forces act so that foreign investment could return on a massive scale and help to progressively modify the economic structure of the country.

In the past, notably at the time when the Freedom Charter was drawn up, the ANC presented apartheid as an outdated colonial form and thus contrary to the needs of capitalism itself. This analysis, which was supposed to convince the democratic and modernizing sectors of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, was erroneous. Apartheid corresponded, on the contrary, to a vital need of capitalist exploitation in South Africa.

Today, on the contrary, the ANC no longer seeks to explain the evolution of the system itself. It takes a triumphalist position, which consists in explaining everything that is happening as the sole effect of the movement of struggle in the 1980s. This kind of self-proclamation has

been a permanent trait of Nelson Mandela's movement, and amounts to a form of sectarianism which disarms cadres and militants. Today, all the evidence indicates that the state and the employers have decided to accelerate the pace of change in the South African economic system. This will change the social and political stakes of the negotiations underway.

The best response would be for the liberation movement, in its totality, to seize the current openings to relaunch the struggles, restore the confidence of the mass movement and push the social demands further than the regime wishes. It is not possible today to claim that the regime is negotiating with its back to the wall and consequently consider simple institutional reform as an end in itself.

If the question of power is obviously not on the order of the day, the necessary retreat must be carried out in such a way as to preserve the framework of unitary mobilizations and to maintain programmatically the subversive hope of the 1980s. Unhappily this has not been the policy followed. The setbacks, suffered but sometimes accepted, are now having a cumulative effect on the state of the popular movement.

The ANC has not succeeded in formulating a coherent economic programme, which could be a basis for remobilization. In the mining sector, the COSATU trade union, the National Union of Mine-workers, is negotiating, without thinking too much about it, a "social" slimming down of the workforce.

The loss of independence of the trade unions in relation to the ANC and the increasingly secret character of the negotiations serve to reinforce the malaise among the rank-and-file. More serious still is the fact that some continue to claim that the current discussions with the government still hold out the perspective of state power for the oppressed.

And the signature of the peace agreement (see attached article) comforts the regime in its hope of coopting and enclosing the ANC in a sort of co-management of the transition, even before the least economic and social reform has been undertaken. ★

A fraudulent peace

ON September 14, 1991, following a conference bringing together most of the political and social forces of the country, a "peace" agreement was launched with the goal of putting an end to the violence tearing apart the townships of the Transvaal and Natal. The event was above all hailed as a pact between the ANC, the government, and the Zulu-based Inkatha party. Some days later the violence restarted; on October 7 at Tokoza 18 people were assassinated by "unidentified" killers. Since that date, 200 people have died in violent circumstances.

PETER BLUMER

IT IS no longer possible to keep count of the mutual recriminations between Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk. Each blows hot and cold. Each seeks to satisfy the impatience, or to calm the fears of, his supporters.

It adds up to the politics of pressures, threats and petty blackmail. But the essential is elsewhere. The true negotiations are taking place in secret inside numerous structures set up at the political, social and economic level.

ANC loses margin of manoeuvre

The ANC has lost any margin of manoeuvre. The constraints of a relationship of forces which is increasingly unfavourable to it are transformed into new doctrines.

The demand for a Constituent Assembly is downplayed in favour of the project for an interim government. The fight for an electoral law that meets the demand for "one person, one vote" is softened, and space left open for the government's project of a two chamber parliamentary sys-

tem which would preserve the (racial) right of minorities.

The central slogans of the old Freedom Charter on the nationalization of the big industries has given way to a total confusion in the ranks of the ANC and to a vast spectrum of contradictory positions. The past enthusiasm for the armed wing of the movement (MK) has given place to disillusion; the people of the townships are receiving very little aid to organize their self-defence against the bands of killers.

The balance sheet is now tragic. At the meetings of the ANC or the COSATU trade unions, the tone remains aggressive. There, the taking of power is still spoken of and some continue to claim that de Klerk is negotiating with his back to the wall. There is a bitter impression that the more Mandela exhorts his partisans and hardens his tone towards the regime, the more he then compromises with the latter.

This is the background to the peace agreement of September 14. Its principal function for the regime would have been to formalize the entry of Inkatha into the process of negotiations on an equal footing to the ANC.

Reactionary heritage

The constitutional reform process will henceforth adapt itself to the recognition of an institutionalized "Zulu" ethnicity. Thus the reactionary heritage of apartheid (which is not limited to differentiating between whites and non-whites but extends this to the blacks themselves) has imposed itself on negotiations which are supposed to be about ending a system based on racial and ethnic identifications. The press is now stressing the weak impact of Mandela amongst the "Indians" of Natal and the "coloureds" of the Cape.

The peace agreement represents moreover a new "institutional" compromise on the part of the ANC at a time when there has still been no constitutional reform, blacks still do not have the right to vote, the bantustans still exist, and so on.

The mechanisms of "peace" represent in effect a form of cooption into structures dominated by the government and the army. The local committees to be set up will be dependent on the police and the local or tribal authorities. They will be charged with regulating demonstrations and meetings and cooperating with the police to identify those responsible for incidents. The signatory organizations must furnish police with the names and addresses of local militants and leaders.

Finally, informers will be protected and the "guilty" denounced. Undoubtedly, in the present circumstances, the signing of such an accord by the ANC represents a loss of independence for the liberation movement.

This new form of control and surveillance in which the ANC is to participate is strangely reminiscent of the old system of "joint management committees" that the

"securocrats" of the Botha era set up to control the townships and identify the leaders. Already at the time it amounted to linking the army and the police with all kinds of local notabilities.

The pressure which will now be exerted on the ANC, in a period where it wishes to convince by its realism and good will, will push it to scaling down mass mobilizations and demonstrations, all capable obviously of leading to violence. Any progressive mobilization would thus be criminalized in the same way as the exactions of the Inkatha militants.

Divisions could sharpen

The division between the ANC and the rest of the political movements of the left also risks becoming sharper. The PAC (Pan African Congress), Azapo (Azanian People's Organization) and WOSA (Workers Organization of South Africa) refused to sign the final document from the peace conference. In response, Mandela called on the General Assembly of the United Nations to support only the signatory movements. Is his target here the PAC? In any case, we are a long way here from the project of the "Patriotic Front", formally accepted by the ANC, and supposed to regroup in unity all the liberation forces.

Not content with having led Nelson Mandela's movement into this impasse, de Klerk continues to accuse him of wishing to "take power by force".

The solution that has been chosen, allegedly to put an end to the violence, puts the aggressors and the aggressed on a footing of equality. Inkatha and its chief, Buthelezi, had hardly signed the document before parading in their thousands in Johannesburg, armed with their traditional tribal weapons. De Klerk, for his part, still affects to know nothing of the commando units of assassins who regularly fire on crowds although it is no secret that the state and army apparatus are behind them.

The social and moral degradation in many townships is very great after so many years of struggle without victory. Many activists hoped to be able to stabilize a system of self-defence. But two essential factors are lacking for such a project; political leaderships which themselves favour this choice and a radical democratic united political battle, which does not surrender on the principal social and political demands.

The capacity for mobilization has weakened but remains high, as shown by the trade union demonstration in Johannesburg against the introduction of a Value Added Tax which will impoverish the poor still further. But the confusions and divisions which reign inside the ANC have been internalized by a large part of the mass movement. A loss of confidence in the capacities of resistance are feeding the political decay in the townships. ★

SINCE 1986 it has been hard to build mass organizations with a lasting existence. Several popular organizations disagreed with Aristide's candidacy in the first place, believing that he did not have the strength to avoid a catastrophe and fearing that it would all end in a "new Chile". It is also the case that the policies followed by Aristide and his government were not equal to the hopes aroused by his candidacy. He had claimed that "transparency" would be a feature of his rule, and this promise was certainly not kept.

At the start of September an incident took place that left a bitter taste in the mouths of many; the departure for the USA of the former provisional president Ertha Pascal-Trouillot. At the time she was legally forbidden to leave the country in the aftermath of the failed coup in January. The justice minister let it be known that the order forbidding her to leave had been lifted more than a month before the public was informed. Under pressure from abroad, Trouillot had been set free several weeks before.

In fact, it seems that all the charges against her had been dropped, but even so nobody could forget that after her presidency the state coffers were found to be empty. Such incidents did not encourage grass-roots mobilization and organization. The botched trial of Lafontant also led to frustration. The trial could have been an opportunity to reveal the background to the coup attempt and obtain information on its international ramifications and the role played by the army — Lafontant's forces were able to seize the National Palace without a shot being fired.

However, the judge silenced Lafontant as soon as he began to blurt out interesting information under pressure. An appeal trial was scheduled, but the word in Port-au-Prince was that it would not take place; that the USA would get rid of Lafontant beforehand. And, curiously, he did indeed die in mysterious conditions at the very beginning of the coup of September 27.

On Friday, September 29, Aristide returned from the United States, where his speech to the United Nations General Assembly had made a strong impression. Oddly, he did not go straight to the National Palace, but made a detour via the shanty town of Cité Soleil. Then he addressed thousands of his supporters gathered in front of the National Palace. Some had kept guard in front of the prison, fearing that Lafontant would escape in Aristide's absence. That evening Aristide made a passionate speech, threatening the bourgeoisie. Since then it has been said that this speech was the spark for the coup. However, the truth is almost certainly the opposite. Aristide knew of a plot to assassinate him between the airport and the National Palace, and this is why he changed his itinerary.

The following day, furthermore, Aristide had a conversation with General

US-backed coup spins out of control

FROM THE MOMENT he was elected Haiti's president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a radical priest committed to improving the lot of Haiti's poor, found himself in an almost impossible situation. The mobilizations on December 6, 1990 (during the elections) and January 7, 1991 (during Lafontant's attempted coup — see /V 198) allowed him to break through the first obstacles. However, the attempts to build a powerful popular movement in the wake of these mobilizations failed. On the whole, the people remained on the sidelines.

ARTHUR MAHON

Cedras, the commander-in-chief of the army, on the subject of rumours of a coup. Thus his speech on September 27 was a message to the plotters and the bourgeoisie. He was saying to them: "Just imagine what would happen if I told this crowd that you were plotting to assassinate me." While this may have been the intention, Aristide's tactics were mistaken. On the one hand he frightened the bourgeoisie and the plotters, but at the same time he did not give his audience the information in his possession, nor did he try to arouse them to confront the threat of a coup.

After his election, Aristide continually called for the formation of vigilante brigades. At the same time, however, he explained that his election "sealed the marriage of the army and the people". This was inconsistent — why form vigilante brigades if the army was ready to protect the people? It seems that Aristide and his circle were convinced that the army reshuffles he had undertaken were enough to ensure the long-term loyalty of the military. It is true that the new police chief stayed faithful to Aristide during the coup, but his own unit turned out to be the spearhead of the coup.

Vigorous purge needed

Army officers sympathetic to Aristide had explained, some weeks prior to the coup, that a vigorous purge of the army was urgently required. Many things seemed to be happening inside the army without the knowledge of René Préval, the prime minister, and also minister of the interior and of defence. According to military sources, the size of the army had increased from 7,500 to 9,000 men since the beginning of the year. Three weeks before the coup, a plane had arrived carrying two containers packed with military material. This had without doubt not

escaped René Prosper, a former soldier whom Préval had inopportunely chosen some months ago to assist him in his tasks as minister of defence. Indeed, it is said that he was one of the conspirators, and that his name figured on the list of candidates for prime minister after the overthrow of Aristide.

The CIA was suspected of having a hand in the coup that interrupted the elections of November 29, 1987, then in the attempted putsch by Lafontant in January 1991. There is hardly any doubt that it is implicated in the coup which began on September 29. The army commander-in-chief, Raoul Cedras, and his deputy, Alix Silva, have been known for a long time for their links with the US embassy. Cedras is not a Duvalierist. He is a resolute pro-American, and a determined partisan of the market economy and the capitalist system. That is why some have mistaken him for a democrat.

The security services responsible to the minister of the interior were heavily infiltrated by the CIA. This could be an advantage, inasmuch as the CIA was disposed to foil plots which obstructed its own plans. But it also explains why these services did not reveal what was being prepared, which they were obviously aware of, given the number of people involved.

After the coup, General Cedras produced a letter of resignation from Aristide, which was even published in the press. Aristide denied having resigned, and such an act hardly conforms with his personality. The letter presents him as resigning "with all his love", a rather caricatured plagiarism of Aristide's style. Moreover, who in Haiti would have the capacities to imitate so well the handwriting and the signature of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, if not the CIA?

The French ambassador used some fair-

ly undiplomatic language to berate the United States and deplore his isolation in the struggle for democracy in Haiti. The United States has tried to hide its role by condemning the coup, in a routine fashion, and by discreetly pointing a finger at certain rich Haitians of Syrian-Lebanese origin, the traditional allies of the Duvalierists.

In reality, this coup has been financed by a very broad swathe of the Haitian bourgeoisie. Indeed, fund-raising in support of the putsch was organized inside this particularly retrograde class. The necessary means were provided by the Brandts and the Madsens (pillars of the oligarchy, who enriched themselves through the coffee trade, and whom nobody has ever dared to touch) as well as the restaurant owners of Pétionville, a residential quarter to the north of Port-au-Prince. After the coup d'état, the bourgeoisie of Pétionville poured out their venom on Aristide, rejoicing at being rid of him.

Forty two million dollars have been channelled into the army, Cedras pocketing five million of it. The soldiers of the Port-au-Prince police corps were bought for the price of \$5,000 each, which represents around two years pay. But not all the soldiers have received the sums promised, and some, heavily armed, recently turned up at the house of one bourgeois to demand "their pay".

The putsch was prepared, or supported after the event, by all those sectors whose interests had been in some way hurt by the Aristide regime; big traders groaning under the new rigour of paying customs duties, smugglers, the mafia and international drugs networks, soldiers who up until now have carved out a big part of the revenues from diverse rackets, civil servants dismissed for corruption, industrialists indignant at the increase in the minimum wage, big landowners frightened at the perspective of land reform.

Balaguer regime implicated

There are several indications that the Balaguer regime in the Dominican Republic was implicated in the coup d'état. Two Duvalierist dignitaries who had sought refuge in the Dominican Republic received a visa to leave the country several days before the coup. Five hundred former Tontons-Macoutes who lived there had also crossed the frontier.

In some of his declarations, Aristide has placed the responsibility for the coup d'état on the Duvalierists, a small group inside the army and the drugs smugglers. In fact this coup has a clear class character. Some soldiers explained to a group of bourgeois who had picked them up as hitch-hikers that they had done this "to protect them". And the national radio claimed that the coup was directed against those "who wish to oppose the poor to the rich".

The press has republished Cedras' denunciations of a "dictatorship under popular pressure" and imaginary human rights violations. In one of his declarations, Cedras unveiled one of the fundamental reasons for the coup; president Aristide had committed the crime of weakening some of the pillars of the Haitian state. A fault which, beyond even the immediate economic interests of the various parties to the coup, was unacceptable as much for the army as for the Haitian bourgeoisie and for imperialism. And it is true that in retiring certain officers and changing others, Aristide and Préval challenged the power of the military hierarchy.

By encouraging the people, in some cases, to close the tribunals which had functioned against the popular interests, Aristide inspired fear in the wealthy whose power has been defended for generations by a corrupt judicial apparatus. In refusing to disown demonstrators who brought pressure on the parliamentarians, Aristide indicated clearly that he placed the authority of the people above that of the deputies and the senators.

While wishing to modify the balance of forces, put the president back on the right track and reaffirm the authority of the army, it is not certain that Cedras wanted to go as far as the overthrow of Aristide. On the contrary, it is now obvious that he began in the first hours of the coup to lose control of a good part of the army. Since then, his deputy, Colonel Silva, has even sought refuge in the United States (perhaps to hold himself in reserve). Cedras must now act under the control of the Duvalierists and the most extreme elements of the army rank-and-file. These latter wanted to physically eliminate Aristide on the day of the coup, and they are now blocking any possibility of negotiating with him.

Some elements of the bourgeoisie are beginning to regret launching this adventure. For, making up for the time lost under Aristide, military commandos are devoting themselves with less and less restraint to extortion from car drivers, as well as the pillage of traders and strong-arm entry into the bourgeois villas.

The leaders of the political parties undoubtedly saw the coup as a means of ousting the government of René Préval, something they had not dared to do themselves a few weeks ago. In refusing to come out in favour of the unconditional return of Aristide, almost all the parliamentary deputies gave de facto support to the coup. But in doing so they played the role of sorcerer's apprentice; on October 7, the army invaded parliament and, under the threat of arms, obliged those present to unseat the prime minister and install a new president of the republic, the judge Nérette. The new self-styled prime minister, Jean-Jaques Honorat, has said that he favours negotiations. The army has already threatened to execute him. ★

Russian workers have had enough!

AS the first autumn snow fell lightly, at least ten thousand people, mostly workers, assembled on October 23 in the Manezh Square in central Moscow.¹ They were attending the first demonstration in which large numbers of workers have confronted the government of Russian president Boris Yeltsin with its economic and social failures.

POUL FUNDER LARSEN

THE action was called by the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP) around a series of demands, including social protection, control by the labour collectives over privatization and indexation of wages. Sizeable contingents of workers were present from key economic areas that included machine building, ship-building, communications and transport, defence industries and state administration.

While only one Russian tricolor was on display, there were many red banners. The placards brought by participants set the tone for the demonstration: The enterprises belong to the workers' collectives, not to the administration! For reforms that create jobs, not unemployment! Gorbachev-Yeltsin, feed and clothe the people! We need flats, not fairytales about privatization! Free prices equals starvation for the workers!

MFP speakers demanded that the Russian parliament immediately adopt laws pledging collective contracts in the enterprises and the indexation of wages. A shop steward from the large car plant AZLK aroused cheers when he warned of the dangers of the current "pirate privatization". But it was a woman trade unionist who drew the loudest applause when she outlined the desperate situation of women workers earning as little as 200 roubles a month (the MFP now puts the subsistence level at 510 roubles a month). She

went on to attack speculators and would-be capitalists who take advantage of the shortages, and called on working people to strike in pursuit of their demands.

This call for political strikes was endorsed by the MFP chairman in an interview with Central Television after the demonstration. Boris Yeltsin's political honeymoon is seemingly coming to an end.

An important theme in several speeches was the effort by the new rulers of Russia to create a "strong executive power". The less than democratic thrust of this government was again in evidence on the eve of the demonstration, when the protest organizers were denied access to their first choice of venue, the square in front of the Moscow Soviet building.

Another illustration of how the ruling "democrats" view the rights of other forces has been the reluctance of the Moscow City Soviet to include trade union representatives in its Committee on Privatizations. The hypocrisy of the new Russian leadership was pinpointed by Alexander Popov, a City Soviet deputy and member of the Socialist Party:

"While government leaders were paying lip service to the workers movement at the Congress of Workers Collectives on October 19 and 20" Popov told the crowd, "Yeltsin was preparing decrees on the ending of price controls — a move which will sharply reduce workers' living standards."

Some speakers retained an ambiguous attitude to the government, calling on Yeltsin and his ministers to be reasonable. But with the the social crisis growing more severe by the day, the confrontations seem certain to multiply. ★

1. On the basis of figures provided by the Moscow militia. Central Television news and leading newspapers estimated the crowd at 50,000.



The first issue of Inter-vzglyad (Russian-language sister publication of IV) has just appeared — contents include a report on the recent World Congress of the Fourth International, Ernest Mandel on economic alternatives, and articles on Marxism and the national question.