

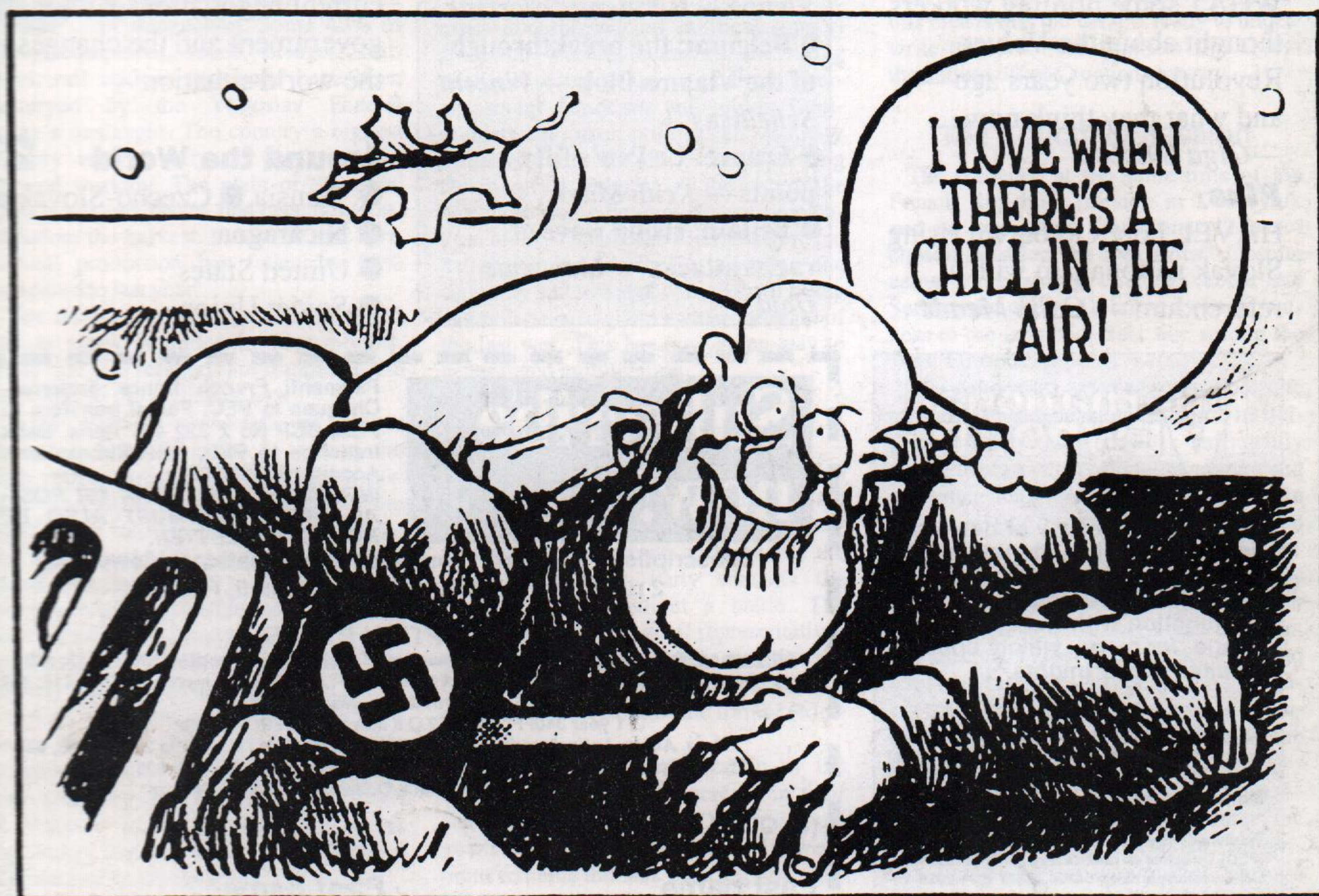
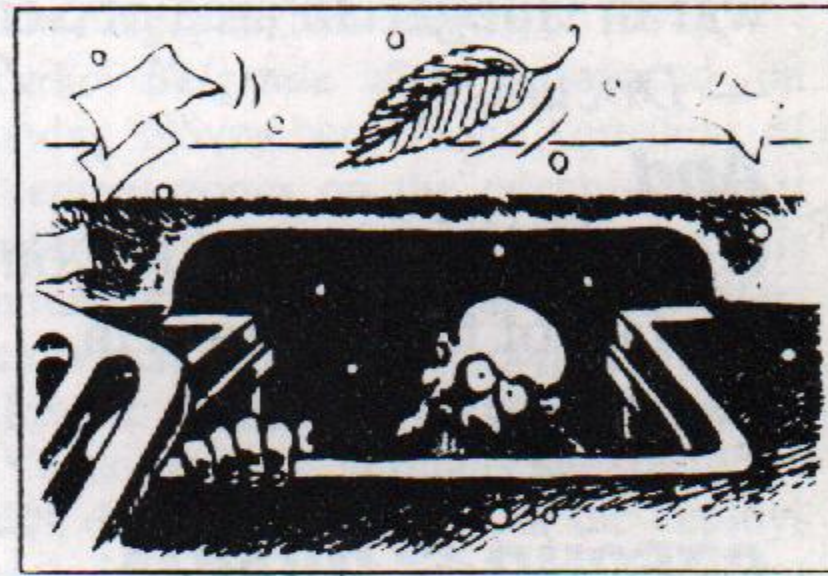
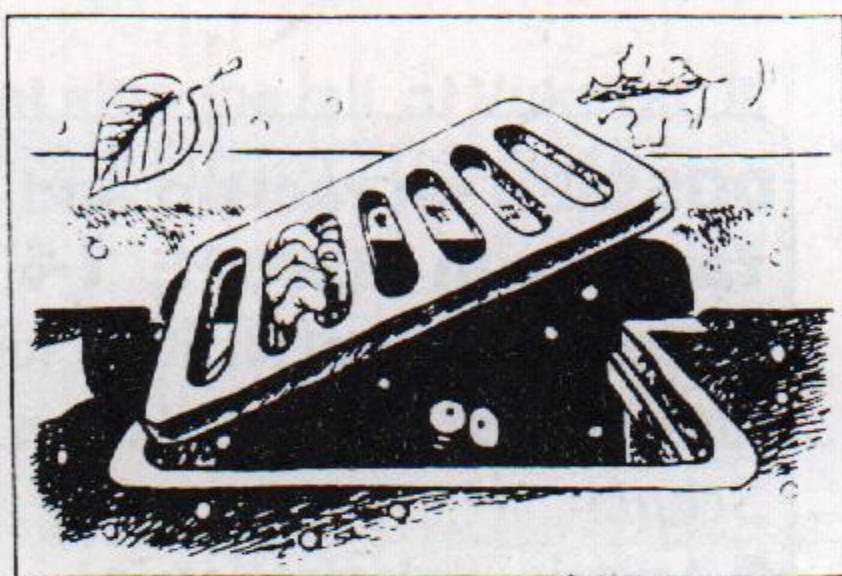
International VIEWPOINT

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Europe: the spectre of fascism



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The Croat tragedy

THE UNITED NATIONS resolved on November 26 to send a peace-keeping force to the front line in the conflict in Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, despite a new ceasefire (the fourteenth), fighting was continuing. Horrific massacres have taken place; in the recently captured Croatian town of Vukovar the Serb nationalist Chetnik militia is reported to have embarked on a systematic policy of terror aimed at driving out the town's Croatian population.

Croatia's president Tudjman has said "I am being criticized by public opinion, by ordinary people, for continuing to negotiate with Europe and the United States while the war continues." (*Le Monde*, November 27, 1991).

The following article was written just after the fall of Vukovar. It appeared in the November 21 issue of the French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge*.

ALEXANDRE LATINOVIC

ONE HUNDRED and twenty days of war in Croatia have wrought an impressive amount of destruction. Some 40% of heavy equipment, roads, bridges, railways, rail stations and ports have been destroyed by the Yugoslav Federal Army's onslaught. The country's biggest refinery and its only oil pipeline have stopped working. The plain of Slavonia, Croatia's bread basket, had been devastated before the harvest. Industrial and agricultural production has fallen by 60% compared to last year.

Ten thousand people have been killed and as many wounded in four months, while 600,000 refugees are trapped in the cities and on the Adriatic Coast.

Many Serbian conscripts no longer believe in their "mission to defend the Serb people threatened by the Croat fascists" and show little enthusiasm for the fight. There have been massive desertions and widespread refusal to follow orders in Montenegro and Serbia itself. As a result, every advance by ex-federal troops has been prepared by massive and murderous bombardments by the airforce and heavy artillery which leave few survivors.

Croat villages and towns that resist have been systematically and methodically destroyed in order to stop the inhabitants from returning after the fighting. The fall of Vukovar has discouraged the Croat population, since it had become a symbol of resistance to the invader.

The Croatian "government of national unity" is coming under attack from the Party of Law (a far right party, represented in parliament, but not included in the government coalition). They accuse President Franjo Tudjman of lack of resolve in the struggle with the Serb enemy and also with collusion with reform Communists,

to whom he gave several ministerial posts three months ago.

However, despite the terrible economic crisis and the lack of political support from the Western countries, the ruling coalition of moderate nationalists, liberals, social democrats and reform Communists has taken political and military initiatives with the aim of strengthening the country's defences. At the start of the war there was a flagrant lack of preparation, along with puerile triumphalism and nationalism, a desire to privatize the economy and to break with the still living symbolism of the anti-fascist struggle of the last war. This has now given way to generalized mobilization.

Army abandons Istria

The army abandoned most of its barracks in Istria, a region of Croatia to the north of the Adriatic, where the workers' movement has a strong tradition and the Croat Communist Party remains the majority force, without a battle. The entry three months ago of representatives of the CCP into the government led to the desertion of a significant number of officers and upper cadres of the former federal army.

This led to a re-organization of the Croat defences and an increase in their capacities. Today, the Croat national guard has become a real army. Its weak point remains the lack of arms, since the Western embargo is being strictly applied to Croatia. However heavy arms and tanks are each day captured from the enemy.

In order to promote the mobilization of Croat society, including the working class, and unleash the country's defensive abilities, a series of measures are

needed, including: a struggle against the fascistic armed bands; incorporation of all the militias into the army; and the nomination of professional officers (deserters from the Yugoslav army) into command posts.

The Belgrade regime clearly understands the new situation. After energetically refusing to allow foreign observers, the Stalino-nationalist regime is now demanding United Nations troops along the line of confrontation. The Serb bureaucracy is no longer invoking the preservation of a united Yugoslavia as the justification for the attack on Croatia; it is now calling openly for a change in Croatia's frontiers to Serbia's benefit "in order to guarantee the security of the Serb people" (according to president Milosevic, *Radio Belgrade*, November 18, 1991).

Radio Belgrade also announced on Monday November 18 the "creation of settlement zones on the occupied Croat territories" to the north of Vukovar. This announcement came at the press conference which followed a meeting between Milosevic and the UN special envoy Cyrus Vance, judged "mutually satisfactory", which dealt with the issue of the deployment of UN troops on the existing front line. Translated from diplomatic language this means that the USA is ready to underwrite the new Serb frontiers and accept the cutting off of Croatian territory.

The Kouchner mission

The presence at the same time of the French Kouchner mission in Dubrovnik and its declaration that France "has not chosen between the two sides" (despite using some strong language about the Serb onslaught on Dubrovnik) bears witness to the lack of a clear line among the West European powers.

The Americans are ready to support the militarist and expansionist regime in Belgrade, which they consider sufficiently strong to act as the regional gendarme and guarantee long-term Western interests in the region (the Yugoslav debt has reached \$20bn).

In order to make this unexpected ally more presentable, the *Washington Post*, in an article devoted to the Vance mission, put an equals sign between the Serb and Croat governments, explaining to its readers that while the Belgrade regime is dictatorial, there are also Communists in the government in Zagreb.

The failure of the Hague conference — Serbia having refused to guarantee the civil and national rights of its own minorities (including the two million Kosovo Albanians) at the same time as demanding Serb-populated territories in other republics — has shown that the European Community is unable to play an independent role. The EEC will now return to the role of humanitarian observer, while the Americans, under the guise of the UN, draw the new frontiers. ★

Antiwar rebellion in Vojvodina

ANY just solution to the Yugoslav crisis depends on the development of a democratic movement inside Serbia opposing the expansionist policies of the Republic's president, Slobodan Milosevic. Rejection of the war by Serbia's non-Serb communities—in particular the Hungarians of Vojvodina and the Albanians of Kosovo, increasingly deprived of national rights, may play the crucial role in this.

The following article, taken from the liberal Belgrade paper, *Vreme*, of November 11, 1991, describes an anti-war rebellion in one region of Vojvodina.

DOCUMENT

LAST TUESDAY, November 5, the planned mobilization of a Territorial Defence Unit in Senta provoked a spontaneous mass rebellion, not only of the reservists and their families but also of other citizens of this little Backa town. This should come as no surprise, since Backa—and Vojvodina as a whole—has borne a far greater burden of this war than is fair. The citizens of Vojvodina in any case complain that the province is now ruled by settlers from Montenegro and Herzegovina who are making their own careers by offering up the Vojvodina people as cannon fodder to their leader Milosevic. Additional tension is caused by refugees from Slavonia [in Croatia] and their alleged privileges. Finally, the treatment of Vojvodina within "united" Serbia has provoked increasing unhappiness, especially as a result of the proposed territorial re-organization [aimed at breaking up the unity of the province].

Given the anxiety caused by this unwanted war and the frustration with the new leaders, the rebellion in Senta came as no surprise. The people demanded an emergency session of the Senta municipal assembly. When convened, it adopted by majority vote the decision to conduct a referendum, as allowed by its statute and other legal acts. In this referendum, answers will be sought to three questions:

1. Do you support the war?
2. Do you agree that your co-citizens should take part in it?
3. Do you agree that citizens who against their will find themselves on the front or in the training centres should immediately return home?

Unsuccessful mobilization of reserve troops

The following day the Novi Sad [the capital of Vojvodina] daily *Dnevnik*, in an article headlined "Canak makes trouble" wrote: "It is not difficult to guess the result of the referendum on which Canak insists, given the unsuccessful mobilization of the Territorial Defence Unit and given the fact that 80% of Senta's citizens are Hungarian." The referendum thus becomes a plot by Nenad Canak, president of the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina, rather than a decision by Senta's assembly and citizens. Because of his attempt to articulate politically this anti-war mood, Nenad Canak became Public Enemy Number One in the eyes of the state.

The virus of anti-war rebellion, however, soon spread from Senta to Ada, where over one thousand citizens gathered on the evening of November 7 to listen to several Hungarian and Serb anti-war activists. "We do not wish death to replace life" said Ferenc Pap from Novi Sad. In the meantime the authorities organized as well. When a delegation from Senta tried to go to Temerin they were met by a large group of heavily armed policemen.

With their guns at the ready, the police forced the buses back without any explanation, some of them shouting "Don't stop until the Hungarian border!" *Dnevnik* now began to describe the peace meetings as "non-Serb" and to exploit the support given to them by the Democratic Union of Vojvodina Hungarians and the Democratic Union of

Croats of Vojvodina.

The campaign against the peace activists followed the well-known pattern. Nenad Canak was chosen as the main culprit. In a statement issued on November 7 by the regional branch of [Milosevic's] Socialist Party of Serbia, Canak was described as "the extended arm of the Croatian fascist hordes." The statement implicitly called for his arrest and lynching when it said: "By their actions, Canak and his co-thinkers are openly siding with the pro-fascist Ustasha politics of the Croatian leadership."

Arrest of leading antiwar activist

After the state organs had several times been called upon to act, they finally obliged on the night of November 7 (the anniversary of the October Revolution), when, shortly after midnight, Nenad Canak was arrested in Novi Sad and taken to a police station for questioning. There he was handed over to the military police who informed him that he had been called-up. They took him first to the Marshal Tito and then to the Majevica barracks.

[According to a statement subsequently issued by the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina, Canak was arrested at the request of the military authorities, although he had never received any call-up papers.]

The regime press has done all it could to publicly malign Nenad Canak and the peace activists from Senta, Ada, Temerin, Becaj, Novi Sad and other Vojvodina towns, playing at the same time the card of racial hatred. The peace movement in



Vojvodina was described as "the fifth column in Serbia, intentionally and unintentionally opening the door to the humiliation and destruction of the Serb nation"; "a dirty and dishonorable fraud following the well-tryed Albanian recipe"; "the vampire-like emanation of the spirit of autonomism"; "a knife in the back of Serbia and its leadership."

The repression also followed the well-established pattern also. Prior to Nenad Canak's arrest, the military police went to the Crisis Centre of the Peace Movement in Senta and arrested two of its activists. The day before it had arrested Janos Szabo, president of the Crisis Centre, at the moment when he was receiving medical treatment following a heart attack. On November 8, the Senta Crisis Centre issued a dramatic statement: "The

forces of WAR have started a decisive battle against our forces of PEACE.... The dismayed and emotionally exhausted people of Senta continue to press their demand for peace, while forced recruitment of Senta's young men in a crazy and mindless war continues."

Veterans and Peace-Loving Citizens

In the Backa, things are taking their own course. After returning from the front, veterans from Horgos established an Organization of War Veterans and Peace-Loving Citizens, which soon gathered several hundred members and has continued to grow.

Their founders speak of their bitterness about the "fratricidal war in which they

no longer wish to participate" of the "great deceptions of the military authorities" and of the fact that every fifth victim among the Vojvodina reservists is a Hungarian.

The Hungarian minority is increasingly clear that it does not wish to take part in a war between Serbs and Croats. The Subotica regional committee of the Hungarian Democratic Union has stated that "Hungarians should not have to take part in a war between Slav nations" and that an ever increasing number of Hungarians are fleeing into Hungary to escape the draft.

The Croat Democratic Union is also against the war. The situation in Vojvodina is on the boil and could have unforeseen political consequences. ★

The Yugoslav trade unions and the war

THE NOW completed break-up of the Yugoslav federation and the rise of nationalism has not spared the trade union movement.* Nonetheless the 1980s — a decade in which, for the first time since the war, the

population saw its real living standards decline — saw significant strike waves in every republic. Over the past decade, the austerity demanded by the IMF to facilitate the repayment of Yugoslavia's foreign debt has weighed down on employment and wages, without resolving the basic problems of the system.

With unemployment running at more than 10% and hyper-inflation which reached a peak of 1,500% in 1989, the values of "self-management socialism" have been discredited. Inequality and divisions between regions have grown. Nationalism has provided a means of blaming others for the crisis and a distorted form of power struggle. It is also the product of the lack of openness and democracy of Tito's regime, despite several decades of socio-economic advances.

As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the turning point of the 1990s has been marked by the end of the State-Party system and the onset of privatization. But, as in the USSR, the crisis has incited the richer republics to leave the sinking ship, hoping thus to enter more rapidly into "Europe". However, the crisis has mainly taken the form of the Serb/Croat conflict and an undeclared war "in defence of Serb minorities" (as the Serb regime and the army put it), or as their opponents put it, "an attack on Croat sovereignty and territory, according to an expansionist logic."

How have the unions dealt with this situation? And first of all how have they been affected by the changes in the regimes?

CATHERINE SAMARY



PLANTA

FORMALLY, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Yugoslavia (the continuation of the former official trade unions) still exists. Dragan Radulovic, a member of the Federation's council, met me in the offices of the Dom Sindikata (the House of the Unions) in what is still called Marx-Engels Square in Belgrade — there is thus so far no question of changing the name.

"The unions will play a new role from now on", Radulovic told me. "Previously they were a very peculiar type of socio-political organization. Now it is a question of defending social interests in a pluralist framework, including as far as unions are concerned." The representative of the Serbian unions who was present specified:

"It could be said that the union was a transmission belt for the party, even in a constitutional sense. Strikes were not legal in the self-management system, since, it was said, 'workers cannot go on strike against themselves'. Since 1988 strikes have been legal." In reality union pluralism exist alongside the old unions, which have been transformed to differing degrees in the different republics. Independent unions have appeared.

Unions demand resignation of Serbian government

But do links remain between unions in different republics? The Confederation official avoided directly answering this question:

"The role of the Confederation is to support the common positions of its affiliated members and oppose the violent solution of conflicts and the violation of the constitution. At the end of February we demanded the resignation of the Federal government, from a worker and union standpoint.

"In July our confederation proposed a peace conference to all unions (including those not affiliated with us). However in practice the Slovene and Croat unions did not take part in the preparation of that conference." From which I gathered that the effort failed.

To my questions on the war and the unions' line on the issue of the sovereignty of the republics, the Confederation representative put forward in a rather reserved manner the usual line from the Serb authorities: "There is a war between the Croatian authorities and the local Serb population. This is the main cause of the armed conflicts in Croatia." But the Croat unions have solidarized with their republic's government and have decided to suspend the right to strike for the duration of the war. What about the Serbian unions?

"Serbia is not at war", replies a leader of the confederation, Slavomir Milosavcivic: "we are furthermore currently involved in a teachers' strike." When, in

this regard, I mention a conflict underway in Kosovo (an Albanian-populated province of Serbia, whose autonomy has been stripped away by Slobodan Milosevic's regime) where to my knowledge many students have been unable to study owing to the massive purge of Albanian teachers, the reply is "everyone has the right to be taught in their mother tongue, but there must be only one syllabus."

The kind of centralist Jacobinism which in France insists that children of immigrants learn about "our ancestors the Gauls" is here applied to Kosovo, a region where 90% of the inhabitants are not Slav. This is also an aspect of the smouldering war. Looking to the future, the "Great Serb" logic shows itself when the ethnic identity of Macedonians and Bosnian Muslims is questioned by my interlocutors. Sure of themselves, they add: "But do you people in France accept the notion of a Corsican people?" There can be no doubt that Jacobin France is a model frequently cited by the partisans of a Yugoslavia united as one people, by force if necessary.

Are inter-ethnic relations better in the new unions? Nezavisnost ("Independence") is the name of one such union, formed on May 25 this year in Belgrade. Branislav Canak, a journalist for Belgrade radio and television, spoke to me about the main branch of this union, in the media. A ferocious war is taking place at this level, with each government presenting its fanaticized vision of the conflict, whipping up hate between nations, and exploiting the memories and fears of the past. This explains the close links that exist between this union and the antiwar movements, which, notably in Serbia, struggle with difficulty against the chauvinist propaganda: "We do not want to be a part of this war" the journalist tells me.

Giving courage and protecting civilization

He is among those who have been sacked by the Serbian regime, which found their output insufficiently committed. "Our aim was to give courage to the other peoples of Yugoslavia, to protect civilization. We pointed out the lies in the information given out. We wanted to form a union that would be independent of all the regimes throughout Yugoslavia, not only in Serbia." Even in Kosovo? "Me, I wanted that too, but I have to say that this was not true of all the journalists here." As for Croatia and Slovenia, "we have not found journalists sharing our decision."

However in Slovenia — and unlike in Croatia — the union scene is beginning to stir. The reason is that the danger of war has receded with the retreat of the federal army. "The proclamation of independence (June 25, 1991) was made in

the context of an economic crisis affecting the stability of the new leading teams of the ruling liberal coalition, DEMOS", Rastko Mocnar told me. He is the leader of the Social Democratic League of Slovenia, a small, extra-parliamentary organization whose idea is to bring together the "68" intelligentsia¹, "socialist self-management" orientated managers and unionists.

He considers that the divergences had been provisionally stifled by "the logic of the state of war" and the accompanying censorship. "The witch-hunt in the media and the economy took the place of a programme. But now the problems are coming back to the fore. The new independent unions are the transmission belts of liberal government policy." At the same time he has a positive assessment of the changes underway in the former official unions, re-baptized as "free unions", to which two thirds of workers are affiliated. But despite this potential, in reality their actions have so far only involved small numbers.

Labour Party formed in Slovenia

"Despite the fact that everything was 'worker' we had forgotten what a workers' struggle is", says Milos Pavlica, a leader of the Labour Party which has just been formed, essentially on the basis of some 10,000 members of the former official unions. "The unions cannot go into parliament, but workers are not represented there, and this is why we have formed a party." Rajko Lesjak, the general secretary of the Free Unions of Slovenia, is also a member of the Labour Party. However, in his union offices, he speaks as a unionist.

He explains the recent changes: "We dissolved the old unions at a congress a year ago. We established new organizational and programmatic bases. Formerly, every worker was automatically a union member. Now you join voluntarily. We have got 450,000 members, that is 60% of the active population. We also replaced the former territorial organization with a branch structure. Finally, we are independent of any party. Only clearly expressed convergences over objectives can give rise to collaboration."

In the past year there have been over 1 million working hours lost through strikes. However of most immediate concern are the draft laws on property coming before parliament. On September 10, on the eve of a parliamentary debate, the Free Unions called a demonstration: "We asked for the vote to be delayed until a vast debate could take place; as it is fundamental decisions were being taken just after the holidays and after a summer spent in a state of war. Our view is that such decisions should be made by referendum."

The draft law, which led to the break-

up of the ruling coalition, was aimed at taking property into state ownership in order to privatize it later, the immediate result being the suppression of any right to self-management. The question of the restoration of agricultural property to former owners is also being discussed. In Slovenia, these legal changes have not even gone as far as in Czechoslovakia. As elsewhere, private capital is a rarity here. The Yugoslav conflict is not an attractive background for potential investors, despite the efforts of the Slovene authorities to get banks to deal with them separately.

The instability of the new governments is a reflection of the social instability, despite the inability of a fragmented left to put forward credible answers. The

demonstration of September 10 only brought out 5,000 people. On the other hand, this is not negligible in a country of less than 2 million people. Furthermore the demonstration was very spectacular, with chains of buses travelling around the city. And it was enough for the vote in parliament to be deferred. ★

* This article first appeared in the French trade union magazine, *Collectif*.

1. In June 1968 there was a wave of occupations in Yugoslavia's main universities, against a background of workers' strikes. In this movement, which was hostile to the pro-market reforms and privatizations introduced in 1965, the critical intelligentsia expressed overwhelming support for a self-managed and pluralist socialism. The main slogans of the movement, apart from egalitarian and social demands, were "self-management from top to bottom" and "down with the red bourgeoisie."

Two years after the "Velvet Revolution" Through workers' eyes

TWO years ago millions of Czechs and Slovaks came out into the streets to demand the end of Gustav Husak's neo-Stalinist regime; abandoned by Moscow, isolated by the fall of the like-minded regime of Erich Honecker in East Germany and deserted by much of the Communist Party apparatus and base, this regime crumbled swiftly, undermined from within. Promising a "return to the West" and market reforms, the Civic Forum (OF) opposition movement and its Slovak counterpart, Public Against Violence (VPN), won a decisive victory in the June 1990 elections.

Since then the OF/VPN have broken up, in the Czech Lands along party political lines, in Slovakia between groups supporting or opposing Slovak nationalism.

Surrounding these political developments are the hopes of Czecho-Slovakia's citizens for a fundamental change in their lives awakened in November 1989. In the following article, taken from the Czech magazine *Listy* (no. 5, 1991), Olga Sulcová describes how some of her working colleagues saw November 1989 and how they felt two years later.

OLGA SULCOVA



WE all like to be told what we want to hear. And the other way round. Nonetheless it remains true that even this rule has its exceptions. For example President Masaryk in the 1920s received [the social democrat] Ferdinand Peroutka precisely because they publicly disagreed. But there are of course not many people like Masaryk.

When in the spring of 1968 I visited my family in Ostrava our old neighbour, the father of my closest childhood friend, lay in wait for me and finally, by the door of the rabbit hutch, gruffly demanded: "This Sik [a pro-reform economist of 1968 vintage] wants to shut the pits. The miners will be out of work. And are you helping him, Olga?" And other co-workers of my dad — neighbours and fathers of my school-fellows — reproached me for supporting the reform current. They were against it. I recounted all this to my journalist colleagues in Prague.

"I'm not surprised" the most experienced of them informed me. "The workers here don't have much to gain from the reforms; indeed they may lose in all kinds of ways..."

I had been working at my present job for seven years. It was at the old printing works in the centre of Prague, where some 80 people worked and where medical and other specialist publications are printed. It was a week after the general strike, and almost everyone had gone out to demonstrate. For a whole week they had gone out each day in the afternoon to Wenceslas Square to shout with relish "Now is the time".

Why are you happy?

I asked some of my colleagues "why are you happy about the revolution? Not much will change as far as your working life is concerned..."

1. Petr Svatek, book printer (29 years old): "I hope that what we have learnt about printing in the world will be applied here in due course. And that I will get a new and more efficient machine. At the moment, even if I want to do something I can't. We have obsolete, decrepit machinery."

2. Karel Langer, book printer (43): "Even if I have to spend the rest of my life at these machines, there will be a different atmosphere — free elections, more opinions; everyone will choose what appeals to them."

3. Marie Kafková, buyer, (57): "As you possibly know, I am a believer. Until now the state has been very hostile to us. I am glad that my grandson will be able to come to religion as I did. Also, I am pleased that I will be able to go to Vienna."

4. Jaroslav Mikoláš, book printer (57): "The thing that I like the most is that it will be possible to rehabilitate 1968 and all the hopes connected with it. And I am



Kresba Vladimír Jiránek

glad that our children will be freer than we were."

5. Marika Drhanová, compositor (42): "We have all been wronged in some way in the past 20 years. And often there has been no way to address this, even if you banged your head on the wall. It could be something faulty that someone bought, bad health care or the schools. Even if not much changes for us, there will be change for our children."

6. Milos Javurek, book printer (42): "I do not see a direct connection between these two things. Freedom will express itself elsewhere and perhaps in time also here. Mainly, I can see that this movement will lead to something."

7. Miroslav Petrzilka, offset printer (25): "It chiefly depends on me. I am quite a lazy person, but that also has something to do with the way things have been. If I do some good work, other will perhaps be able to value it."

Here my private survey from the first days of December 1989 ends. I did not finish the manuscript. I had to go to hospital, and meanwhile the answers of my "private correspondents" became out of date. But after nearly two years I rediscovered these two typed pages. These statements by my fellow workers of the time, with their ingenuous enthusiasm and irrepressible hope for a better tomorrow are almost touching after this so short, but also so long, period of time. Today this has the flavour of history.

Two years later

How would these same people answer the same questions now? Would they even be ready to talk to me again?

1. Petr Svatek (31): "It makes me laugh to recall what I said two years ago. I hope that you did not take my answer too seriously. I have quite other concerns now than I had then. Far more serious. We are

expecting our second child, and my wife has been at home since last year's promotion — her job no longer exists. My pay — at 2,500 crowns a month — has not changed, but prices have. I pay 1,500 crowns for our apartment. Shoes for our three-year old cost 80 crowns, small boots, which were 30 crowns, now cost 250.... If I did not have a second job in the private sector I don't know how we would survive. After November President Havel said that our living standards, those of people who have inherited nothing and have no capital, would not drop. It seems that this was not true. But would I want things to return to as they were before? Not in any circumstances."

2. Karel Langer (45): "What I talked about then — free elections, more points of view, each choosing what appealed to them — has come about. But today I am wiser than I was then. I have lost my illusions. I see that the people who are doing well now are the same who were doing well before November 1989. Such people retain their connections and knowledge from the former time; they are linked together by mutual back-scratching. Thus "they" are the victors. And what still annoys me is that those who are most to blame have not been called to answer for their actions. Nothing has happened to any of them. They live in peace and quiet. It is only the small fry who have been hunted, while the big fish are still swimming along. Furthermore, foreign capital was involved even in the small privatization [of shops, restaurants etc]. From the start everyone should have had to show how they came by such big sums of money. Nobody here was in a position to come up with 82 million crowns and buy a leisure steamer. These people are only puppets. This makes my blood boil. Why do we have to behave like idiots? Let things be said exactly as they are. That would be easier for everyone to take."

3. Marie Kafková (59): "This really needs hours. As you can see I am all swelled up with peritonitis. But I have to tell you: These Slovaks make me mad. Why do we put up with them? If they want to go, let them go! Have I gone to Vienna? Not yet. Somehow I don't seem to get round to it. There are other things to worry about..."

4. Jaroslav Mikoláš (59): "I stand today on everything I said then. Our children are freer than we were, even if their lives are more complicated. Our son was a shop manager, but the shop was sold in an auction, and now he does not know what will become of him. He does not have the money to buy something in an auction himself. Before everything here was

more comfortable, but it wasn't working. It would have ended in a big crash."

And what about 1968 — do you really think that it will be rehabilitated?

"In my opinion, yes. Fully."

But reading the newspapers or listening to some politicians, you would think that the opposite was true...

"That is just some political game. People with no achievements to their name are belittling anyone who did something useful in 1968. In my opinion, what people did and attempted to do then was right and in tune with the needs of the time. What is happening today grew out of 1968. Without the 'Spring' of that year there would have been no "November" in 1989."

5. Marika Drahanová (44): "I continue to hold to everything I said and hoped for then. If it had not happened, then things would have been much worse now. That may still happen. My fear is that in a year or two there will not be enough food. I cannot make head nor tail of our agricultural policies. I do not know if our politicians are up to it. Certainly, if the farmers leave the land owing to the unforeseen and bad situation, we will go hungry. Also, I do not think it is just that present or former Communists remain in so many positions. Communists will always be Communists! Prices have doubled and redoubled, but our wages are the same. We have two daughters at school — one is studying agriculture and the other is at technical college. I buy most of their books with our savings, but there is not much left of these. I live in fear that the fridge or the washing machine will break down. And where would I find ten or twelve thousand crowns today? Then I swear, but when someone starts swearing in front of me and says that it was not like this under the Communists then I go for them. If things had simply gone on as they were, there would have been a catas-

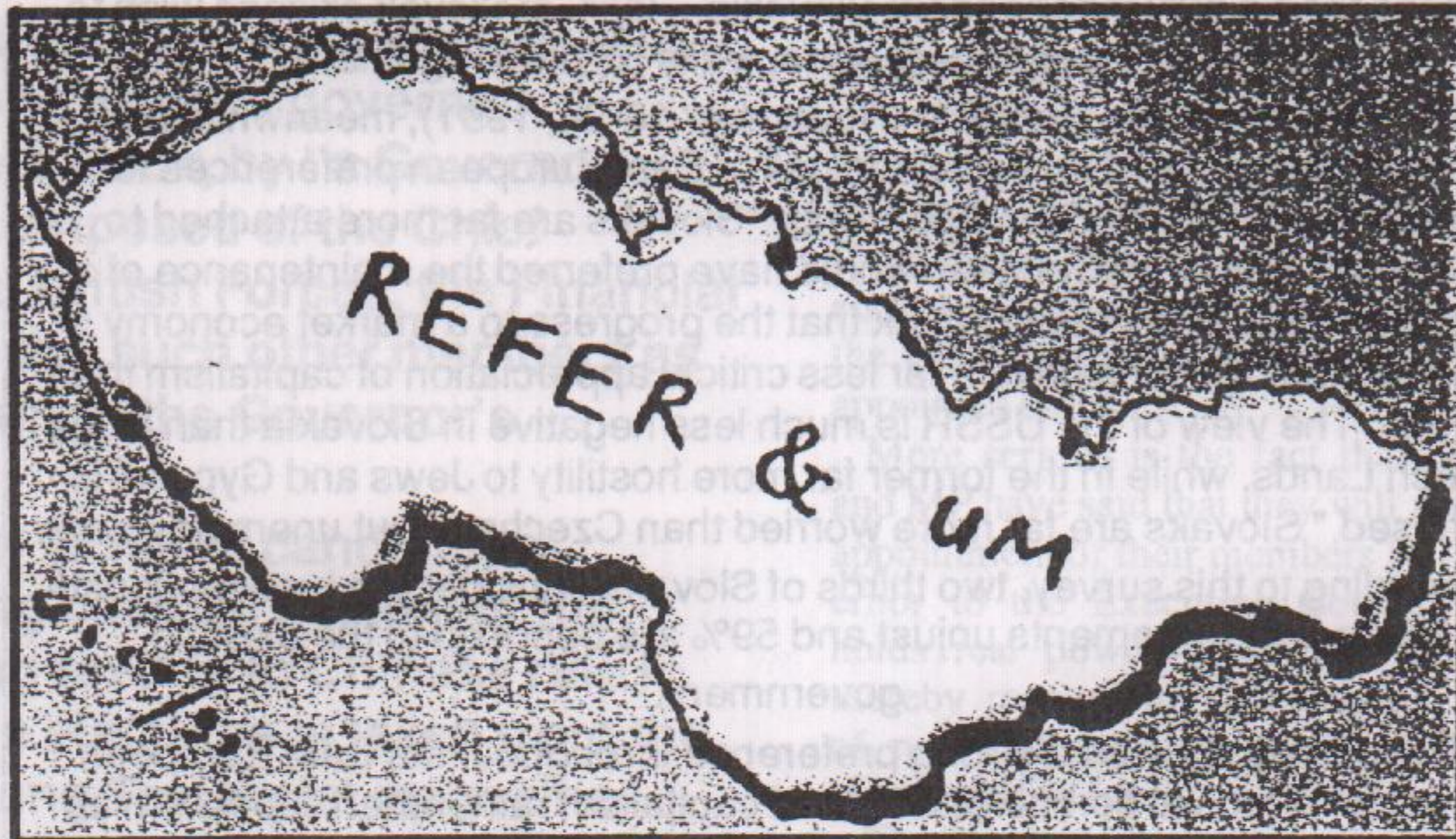
trophe. As long as you have work things are alright. Both me and my husband are working. And I hope that if you ask again after another two years, I will answer more cheerfully."

6. Milos Javurek (44): "I maintain what I said two years ago. But now I am in the minority. People are discontented and grumble. They say: everything is bad and nothing and nobody is in their rightful place. They would do better. The education of the previous forty years is showing through in people. There is hate and envy. We should all have the same. The theory about all stomachs being the same has taken root. As a people we are like this: we get roused up to do something but in a few days we lose interest and go for a beer. It is the same with the tightening of the belt — when it really happens, we don't want to know about it any more. The worst grumblers have the least reasons. Recently it seems to me that people have calmed down a bit — inflation has stopped. I believe that in time everything will turn out fine. Time is needed. In my opinion it is all a matter of time. We must not be too impatient. Problems that no one expected have arisen. It is not easy to solve them. But things will slowly get better. I am an optimist. And I am calm. I am annoyed by the petrol issue. I used to go to my cottage each week, but now I simply cannot get there. But otherwise I am at peace; no more nonsense about May 1 demonstrations, meetings, political education or pressure to join the party. And if I want to pick up my passport and go, I can go where I want."

The seventh respondent to my private survey, Miroslav Petržilka, had in the meantime got married, moved and changed his job. Thus he was the only one of the seven who I did not talk to again.

Also I am annoyed with myself now for not including in the survey J.D. who had newly joined our firm as a paper cutter. He arrived at the start of 1989 straight from prison. He had spent quite a lot of time in jail, but he was no big criminal — rather a banal recidivist, sentenced for receiving stolen goods, disturbing the peace and the like. Otherwise he was quite a nice lad, and by no means stupid. He had a criminal record, no qualifications, no means and nowhere to live. He was on the run from his second wife. By chance I ran into him this May in the what used to be the National Committee building. I was there to deal with my pension and he was after a trading licence. He was preparing some kind of business. We looked at each other with suppressed sympathy. In fact, however, my sympathy was out of place. As I have recently learned, our former paper cutter J. D., the man without a home, a wife, means and with a criminal record, already has two cars and shops in Prague's prestige stores. His fingers glitter with rings and he has a lot of money in the bank... ★

Havel manoeuvres to meet Slovak challenge



"IN THE interests of protecting our state from chaos"

Czecho-Slovakia's president Vaclav Havel announced on the country's TV on November 17 that he would be seeking a series of new constitutional measures. These included the right of the president to call referenda under certain circumstances; the rapid coming into effect of the new law on the federal structure of the state; and a law facilitating the calling of new legislative elections and permitting the president to rule by decree when no legitimate Federal Assembly exists.¹

COLIN MEADE

THE reason for this dramatic announcement was the continuing constitutional stalemate in the country resulting from efforts by the Slovak government to wrest sovereignty away from the Federal institutions.

Slovakia, the eastern part of the Czecho-Slovak state, containing about a third of the country's population, has always been an unhappy and unequal partner in the various Czecho-Slovak state formations that have existed since 1918. After the "Velvet Revolution" of November 1989 a powerful mood developed in Slovakia for a complete re-definition of the terms of the joint state with the Czech Lands, with a significant minority supporting complete independence.

Over the past year the major parties in the Slovak parliament and government have increasingly attempted to exercise

self-determination in practice, taking initiatives without reference to federal authorities in Prague, and calling for a new constitution to be ratified *first* by the two national parliaments and *only then* by the Federal Assembly, thus giving constitutional primacy to the former.

The Slovak National Council (parliament) has discussed the setting up of a Slovak defence force, independent Slovak delegations have set off on diplomatic missions abroad and, "when Federal and Czech politicians called for a quick application for membership in the NATO following the coup attempt in Moscow, [Slovak premier] Carnogursky publicly voiced his reluctance."²

Repeated negotiations between Slovak and Czech/Federal representatives have

1. *Lidové noviny*, November 18, 1991.

2. *Rudé právo*, September 4, 1991.

What the polls reveal

IN November the Prague Institute for the Investigation of Public Opinion (IVVM) conducted a poll into, among other things, Czech and Slovak views on the future of the common state. According to the summary of the poll published in *Lidové noviny* (November 22, 1991). "Czechs mostly prefer a unitary state, with a federal arrangement in second place, as do a majority of Moravians and Silesians... Slovaks mostly support a federation or a confederation, while slightly more Slovaks are in favour of a unitary state with the Czechs than a fully independent Slovakia... 23% of Slovak citizens wish to live in an independent state, while 52% are against it."

The Czech weekly, *Respekt* (November 18-24, 1991), meanwhile published the results of an American poll of East European preferences for socio-economic models. Apparently "Slovaks are far more attached to Socialism, and in many cases would have preferred the maintenance of a Socialist state. The majority think that the progress to a market economy is going too fast. Czechs have a far less critical appreciation of capitalism than Slovaks. The view of the USSR is much less negative in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands, while in the former far more hostility to Jews and Gypsies is expressed." Slovaks are far more worried than Czechs about unemployment.

According to this survey, two thirds of Slovaks consider the present constitutional arrangements unjust and 59% are opposed to the existing government.

The survey showed a strong preference throughout the East European region for a "social democratic form of capitalism rather than capitalism as found in the USA or Japan". For Czechoslovakia 68% of respondents were in favour of the former and 14% in favour of a "purely capitalist" option. ★

foundered on the issue of whether Federal or Slovak law should take precedence in Slovakia.

The conflict between the Slovak leadership and the Federal/Czech counterparts go beyond constitutional questions, however. As Carnogursky's reservations on the question of NATO show, official Slovak thinking is out of line with the firmly pro-Western and pro-market orientation favoured in Prague.

In June this year the then Slovak premier Vladimir Meciar was ousted for his reluctance to support drastic privatization plans. However his compromise replacement, Carnogursky, has also bent to popular pressures on the national and economic issues. As a Slovak supporter of the maintenance of the existing federation has explained: "It is not inevitable that a fascist or some other kind of totalitarian state would arise [in an independent Slovakia] but what is absolutely certain is that there would be an economic collapse."³

Slovakia has to be brought into step. The means chosen to do this is the proposal for a referendum, or new elections, to be polarized dramatically around the question of *separation or not*. Efforts to get a referendum launched by the Federal Assembly, however, have failed owing to a boycott by the main Slovak parties. Thus the president's attempt to go over the head of the Assembly.

The president's ploy plays intelligently on the confusion within the Slovak camp. Here there are three main currents: one resolutely pro-federalist (the Public

Against Violence), another resolutely pro-separation (the Slovak National Party); but these two are very much in the minority. The third, mainstream, current wants some form of confederation through self-determination. This point of view is shared, more or less by the supporters of the former premier Meciar, the Christian Democratic Movement of the present premier Carnogursky, and the former Communist Party (SDL).

However this current is ridden with personality conflicts and power struggles. Behind these stand important social and political differences; thus both the Christian Democrats and the former Communist party find themselves *de facto* in the same camp on this one issue. The result is constant vacillation in the conduct of the struggle for sovereignty and in negotiations with the federal and Czech authorities.

Efforts to get a sovereignty declaration through the SNC have more than once failed, even though if you add up the deputies of the parties who appear on paper to be in favour of such a declaration it should pass without difficulty.

The spirit of vacillation

The Slovak premier, the Christian democrat Jan Carnogursky — constantly looking over his shoulder at Meciar — is a living incarnation of these vacillations; he has been sharply critical of the Declaration of Slovak Sovereignty on the grounds that it would violate the existing Czecho-Slovak constitution. "No state

would be willing to recognize Slovakia if it gained its independence through unconstitutional means."⁴. At the same time he has talked of the coming into being of an independent Slovakia within Europe by the year 2000⁵ (not so far away any more...).

Another chronic weakness of the Slovak leadership is their identification with hostility to the country's more than 500,000 strong Hungarian minority, with the result that representatives of this minority are now firmly in the pro-federalist camp.

Slovak public opinion, though largely supportive of the mainstream current, is also on the whole in favour of some kind of common state with the Czechs. Thus, given the in-fighting among the Slovak leaders and their evident lack of relish for a real confrontation over the issue, a referendum which sharply poses the question of separation could see a majority even in Slovakia for a continuing federation (as people vote for *some sort of association*) — to be interpreted as a green light for Prague's plans for the economic and political future of the country as a whole.

However, even a referendum victory for Havel and the federal government will not bury the Slovak question. The further progress of the economic reforms will hit Slovakia especially hard and the Slovak national institutions will be seen as one buffer against the onslaught. Havel has consistently ruled out the use of force to deal with the Slovak issue, but others may think differently. The Slovak question in any event will continue to loom large in the country's political life.

Without wishing to apologize for the existing Slovak leaders, furthermore, the case on self-determination seems clear enough. Slovakia has never formally agreed to any of the "Czechoslovakia's" of the past. If there is to be a new joint state, it has to be agreed to by equal partners exercising full sovereignty.

The shadow of the clerico-fascist state

Additionally, whatever idiocies may have been uttered by this or that Slovak politician on the subject of the pro-Nazi puppet Slovak state of 1939-45, the situation today is not the same. Then elements in the Slovak nationalist movement put themselves at the service of the expansionist Nazi dictatorship. This time the issue of Slovak self-determination is being posed by Slovaks independently of, and even in conflict with, the will of other powers great or small.

And self-determination of this kind can only be won by massive, freely given, internal popular support and a policy of alliances based on friendship between peoples. ★

3. Vladimír Savcinsky in *Lidové noviny*, November 15, 1991.

4. CTK, September 16, 1991.

5. *Libération*, July 20, 1991.

Hong Kong voters reject Beijing and colonialism

IN SEPTEMBER the first partial direct elections were held in Hong Kong. A British colony, Hong Kong is governed, according to the *Statesman's Year Book*, by "a Governor, aided by an Executive Council, composed of the Chief Secretary, the Commander of the British Forces, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney-General and such other members as may be appointed by the Queen upon the Governor's nomination."

The voters took this opportunity to reject candidates associated either with the existing colonial system or the Chinese bureaucracy (Hong Kong reverts to Chinese rule in 1997). The following article on the elections is taken from the November 5 issue of the Hong Kong Trotskyist magazine, *October Review*.

THE casting of votes by Hong Kong citizens in the 1991 partial direct election for the Legislative Council certainly did not reflect the government propaganda that "Voting is Power". However, whether voters voted or not and for whom they voted, can be taken as a political thermometer reflecting their preferences.

Three obvious observations can be made:

- The three candidates explicitly identified with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lost by a considerable margin;

- All the candidates supported by the Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA), representing the bourgeoisie, also lost;

- Candidates from the United Democrats (UD), Meeting Point (MP) and other groups largely identified as "democrats" won.

Rejection of pro-Beijing candidates

The defeat of all candidates related to the regime in Beijing shows that, two years after the 1989 democracy movement in China, Hong Kong citizens have not lessened their rejection of the CCP regime. Moreover the changes in the Soviet Union during the campaign period, in particular the fall of the Soviet Communist Party, have sent a clear signal that the CCP regime is also in its death agony.

Even with their strong grassroots network and the huge financial and human resources thrown into the election campaign by organizations such as the pro-CCP Hong Kong Trade Unions Federation

(HKFTU) and community organizations, their candidates lost to the "democrats". This shows clearly the political aspiration of many Hong Kong citizens for democracy.

The political burden of tail-ending the CCP regime will continue to create big pressure for the HKFTU and other such organizations. How to locate themselves in the changing situation in Hong Kong and China, with what material resources and ideology to maintain the participation of active members and develop grassroots networks — these are the key questions for them.

Party of big bourgeoisie defeated

The political significance of the defeat of all candidates presented by the party of the big bourgeoisie, the LDA, is equally great. It shows that citizens are discontented with the plundering of big capital, and reject conservative political forces closely linked to British colonial rule.

The Chinese and British regimes have colluded with each other in secret deals to prepare for the transfer of power to mutually agreed forces, and have joined hands in blocking the direct election of all Legislative Council members.

The election results show that Hong Kong rejects both pro-CCP and pro-British colonial forces. It is thus foreseeable that the CCP and the colonial regime will jointly block the request of the masses for a significant increase in the number of directly elected seats in the 1995 Legislative Council election (currently 18

out of 60, scheduled to increase to 20 in 1995).

The winning of most of the directly elected seats by the "democrats" (mostly of middle class background) reflects the support of Hong Kong citizens for their program of "striving for democracy and protecting livelihood" and their aspiration for a society with democratic rights and social security. How they try to realize their program after entering the Legislative Council will be a stiff test for the "democrats".

Immediately after the elections, the UD proposed a secret list of candidates to the Governor for the appointed seats on the Council, an incident that attracted widespread criticism — the central issue being the UD's failure to oppose the system of appointed seats.

More serious is the fact that both UD and MP have said that they will accept the appointment of their members by the governor to the Executive Council (which holds real power under the Governor), thereby recognizing the colonial system of rule and showing readiness to share responsibility for it.

The incident was condemned in a joint letter by 53 individuals and groups. This statement regrets the contravention of the concept of democracy and stresses that all seats in the Legislative Council should be directly elected by Hong Kong citizens on the principle of one person, one vote.

Vacillations on democratic principles

Besides their vacillations on democratic principles, the "democrats" lack a substantial organized grassroots network. The election model favours candidates with high media exposure. Many citizens supported the "democrats" for their general position on democratic and social welfare issues — but it is not clear how deep this support goes.

Furthermore, only half of the eligible voters registered for these elections and less than 40% of them voted. Thus the "democrats" victory is only a first step in the citizens' struggle for democracy; a long process of organizing the masses lies ahead.

From this point of view, consistency has to be maintained in respect of organizational means and programmatic principles.

The democracy movement should insist on the need for citizens' self-organization to pursue the struggle for democracy; the aim of the democracy movement should be to totally break with the period of British colonial rule, as well as with control and manipulation by big capital and the CCP regime, so that the people can democratically decide the social system. Attempts to rely on the conservative forces or to compromise and trade will lead to retreats on principles.

The 1991 election is a milestone on the

Chan Cheong ran on behalf of October Review in a mainly working class constituency. He gained 3421 votes (4.2%). Here is a summary of his platform.

Main Themes:

- Promote democratic changes in mainland China, end CCP one-party rule, return power to the people and realize democratic unification of China on a democratic basis.
- Defend the rights of workers and grassroots organizations, and, based on the self-organization of the masses, strive for a universally elected People's Congress of Hong Kong to exercise full power and realize democratic self-rule.

Basic Positions:

- Strengthen the solidarity of the people in mainland China and Hong Kong, support the people in mainland China in their struggle for democracy; end CCP one-party rule, return power to the people, democratically draft a new constitution.
- The sovereignty of Hong Kong belongs to the people of China. Strive for the convening of a universally elected People's Congress of Hong Kong to exercise full power and end colonial rule, define the political, economic and social system in Hong Kong and the rights of citizens, realize highly autonomous and democratic self-rule, and finally come to democratic unification of China.
- Hong Kong deputies to National People's Congress to be directly elected and responsible to the people of Hong Kong.
- Rescind the undemocratic Basic Law, democratically draft a Self-rule Law.
- All key questions related to Hong Kong to be decided according to the wishes of all Hong Kong citizens by mechanisms such as universal referendum; against monopoly and manipulation by the authorities.
- Support all democratic reforms favourable to the masses; for direct elections to all councils.
- Promote the self-organization and mobilization of the masses to realize democratic self-rule and to counter attempts by CCP and Britain to find professional elite successors to rule Hong Kong.
- Defend living standards against inflation; defend right to jobs; for a full social security system; for the equality of the sexes. ★

road to democracy in Hong Kong. At the same time the Western election model favours the rich and powerful.

For the moment grassroots power, independent of the CCP regime or the British colonial regime is generally very weak, both in terms of the organization and mobilization of the masses and from the point of view of formulating programmes.

Despite very limited human and material resources, Chan Cheong, representing *October Review*, managed to take part in the election to put forward a program exposing the fake "representative government" system and putting forward an unequivocal view of the relationships between mainland China and Hong Kong, radical democracy and other social issues.

Generally favourable reception

The program received a generally favourable reception in the media and among some grassroots activists.

During the election campaign period, some vanguard groups drafted a Women's Program, a Workers' Program and a Students' Program, constituting voices alternative to parliamentary politics. They raised an important idea; let the grassroots define their own demands and not just give their votes to a particular candidate or party.

However these programs were only the work of small groups, and were not widely discussed among women, workers or students themselves.

Now that the elections are over, the discussions among grassroots organizations on the programs and the actual task of organizing must continue. ★



Massacre highlights repression

THE MASSACRE by Indonesian troops of as many as 200 mourners at a funeral in East Timor has thrown the spotlight of media attention on one of the world's bloodiest and most tenacious national liberation struggles.

BERNARD GIBBONS

THE carnage took place on November 12 in East Timor's capital, Dili, at the funeral of a Timorese youth, Sebastao Gomes, who had been killed by Indonesian security forces on October 28. According to the military version of events, a pistol was fired and a grenade thrown before the army opened fire.

However, two US journalists who witnessed the massacre and were badly beaten by Indonesian troops confirmed that the army had simply fired thousand of rounds into the crowd of 3,500 who emerged from the funeral Mass holding banners calling for self-determination for East Timor.

A linguistic misunderstanding

Subsequently, the Indonesian army's regional commander, Major-General Sintong Panjaitan, alleged that the death toll was only 15 and tried to explain the shootings as the result of a linguistic misunderstanding, claiming that his troops mistook the order "don't fire" for "fire". This rather unlikely account is hardly borne out by eyewitness accounts of troops savagely beating the wounded and turning away ambulances which had arrived on the scene.

Since the killings, human rights organizations estimate that up to 400 participants at the funeral have been arrested and tortured, and the Red Cross has been refused permission to visit the wounded. In the past few days, there have been reports of as many as three further massacres.

East Timor, formerly a Portuguese colony, has been occupied by Indonesia since

December 1975. An estimated 30,000 Indonesian soldiers are currently deployed in this country of 700,000 inhabitants, confronting a poorly armed guerilla army led by the Timorese liberation movement, Fretilin (Frente Revolucionario de Este Timor Independente).

The situation in Dili had been tense since the announcement on October 24 that a visit to the territory by a Portuguese parliamentary delegation, aimed at resolving the dispute over East Timor's status, had been suspended. Timorese said there had been heavy military intimidation and threats against local people prior to the scheduled visit in order to prevent them from expressing support for self-determination.

The massacre was strongly condemned by Portugal (still recognized by the United Nations as the legal administrative power in East Timor), which has called for an international inquiry and asked the EC to consider severing all relations with Indonesia. A national day of mourning for the victims of the massacre was held in Portugal on November 19.

Netherlands suspends aid

The Netherlands has already suspended aid to the Djakarta regime. The US state department limited itself to expressing "regret" and calling for a "prompt and full investigation". For its part, the British government has ruled out any arms embargo against Indonesia.

Australia, a few hundred kilometers away, is one of the few countries that recognizes Indonesian sovereignty in East Timor. Its notoriously lachrymose Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, had no tears to shed for the victims of the military, merely calling for "a thorough investigation". Australia and Indonesia recently signed the Timor Gap treaty, with a view to exploring the potentially rich oil reserves beneath the Timor Sea, and Canberra is clearly not going to allow human rights considerations to undermine the opening to Asia which is becoming increasingly central to its economic strategy.

Nonetheless, the Hawke government has been shaken by the massacre and the angry protests which followed in most of Australia's major cities, and it is moderating somewhat its pro-Indonesian tone.

The Indonesian government, accustomed to carrying out the most savage butchery without a peep of protest from Western governments and media, appears to be somewhat taken aback even by these restrained protests — an "Israeli-style" inquiry is now to be set up to limit the damage, presided over by a retired military notable.

The eastern part of the island of Timor was under Portuguese control for four centuries: following the overthrow of the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal in April 1974, Fretilin was formed in September 1974 as a broad front against the colonial

presence.

There followed a brief period of civil war with a more conservative group, the UDT, in which an estimated 3,000 people died, but Fretilin had established effective control of the country by September 1975.

An Australian MP, Ken Fry, who visited East Timor in that month, observed that "the Fretilin administration was responsible and moderate and had the massive support of the people of East Timor... The civil war had ended". His testimony is significant, because one of the pretexts for the subsequent Indonesian invasion was the need to end the civil war, together with the alleged "Communist threat" represented by Fretilin. In fact Fretilin's "Catholic populist" programme, centring around a literacy and health drive and the beginning of an attempt to plan the development of the country's economy in accordance with popular needs, owed much more to Paulo Freire than to Mao Zedong; but even the prospect of such a government, in a strategically sensitive area, was too much for President Suharto's "New Order" regime in Djakarta and a US government still reeling from its defeat in Vietnam.

US gives support to invasion

On November 28, 1975 the Democratic Republic of East Timor was proclaimed. Indonesia invaded on December 7, 1975, the invasion coming within 12 hours of a visit to Indonesia by US President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Three US destroyers participated in the Indonesian military blockade of East Timor, and Congress voted to double military aid to Djakarta a few days after the attack.

The US, Britain, France and Germany abstained on a subsequent resolution in the UN condemning the invasion (which was nonetheless passed) — however the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on December 22, 1975, calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Indonesian troops.

Using chemical and biological weapons, the Indonesians killed an estimated 10% of the Timorese population in the first six months of the invasion — in July 1976 East Timor was formally annexed as Indonesia's 27th province. In 15 years of military occupation, it is estimated that a third of the population of East Timor (or around 200,000 people) have died.

It is hardly necessary to point out the



parallels with Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, nor the very different response shown to the aggression by the major imperialist powers. Western governments have continued to maintain the closest economic, political, and military links with the Djakarta dictatorship (the United States and Britain are Indonesia's main arms suppliers, while Australia provides military and intelligence training).

The media have connived in covering up the crimes of the Suharto regime both in Indonesia and East Timor (thus, preposterously, the *Financial Times*' Claire Bolderson claimed on March 22 of this year: "Indonesians are immensely proud of their democracy [in which] "opposition" is a dirty word and the bickerings and snipings of western democratic practice are scorned. Potentially divisive voting ... is almost unheard of" — this happy state of affairs having been brought about through 25 years of military-backed tyranny and the slaughter of up to a million Communists and members of the Chinese minority between 1965 and 1969).

Opportunity for solidarity

Nonetheless, the obvious embarrassment of Western governments at having their double standards so blatantly exposed provides a good opportunity to build solidarity with Fretilin and its call for self-determination and an international arms embargo against Indonesia, especially in those countries most complicit with the Suharto dictatorship.

It should also provide an opportunity to focus on solidarity with the movement for democracy within Indonesia. Perhaps the most significant protest against the massacre took place in Djakarta itself, where about 200 people demonstrated on Tuesday, November 19, with banners calling for self-determination for East Timor (70 were subsequently arrested). This, with other as yet modest developments (like the formation of an independent Indonesian trade union at the end of last year) indicates that time might be slowly running out for a regime that deserves to be ranked among the most bestial on the planet. ★

Racism and anti-racism in Germany

THE following article argues that the racist outrages in Hoyerswerda and elsewhere in Germany in recent weeks are planned actions by militant neo-Nazis rather than simply the work of confused youth. The author argues that to meet this threat a broad nationwide movement is needed to combat racism in all its forms. The article was first published in the November 1991 issue of *Inprekorr*, a monthly magazine produced by German supporters of the Fourth International.

HANS JÜRGEN SCHULZ

“THE SEED which the teachers of our country have sown and are daily sowing has sprung to life”, commented Margot Honecker in June 1989. She knew better, since even then 6% of East German youth identified themselves as on the radical right, while for a long time the Stasi [East German secret police] employed a team of skinheads. This was hardly the teachers’ fault, but that of social reality, which undermined the teachers’ credibility.

Since the beginning of April, when Jorge Gomondai was killed in Dresden, scarcely a night has passed in the new democratic and peace-loving Germany without arson attacks or physical assaults; 2,000 neo-Nazis marched on June 1 in Dresden and again on August 17 in Bayreuth, well protected by the police, and with little public outcry.

This street terror took on a new quality with the outrage in Hoyerswerda (see *IV* no. 215) which forced German politicians and their acolytes — policemen, journalists, experts — to defend their country’s good name abroad and express their consternation. Even then, however, we were warned not to over-react. The young people were, of course, aggressive, but it would be wise not to provoke them. These were not organized gangs, but merely drunken youth on the rampage. In any case they were not political and, furthermore, there were only a few of them...

The fact is that, in the meantime, refugees, foreigners or migrants are without accommodation throughout Germany and none of them can feel safe from intimidation and attack on the streets. Previously these things happened often, but now they are the rule everywhere. The tide of arson and murderous assaults,

the muggings and provocations, will ebb, but it can flood in again at any moment, since it comes from the depths of this society. It has to be combated at a fundamental level.

Reactionary, far right and openly fascist views are being widely expressed or at least tolerated. In Hoyerswerda, the terror was openly greeted, because nobody openly confronted it. They are less daring in the West, but the good citizens of Essen have invited skinheads to attack a refuge, so that they can make their neighbourhood “foreigner free”.

In Bremen the far right recently got 8% of the vote. In this case the votes came not from the petty bourgeoisie, but from workers and unemployed; that is, from precisely those social groups with whom we hope to change society.

There is still a difference between the East, where an anti-fascist tradition remains strong despite everything, and the West. “Only” 21% of Easterners, as opposed to 38% of Westerners, feel “understanding” for far right tendencies. One in ten Germans thinks in a far right way, even if they do not necessarily express this in voting. The figure is higher for the youth. Some 56% of the 16 to 18 year old age group agree with the statement “I am proud to be a German”. Almost one in every five Germans thinks along authoritarian lines and wants a leader. One in every 20 is frankly fascist.

It is said that in East Germany there are only 1,500 young far right cadres, and this number has not altered since the fall of the Wall. This may be true, but they have some 15,000 open sympathizers while another 50,000 consider themselves “inclined” towards them — whatever that may mean. Thus, it is merely an

organizational problem to increase the number of active thugs tenfold. In West Germany there are at least twice as many. A militant fascist mass movement has become a possibility.

In East Germany, Stalinism has left an ideological void, while in the West bourgeois democratic ideas are losing ground, except among the intelligentsia. Only the media disseminates such ideas in the working class, and they are at odds with people’s daily experience.

The established social organizations have lost almost all real links with the unemployed, people on social security and above all with working class youth. Scarcely anyone really believes in God, while there is nobody to be found in the youth organizations of the political parties except careerist Yuppies. The trade union youth structures exist mainly on paper and are the servants of the enterprise council and union bureaucrats.

The beautiful ideas of equality, social security, solidarity, democratic co-management and opportunities for the future have turned out to be mere dreams and only live on now as a vague feeling. The sick, the old, or the simply ill-adapted have no chance. Whoever cannot toe the factory line is out. People have no possibilities for influencing things, whether in the party, the union or the community. People are powerless; those above give orders, those below obey.

“Struggle, Selection, Power”

Everybody thinks only of themselves, each struggles against all and only the ruthless succeed. “Struggle, Selection, Power” (Michael Kühnen) — this is the experience and true morality of capitalism. When the old ideologies break down, then this social natural religion breaks through. It is not democratic, but authoritarian, anti-solidarity and power-oriented; it is barbaric.

When classes or social layers see no alternative, when progressive ideas are no longer promoted and no countervailing experiences are provided by unions, parties or civil movements, then reactionary thinking breeds. It becomes rooted in the society, a consequence of the fact that socialist, or even merely radical democratic ideas are no longer a living force.

The two years since the fall of the Wall have been turbulent for the far right groups. Unexpectedly here was a united Germany, and they had contributed nothing to bringing about its existence. This threw them onto the defensive. They descended into their usual squabbling.

The strongest of these groups were the Republicans (“Republikaner”), who in the European elections of summer 1989 gained 2 million votes (7.1%) and fought to gain access to all the elected forums. The mutiny of the openly fascist wing, around the Bavarian regional deputy Neubauer, crippled this party for almost a year

100,000 march against racist attacks

MORE than 100,000 people attended anti-fascist demonstrations in Germany on or around November 9, 1991. This time they were not only commemorating the "Reichskristallnacht" of 1938¹; they also wanted to protest against the fascist pogroms that had taken place in Hoyerswerda, Saarlouis and Greifswald and against a toughening of the laws restricting asylum.

Although some of the local demonstrations were quite large — 8,000 people in Hamburg and more than 50,000 in Berlin — it was mainly the left that took to the streets. To a lesser extent this was also true of the demonstrations that took place after the pogrom in Hoyerswerda, a small town in Saxony, where immigrants had been attacked by fascists with the support of a substantial proportion of the local population.

There were also many young people on these demonstrations.

In many cases there were competing "official" and militant demonstrations, as well as much political sectarianism. Thus in Hamburg there was a small protest where the head of the government Voscherau spoke and a second, supposedly "leftist" demonstration excluded people who it was considered might raise "anti-Zionist" positions. All this reduced the size of the turnout.

Only in Saarland — an SPD stronghold where an immigrant has recently been murdered by fascists — did the social democrats organize a demonstration. Although a significant number of refugee organizations took part in preparing the demonstrations, there was little immigrant presence on them. The exception was Berlin, whose strong immigrant population is quite politicized. The "wait and see" attitude of immigrants is understandable enough since the left and the workers' movement are sometimes more willing than able to defend immigrants.

The run-up to the demonstrations had already shown that the far left was, and is, unaware of the need to focus on immigrants — and especially immigrant youth — to build an anti-racist movement.

There is almost no cooperation with the main political force among the immigrants, the mosques representing the moderate Islamic current. In spite of a declaration calling for self-defence against fascist attacks, the DGB trade union federation didn't try to mobilize in the factories, where racism is quite strong among white workers. It too made no effort to mobilize immigrant workers.

In Hamburg and Hanover the Greens played a role in splitting the movement. In Hamburg they supported the demonstrations called by the established parties, employers' associations and so on. This demonstration, on November 7, brought out about 1,000 people, while the "radical" demonstration on the next day attracted about 8,000. The line taken by the Greens is attributable to their overall rightward drift, but also to the fact that they have lost most of their grassroots activists. They do not play a big role in the left committees that are still the main force mobilizing against the fascists. While the Greens' attitude does not much affect the size of demonstrations, it has a political impact given that this party has been seen as a defender of the interests of immigrants and refugees by a large part of the population.

Two days after the demonstrations the ruling conservatives of the CDU/CSU demanded of the SPD in a report: "vote for a change in our constitution!" to limit the rights of asylum seekers. It has also been revealed that meetings of neo-Nazis to coordinate attacks on immigrants had taken place in the framework of the state financed associations of people expelled from Eastern Europe after World War 2.

In this climate we must do everything to create a coordination of anti-fascist forces. It is not the German people that is threatened by a flood of refugees. It is the left and every democratic and trade union organization that is threatened by this racist and neo-Nazi flood. — *David Müller and Winfried Wolf* ★

before the big chief Schönhuber could get rid of it. Membership sank to below 15,000.

However, since the summer of last year the party has consolidated itself and now claims a (probably exaggerated) membership of 25,000. It is no longer able to orga-

nize mass events as it once could. On the electoral scene it remains by far the most important of such groups and has been able to reinforce its position in the past year. In the East its organization is weak and has scored no spectacular successes.

The NPD and DVU [the two other prin-

cipal far right formations] have become stronger in the past two years, but have made no qualitative breakthrough; together they have no more than 30,000 members. The attempted unification of far right forces by the "German List", rather than overcoming the splintering, has in fact created an additional organization with an uncertain fate.

The problem for all these groups is that their membership is chiefly drawn from bourgeois forces, concerned for their reputation; they want to express something politically, but are ill-adapted to long-term organizational work, while their willingness to make financial sacrifices is not unlimited. They have no independent social base, and are more like electoral blocs than parties. They can draw support from the widespread fascistic outlook, feeding off reactionary thinking and xenophobia.

Under favourable conditions, they might gain some 10% of the votes in an election. This electoral base is still timid and inactive. Mostly it votes for the established parties, chiefly the Christian Democrats. These latter, with the aid of the tabloid press, have whipped up terror with their thoughtless anti-refugee hysteria, and have thus strengthened the reactionary groundswell.

Far right consolidates electoral support

Nonetheless, the far right parties have politically stabilized themselves, have consolidated their base and electoral support; this is already a significant change since the mid-'80s. They are present in the public mind as a political alternative and can achieve electoral successes at least — an example being Bremen.

The openly fascist groups are incomparably more dangerous. Unlike the established far right parties, they rest on an activist cadre, working amongst the working class youth, rather than directing propaganda and electoral appeals at it from outside.

They have more than 3,000 members, and their activity is based primarily on the skinheads. Official estimates say there are only 3,000 of them in Germany, but in fact there are at least 7,000, even if not all are fascist in thought and action. They are very undisciplined and it is difficult to get them into durable and firm structures. "We have difficulties in establishing an organizational structure" says neo-Nazi Worch. However to some extent in East Germany this has already changed. Up to 150 skinheads have been involved in joint assaults in many towns; often they act for a whole day in a coordinated manner attacking specific targets, walking around with incendiary devices. Actions involving 20 to 30 people are commonplace. This can no longer be described as spontaneous.

In May 1991 a high-ranking east Ger-

man police officer warned of the increasing terror. It would be organized "on conspiratorial lines" so that apparently independent and free acting groups would in reality be "organized and bound together" while larger actions would be thought out and prepared by "meetings of leaders". Up until now this has been denied, although the facts speak for themselves.

It is also clear that many attacks are carried out as imitations by sympathizers and small group. But this does not explain the systematic nature of the terror nor the choice of targets — dwellings of asylum seekers and foreigners — or why all the actions follow the same pattern. It seems that among the skinheads there are activist cores who whip up their associates, organize them for action and establish a level of discipline.

Creating organization through action

The idea may be to create the organization through action. To do this they can rely on the broadly sympathetic environment. If such a plan were to succeed then we would find ourselves living and working in quite different conditions.

Their resonance is bigger than ever before. For the first time since the end of the Nazi period, there exists a militant fascist movement. Their actions are carried out in such a way that people will inevitably be killed or injured.

Things will not stand still. There is already evidence that arms are being stockpiled and that special groups are engaging in military training. Lists of "enemies of the people" are without doubt already being drawn up. Terror against political opponents and indiscriminate mass terror can intimidate the population, as was seen in the 1970s in Italy or Turkey.

The shock of the terror will above all be replied to by demonstrations and other such actions. This may result in restricting and perhaps reducing the public influence of the far right — but no more. In particular this will do nothing to halt the construction of the militant fascist gangs. The real problem is that the far right are appealing to and building among the working class youth, when the left and the social movements have lost more or less all their influence in this layer.

The fascist danger cannot only be met with protests. Furthermore, the use of legislation banning organizations, the favoured antidote of reformists and ex-Stalinists, is useless. The fascists are the emergency reserves of the bourgeois state and will be protected by it. Furthermore, even if a group is banned, there is nothing to stop it reappearing in another guise. The whole history of the banning of West German Nazi organizations shows this.

What is required is the construction of a

broad, permanent coalition movement. It needs to be based on local initiatives and coordinations which can organize actions and mobilizations as well as build self-defence structures and do propaganda work.

This movement must in the first place oppose the xenophobic hysteria and address the roots of unemployment and homelessness.

It must centre its work on the most deprived neighbourhoods, work in the

factories and seek an alliance with the immigrants. Campaigns should be organized starting out with a march against xenophobia on the lines of "don't touch my mate".¹

It is not only a question of directly confronting the terrorist groups; thinking also needs to be changed. ★

1. The reference here is to the slogan of the French SOS-Racisme campaign "Touche pas à mon pote".

Polarization in Vienna

IN THE recent municipal elections in Vienna the social democrats lost their absolute majority, the traditional conservatives found themselves overtaken by the populist right FPÖ and the Greens won seats for the first time.

However the electoral success of the progressive Green Alternative cannot be allowed to obscure the fact that the basic shift was towards the right.

HERMANN DWORCZAK

THE social democrats' result was their worst since 1945. They lost 7.1% of their vote and retained an absolute majority of the seats only due to electoral arithmetic. The traditional Austrian bourgeois party, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), meanwhile, suffered a debacle, losing 10.3% of its vote and seeing itself overtaken by the FPÖ. In 1987 the ÖVP had 28.4% to the FPÖ's 9.7%. This time they got 18.1% and 22.5% respectively. The Green Alternative got 4.7% and seven council seats. The Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) got less than 5,000 votes and lost its last seat at local government level.

The elections were dominated by the issue of immigration. The FPÖ launched a massive anti-immigrant campaign, the conservatives followed in the FPÖ's wake and the Social Democrats attempted to make the longest possible detour around the issue. Only the Green Alternative directly opposed the xenophobia, if not always with the necessary consistency.

As the head of the Green's list, Peter Pilz put it thus when rejecting the infa-

mous slogan of "Foreigners Out" ("Ausländer Raus"): "but we are not a 'foreigners in' party".

Against this background the FPÖ succeeded in taking 45,000 votes from the Social Democrats. In traditional working class constituencies the FPÖ sometimes reached the 25% mark. The failures of the Social Democrats over the decades of their administration — in such basic areas as transport, health care, nursery care and housing construction and the lack of a public integration policy for immigrants — allowed xenophobia to act as a point of crystallization for all kinds of diffuse discontent.

The conservatives, who have already suffered severe setbacks in regional elections in the Steiermark and Oberösterreich, have been plunged into a fundamental crisis by the debacle in Vienna. Many observers believe that the FPÖ is already running neck-and-neck with the ÖVP at the national level — which can only increase the pressure on the governing coalition of social democrats and conservatives.

A green and silver lining

The silver lining in this election was evidently the good score obtained by the Green Alternative.

The Greens' electoral efforts were very strongly marked by the crowd puller Peter Pilz, but the left was by no means invisible. Thus the well known trade unionist, Jean Margulies, is now on the city council. These elections have sharpened the polarization in Austria.

The social democratic/ conservative bloc is fraying. On the right the FPÖ, with its populist rabble rouser Jörg Haider, is gaining. On the left, the Green Alternative — in which the members of the SOAL, the Austrian section of the Fourth International, participate — has the chance to become a pole of attraction for progressive people interested in social change. It is an open question if the chance will be taken. ★

The rise of the Vlaams Blok

THE GENERALIZED breakthrough of the far right is the most striking feature of the Belgian general election of November 24, 1991.

VINCENT SCHELTENS

THOSE, like the foreign press, who look at the results (in particular in Flanders, and above all Antwerp) from abroad can hardly hide their stupefaction. And yet, for anti-racists, they are not really a surprise. In the first place, all the ingredients for a breakthrough by the fascist and far right forces have been there for some time. Secondly, many bourgeois and Social Democratic politicians have played with racist demagoguery in the hope of winning votes. Without success: for to copy is to reinforce the legitimacy of the original. Will the traditional parties now toughen their position on immigration? Or will they try to "resolve the problems of society" exploited by the far right? No, for a genuine solution more than ever presupposes radical change.

In Flanders, the far right Vlaams Blok increased its score from 3.0% in 1987 to 10.4%, its parliamentary representation being increased from two to twelve deputies. In the senate, the Blok took five seats (one in 1987).

To this is added a small army of provincial councillors. The most spectacular result was at Antwerp, where the Blok became the biggest party. In Brussels, the party was popular with the Flemish electors — only the CVP (the Christian democratic party, with Prime Minister Martens on its list) took a bigger share of the vote. With 10.4% of the vote across Flanders, the Blok has the automatic right to a ministerial post in the Flemish regional government, made up on a proportional basis.

The Vlaams Blok will not be the only far right party represented in Parliament. Brussels elected a representative of the francophone Front National to the chamber. The FN received 33,000 votes in the capital and had some impressive scores in other Walloon towns. This score is remarkable in that the NF, unlike the Vlaams Blok, was not the only far right

party competing in the elections. There is a strong risk that its success could allow the FN to absorb the other fascist groups in the francophone part of the country.

This far right breakthrough is essentially an electoral phenomenon. These are fascist parties, but at this stage in their construction they try to give themselves a respectable image and to exploit simple themes; immigration, insecurity, nationalism and abortion.

An urban phenomenon

The Vlaams Blok are beginning to make gains in the rural areas. But it remains essentially an urban phenomenon, in the big and medium-sized towns, where the sectors of the working class who have been hardest hit by the austerity of the last ten years live. And this is the heart of the problem; the "brown plague" feeds on the crisis of growing social inequality.

These elections show that the vote for the Green parties is no barricade against the far right.

The Greens are not attracting the same popular vote. Their social programme is not sufficient. There is a deep void between the legitimate aspirations of the Greens to equality (the right to vote for immigrants) and the means they propose to eradicate racism. The Greens do not see the necessity of mass action against racism. Nor do they see the necessity of social demands which challenge the logic of the free market, the ultimate cause of the fascist upsurge.

The Social Democrats have been hardest hit by the far right breakthrough. That is not astonishing. They have collaborated in the management of the crisis, and have been incapable of changing in any way the situation of people in the poorest areas.

Where Social Democracy has failed to give people a perspective, a sentiment of solidarity and identity, the Vlaams Blok

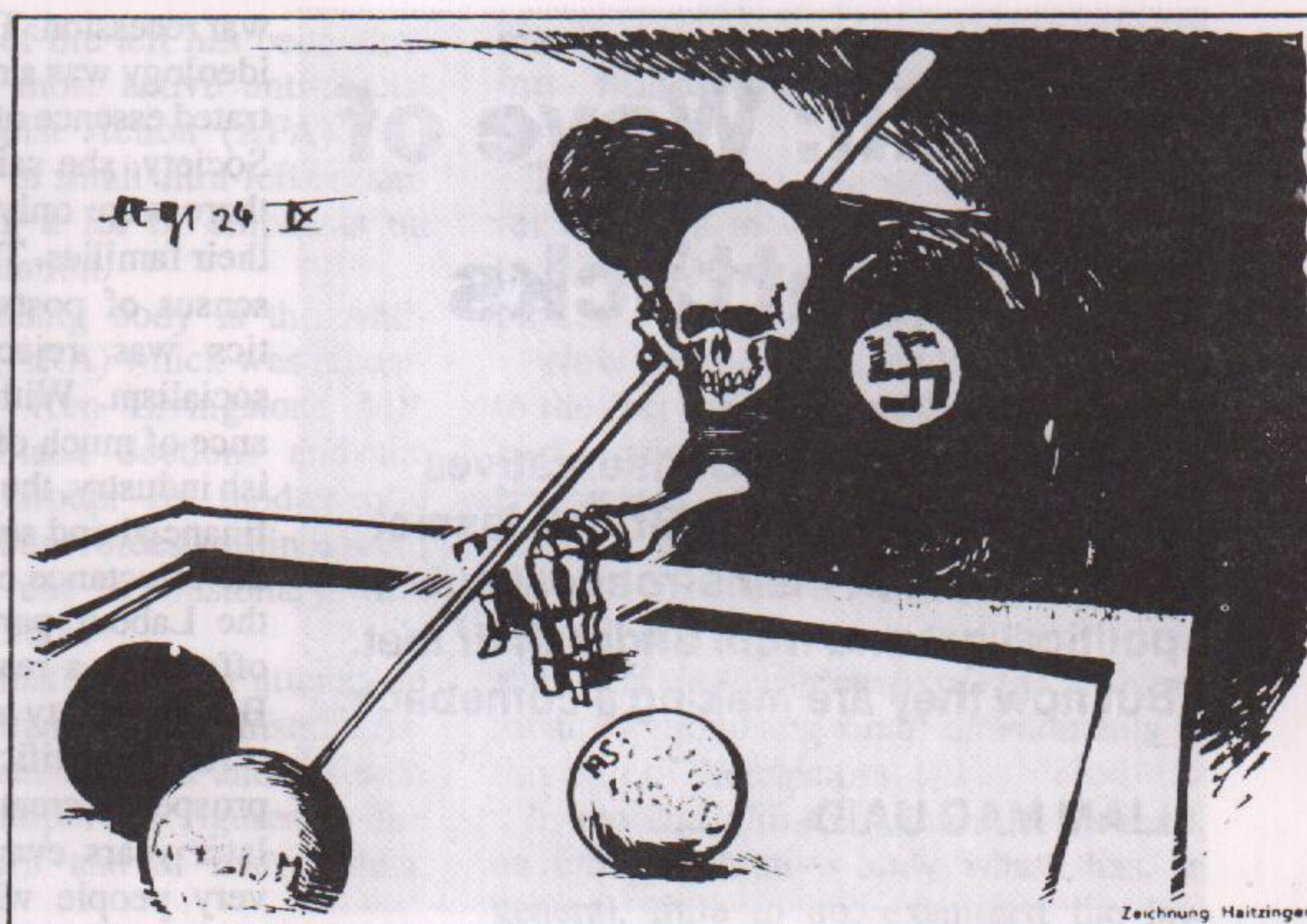
has succeeded. The first reactions from the SP show that they have not understood the message; they call for "a resolute approach to the problem" and "a strong government". From this point of view, the far right breakthrough gives the bourgeoisie an argument for implementing its plans for a reinforcement of state power. Less democratic rights, and more racism, in the name of the struggle against the "brown tidal wave".

For now, the far right has the wind in its sails. This is also the result of the international conjuncture. With European economic and political unification, austerity is on the agenda everywhere. To this can be added the effects of the victory of capitalism in Eastern Europe. In the absence of a socialist alternative, nationalist tendencies are developing. The success of the FN, built on the simple fact of taking the name and symbolism of Le Pen's party in France, shows the ease with which organizations of this type can now win over a section of the public.

Building a blockade against the far right is not easy. There is a huge gap between understanding the necessity for a unified struggle and arriving at concrete and radical demands. In any case, the solution will surely not come from the proposal for a democratic front against the far right. Those who, by their policies, have paved the way for the far right are now calling on others to help them to sort out their problems.

The electorate have said "a plague on both your houses". Many are socially uprooted and ideologically in disarray. The only way to deal with this is to build a radical alternative, aimed at satisfying popular needs and creating jobs for all, coupled with political equality for Belgians and immigrants.

This is possible if the wealth that exists for such a programme is taken from those who have it, and if the workers and youth are mobilized for these demands. There is no other way. ★



Britain: Wave of racist attacks

THE election of the Conservatives (Tories) in 1979, when British fascist groups were at their strongest cut the political ground from under their feet. But now they are making a comeback.

LIAM MAC UAID

AT the time Thatcher made a famous speech in which she spoke of white British fears of being swamped by "alien cultures" and her crony Norman Tebbit wondered whether or not British Blacks and Asians supported the England cricket team. This racist undercurrent was accompanied by a barrage of anti-European rhetoric in the guise of attacks on the "Brussels bureaucrats". Neither was Thatcher averse to starting a small war when it might help with an election. The Malvinas war was the occasion for an unparalleled display of reactionary nationalism.

But now Thatcher has gone. The politics of the Labour leadership under Neil Kinnock are almost indistinguishable from those of Tory Prime Minister John Major. Unemployment is at least three million and rising in Britain's worst post-

war recession. Thatcherism as an ideology was simply the concentrated essence of free marketism. Society, she said, did not exist, there were only individuals and their families. The welfarist consensus of postwar British politics was rejected as utopian socialism. With the disappearance of much of traditional British industry, the expansion of the financial and service sectors and the reluctance of the unions and the Labour party to go on the offensive, a real atomization of British society took place.

As the artificial, credit-based prosperity created in Thatcher's later years evaporates, it is the very people who thought they stood to gain the most who are

now suffering most severely. All those who took her government's advice and took out loans to buy their own homes or set up their own businesses are now being punished by high interest rates, a steep decline in their earnings and big job losses in former boom areas.

A supine labour movement, a recession and an increasingly frustrated layer of long-term unemployed and small business people are the classic conditions for the growth of racism and fascism. And the British fascist organizations have started both to grow and step up their activity since Thatcher's fall.

They have put their wilderness years to good use. Their tactics now are much more refined. Last September, before Thatcher went, the most prominent of the British groups, the British National Party (BNP), won 25% of the white working class vote in a council by-election in east

London. Their campaign theme was "rights for whites". They used the stabbing of a white youth by young Bangladeshis (after countless attacks of every sort on the Bangladeshi community in this area) to win support.

This is a rather more subtle approach than in earlier fascist election campaigns and it served them well. Using the stabbing as a pretext they blamed the inadequate housing and lack of jobs on immigrants, tapping into anger and frustration in the white working class in one of London's most deprived areas. The BNP will be standing about 20 candidates at the next general election and another fascist group, the National Front, may be standing another dozen.

Left-wing activists attacked

They have also started a serious campaign of harassment of left-wing activists. Supporters of the revolutionary Marxist fortnightly *Socialist Outlook* have been attacked and threatened in a number of cities. A Black member of the far left Socialist Workers Party had his house firebombed and every week there are reports of attacks on comrades selling the SWP's paper *Socialist Worker*.

But most disturbing of all is the increase in both the number and degree of viciousness of racist attacks. There have been firebomb attacks on Black and Asian families and there have been horrific incidents in which three or four adult men have literally jumped on the faces of 10-year old Asian children.

According to the government, there were 6459 racially motivated attacks in Britain in 1990. This is certainly substantially lower than the real figure. But what

France: The shadow of Vichy

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, leader of France's far right National Front, has recently published a fifty-point program on immigration.

In a France ruled by Le Pen, families of foreign workers would no longer have the right to automatically enter the country. Those born on French soil would not automatically be entitled to French citizenship — an imitation of the nationality code of the Vichy government which collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. Those who have been granted French nationality in recent years would have their status retroactively reviewed — another practice borrowed from the Vichy years. Immigrants would be officially discriminated against in jobs, and a separate (and no doubt inferior) system of social security with separate funding would be established. Subsidies given to families based on the number of children they have would be reserved solely for French citizens. Citizens would be prioritized in the allocation of public housing. Those wishing to enter the country — even as tourists — would be required to post a 100,000 franc bond and undergo HIV blood testing. All of this would be enforced with the aid of detention centers established at airports and sea-ports.

The NF also calls for a review of the French educational system in order to purge school curriculums of "cosmopolitanism". The construction of new mosques and Muslim cultural centers would be halted.

Not subject to these draconian measures would be people from other EEC (European Economic Community) countries and those sharing a common "destiny, culture, religion and civilization".

These measures were widely condemned by most of France's mainstream political parties and politicians on the right and left. But at least one well-known French politician, Michel Poniatowski, a former Interior minister in the government of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the 1970's, found many of these propositions "interesting" and "normal". Poniatowski has gone on record recently as favoring an eventual electoral alliance with the National Front. While the other right wing parties publicly refuse to consider such an eventuality, the logic of their public statements on immigration, such as Jacques Chirac's complaints about the "odors" of immigrants and Giscard d'Estaing's fear of an "invasion", leads precisely in that direction.

In fact, the unveiling of the National Front's propositions clearly annoyed these "respectable" right wing forces who expected a less radical response from a party that is making serious electoral advances. By taking such an openly racist position, the FN clearly hopes to avoid being outflanked by other right-wing forces. Nevertheless, if experience is a guide, more than a few of the FN's fifty propositions will soon become part of the discourse of the French political mainstream —

Keith Mann ★

is certain is that the figures for 1991 and 1992 will be higher. Not all these attacks are the work of supporters of the fascist groups. Many are carried out by neighbours or groups of youths who go looking for victims. Racism is becoming respectable again.

The pro-Tory papers are carrying more and more stories about immigrants making fraudulent social security claims, and fabricating and distorting stories about immigrants being given council houses in preference to whites.

At the same time government ministers have again been referring to the country being "swamped" by immigrants and legislation, condemned by Amnesty International and some Bishops, has been introduced to make it even more difficult for refugees to enter Britain.

The response of the left has been slow and weak. The most active anti-fascist group, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) consists of a number of small ultra-left organizations and puts a lot of emphasis on physical confrontation.

A more promising body is the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) which was recently launched by Ken Livingstone MP, Labour Party Black Sections and the Black Liaison Group. Its fundamental problem is that some forces within it seem determined to use exclusionary and bureaucratic methods.

But it is the most important attempt to begin a national campaign against the rising fascist and racist danger and has won the support of important figures in the Labour movement and of many Black organizations. ★

Before the Algerian elections

FREE elections are due in Algeria on December 26, 1991. The big question is whether the powerful Algerian Islamic fundamentalist movement, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), will stand, and how well it will do, given the arrest of its leaders and the regime's attempts to fix the electoral system to its own advantage.

IV spoke to Chawki Salhi, a spokesperson of the Algerian Socialist Workers Party (Algerian sympathisers of the Fourth International) about the background to these elections. The interview took place on November 26.

THE electoral law imposed by the government has led to a significant stir of debate, as much between the government and the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) in parliament as among the opposition.

All this noise is artificial. Both the various currents in the regime and most of the so-called democratic parties — apart from Ait Ahmed's Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) — are in favour of majority voting in two rounds. Most of them have thereby supported their own disappearance from the electoral scene.

Only the Socialist Workers Party (PST) has broken this consensus, fighting for proportional representation, with the support of some thirty other small organizations.

The fundamentalists, meanwhile, have come out for a hybrid system which tops up those with the highest votes — this gave them good results on June 12, 1991. But in any case, the debate is a fraud. Once the big democratic parties grasped that the aim of the government at the

recent elections on June 27 was to cut the FIS down to size in the National People's Assembly (APN), they accepted the big swindle, according to which the dispersed populations of the South are strongly represented, those of the countryside moderately represented and the cities under-represented. Obviously it is these same parties that are the first victims, since all new political phenomena find their first and strongest expression in the cities.

Some parties, including that of Ben Bella, have proposed a "third candidate in the second round" rather than two. But his arithmetic is as bad as the others'. When the law was voted through, several figures in the regime realized that the two-round ballot could cut both ways, and that, even if it won, the FLN would have problems, since it would not have the absolute majority and could see all its potential allies vanish.

■ **Another subject of debate over the electoral law is that of proxy voting, which effectively prevents**

married women from voting, allowing husbands to vote on their behalf.

Two years ago, the struggle of women for the right to vote was totally ignored in the media and by the big democratic parties.

Now people have suddenly woken up to the fact that there are 3.5 million married women, who may have their votes confiscated.

This has led to panic, and a conflict between the prime minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali and the APN, which has tried to show its independence of the government by proposing small amendments to this part of the electoral law.

In the end, the Constitutional Council, an unrepresentative body which has, in general, little to do, examined the law and removed the right to vote on behalf of other members of the family on presentation of the family book. Thus, women now have the right to vote, even though they may well not use it, being prevented from leaving the home. In any case their vote cannot now simply be manipulated.

■ **What is your attitude to the FIS? If its main leaders are imprisoned, will you call for a boycott of the elections or not?**

We should remember that the FIS saw a conflict in the aftermath of the arrest of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, on June 30, 1991, between its historic leaders on the one hand and some lesser known figures on the other.

The former, who advocated a hardline, and even a military-guerilla orientation for the FIS, thought that the general strike called by the FIS might end in their humiliation, and that it would be better to stop it.

On the other side, an illustrious unknown, Hashani, who has since been the FIS' public leader, started out declaring that he would refuse to talk to the government while Madani and Belhadj remained in prison. Despite this, he was quick to negotiate with the government and get ready for these elections, declaring all the time that the FIS would not take part if its leaders remained in jail.

Then the FIS was not only preparing to take part, but was even ready to put forward its imprisoned big chiefs not as candidates, but merely as alternates, to get round the stipulation that candidates must present their dossiers in person, while lying about this to the rank-and-file of the FIS.

However the government has even refused them this, without legal grounds. Hashani once again declared that the FIS would boycott the elections, while at the same time making statements like: "If we take part, we must win; if we do not take part, we must prevent the elections from taking place." The FIS' final aim is to take part.

■ **In your opinion, after the state of emergency, does the FIS still have strong popular support?**

The FIS has lost a lot of ground; already by this spring it had lost its hegemony among the masses. But, despite this, it has been able to occupy a central place on the political stage because other forces do not amount to an alternative.

The democratic parties have put all their energy into futile polemics in the National Assembly, leaving the field free to the FIS to appear as the consistent, genuine opposition.

However, it is the economic crisis that is at the heart of people's concerns, and about this the FIS has little to say. It has failed to build a trade union and only puts itself at the head of social discontent when movements have already developed.

The FIS continues to loom large on the political scene: it filled a big stadium this autumn to demand the lifting of the state of emergency; it has held marches, including one from Tizi to Ouzou on November 23/24, to present itself in a combative and all-conquering light. This may serve to justify its participation in the elections in the eyes of a militant rank-and-file.

Recently, some FIS groups have been sabotaging the activities of other parties — Ben Bella has several times been prevented from holding meetings in the East. It is not clear if this is part of a conscious policy or the work of over-excitable groups.

■ **What is the popular feeling about the approaching elections?**

People's main concern is the economic crisis. Furthermore, democracy has lost credibility among the people. The state of emergency has made even more clear the derisory character of the supposed alternatives, who debate in the media while being unable to change anything.

The regime, which, besides the government, also involves the army, the president and so on, has appeared as the ring-master. There is a widespread feeling that the big parties do not want the people to decide, since these parties don't know what they would choose.

The positions of various leaders of the opposition have strengthened this confusion. For example, Aït Ahmed one day defends the government, the army and the economic policy; a leader of the Democratic Movement For Algerian Renewal, a puppet party of the FLN, calls for "the unity of all" and the suppression of democracy to save Algeria... People believe that the government is behind everything and the party leaderships are minor actors.

At the same time there is this campaign, orchestrated by the government that says: "be careful, stay calm; the elections will be postponed". These

rumours are aimed at tendencies to working class militancy, calling for social peace with the blackmail of a possible coup d'état — even if things are never put as openly as this.

There has even been a rumour that the general strike which the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) tried to organize in June 1991 was nothing but a manoeuvre by the regime to block the elections.

This is all working, with a loss of confidence in democracy and the dismantling of all the social organizations born out of the uprising of 1988. These days there is nothing but the parties, and they are not impressive.

The few workers who followed the fundamentalists' call for a general strike in June have been sacked and remain out of work despite a campaign around this question. This has made workers feel powerless and sowed fear at a time when there is a wave of job cutbacks.

Thus people are not very interested in the election campaign, which is aimed at winning social peace. A high abstention rate is thus to be expected, but not a boycott, since people see no alternative. Furthermore many young people will not vote because they do not have identity papers.

The system of electoral cards is chaotic — this used to be a worthless piece of paper — many people have two, others none at all. Finally, in my view, the turnout among women will be low and their husbands can now no longer vote in their place. However, if the FIS takes part, people will follow the electoral duel with more interest, even if they don't vote.

■ **It seems as if the economic situation has got a lot worse recently. The government has introduced new IMF-type reforms. Have there been reactions among the workers?**

The crisis began long ago. The previous government of Hamroush already started on a programme of structural reforms of the sort seen elsewhere in the Third World, to get international credits before its electoral campaign. The provisional measures taken then camouflaged the gravity of the reforms entered into.

The IMF obviously wants Algerians to be even poorer, to provide a cheap labour force and improve Algeria's place in the world market. To do this the government devalued the dinar (dividing it by five), which hit the population's living standards hard. This devaluation was hidden behind a simple administrative operation — profiting from the fact that the dinar is not convertible.

On a particular date it was announced that the dinar would be reduced in value by 50% and that after two years it would be worth four times less. The effects were hidden behind high taxes above all on goods bought by the middle classes

— such as household appliances, while the most basic products, such as milk or cooking oil, remained at low prices. However, the IMF insisted that the government stop subsidizing prices, and Hamroush promised this in a letter of intent to the IMF.

The June elections did not take place and the IMF decided that it could not go on indefinitely financing the FLN, despite the spectre of fundamentalism. The Ghazali government found itself obliged to honour Hamroush's promises in order to get further credit; indeed, it went further and sold rights to oil exploitation to foreign companies. Thus the IMF is looking to regain everything lost during the colonial revolution and as a result of popular pressures, by pulling down every protectionist barrier.

These measures led to a very confused debate within the political class, organized by Ghazali himself. The idea was to get the population to accept these "common sense" measures while discrediting the more populist solutions coming from within the FLN and heading off militant opposition.

The neo-liberal offensive by the government hit the population hard and a whole series of strikes broke out in the more privileged layers of wage workers — higher education, doctors, airline pilots and so on — demanding wage rises, which often seemed enormous compared to the miserable wages of other workers.

The UGTA was pushed into action by the pressure from its rank-and-file. This led to negotiations between this union and the government, with less than impressive results.

The minimum wage was to rise from 2,500 to 3,500 dinars by July 1992, which in no way compensates for the massive rises in the prices of the most basic goods.

Meanwhile neither the IMF nor the French bank Crédit Lyonnais, which is heavily involved in Algeria, gave a cent, waiting for the final vote on the liberalization of prices and perhaps also a clearer view of the political scene.

■ **Has the PST succeeded in presenting lists in these legislative elections?**

Unfortunately we were not able to construct a front with other organizations. However, we are putting forward 53 candidates in 16 departments throughout the country. Among those on our lists are the general secretary of the railworkers union and other leaders of struggles.

The PST has many women candidates. While we are putting forward only 1% of the total number of candidates, we are putting forward 25% of the women in this election.

Furthermore a group of militants from the Communist Movement of Algeria has just joined the PST. ★

Government and right wing against reproductive rights

SINCE 1974, reimbursement for French women using contraception has been a right recognized by law, as has the possibility of abortion up to the tenth week of pregnancy. Seventeen years later, however, it is not clear that this law is being applied; while nearly 4 million women take the pill, 2 million do so in a form which is not, or is no longer, reimbursed.

Despite the promises of the Prime Minister, Edith Cresson, at the end of November 1991, on the impending reimbursement of two supplementary pills¹, and the declarations of the Secretary of State responsible for women's rights, Veronique Neiertz, the negligence of the government and the upsurge of fundamentalist and reactionary activists of all kinds present grave threats to the right to choose and to women's health.

SOPHIE MASSOURI

SINCE 1984, a growing number of new contraceptive pills have not been covered by the Social Security, whereas the cost of some of the older brands is no longer reimbursed. Why? The pharmaceutical laboratories are playing upon the ambiguity of the law, which says that "contraception must be reimbursed" without giving the State the means to demand its reimbursement. Thus, the pills of the new generation, with smaller dosages of oestrogen (responsible for secondary effects on women, and notably for cardiovascular illness), and using new progestatives, which are presented as less harmful to women's health, are not reimbursed.

The argument put forward by the laboratories in order to demand an exorbitant price is controversial; some specialists argue that it has not been shown that the new pills reduce significantly these "secondary effects".

Why do the laboratories pursue this policy? In France, the prices of drugs which are not reimbursed are free, contrary to those of reimbursed medicaments, which are fixed and controlled by the authorities. It has been clear for a decade that the manufacturers prefer non-reimbursement to a price which they consider too low. According to several studies the consumption of contraceptives does not seem to depend on whether they are covered by the Social Security.

How could it be otherwise, when the pill

is the primary means of contraception used by women (one woman in three takes the pill) and when, given the profusion of pills available, they only very rarely have the means to insist that their doctor prescribe this or that pill, in accordance with their needs and above all with its cost.

Laboratories seek maximum profits

Obviously, laboratories will always seek to maximize their profits and there is no reason why they should behave differently on the question of contraception. What is more serious is the failure of the government to apply a law which is in practice held up to ridicule.

But this reflects the policy pursued by the Socialist government. Thus, the management of information and planning centres, which are often the sole sources of information for young people and for a majority of women, has, as a result of the policy of decentralization, initiated since 1983, been transferred to regional councils, accentuating social disparities, and partially threatening their existence.

The government's progressive disengagement, like its austerity policy in the field of health, as much in the provision of medicaments as in the hospitals (suppression of hospital beds, reduction of workforce, and so on)² presents an insidious challenge to the right of women to



freely choose maternity, instituting on this question, as on the question of health in general, a two tier system — on the one hand women who can pay, on the other those who cannot.

This policy is being implemented in a degraded social and economic context, in which the influence of fundamentalist and far right groups — like Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front, predicted to take 25-30% of the vote at the next regional elections in March 1992 — is growing.

Taking the offensive on the question of abortion, these far right groups — primarily The Truce of God and SOS Tout-Petits — even if they organize few people, are gradually extending their influence through increased media coverage, manipulation and infiltration in broad sectors of society, and so on.³

For nearly two years now, some of these groups, under the inspiration of Operation Rescue in the United States, have been attacking abortion centres.⁴ Some prefer to sing hymns outside the centres and hospitals or to distribute leaflets denouncing the crime which abortion represents in their eyes; others enter the operating theatres, dusterilizing the materials and chaining

1. One of these two pills, Trinordiol, which represents alone nearly 17% of the market, was still covered by Social Security until six months ago.

2. See IV 216.

3. Jean-Marie Le Pen, for example, demanded a minute's silence, during his demonstration on May 1, 1991, "in memory of the millions of French children murdered by the Veil-Chirac abortion law".

4. Over the past two years, 30 attacks have been reported — in December 1990, a group of feminists, aware of the intentions of one of these groups to invade a Paris hospital, intervened to stop them entering the hospital and distributed leaflets demanding that the law be respected (free access to the abortion centres, as well as to contraception, for all women).

themselves to the operating tables. Everywhere the same goal; to create a feeling of terror among women who come for an abortion, and above all a feeling of guilt.

The government has remained largely silent on all this. Despite the complaints brought by hospital directors and the testimony of nurses, the attackers have not been brought to justice.

It is perhaps not by chance that the government seems still less prompt to denounce these commando raids than to begin the policy of reimbursement for the two new pills. Its health policy, involving a hospital reform dictated by the logic of profitability and of decentralization, will lead to a reduction of the operating capacities of the abortion centres, when it does not simply lead to their closure; denounc-

ing the laboratories enables it to avoid explaining its policy.

Since the end of 1990, a united coordination bringing together women's groups, trade unions, political parties and associations, including the French Movement for Family Planning (MFPP), has been established to mobilize public opinion around this question and make the government face its responsibilities — a national petition was launched in June 1991, with committees being set up in various cities.

On November 30, 1991, there will be a national day of action in preparation for general assemblies on the right to choose on January 18-19, 1992, and, of course, for a mobilization on March 8, 1992, International Women's Day. ★

Founding conference of Left Alternative

IN early November, 1991, at a time when Madrid was regularly shaken by the screams of sirens announcing the passage of the representatives to the so-called "Peace Conference" on the Middle East, the most representative organizations of the radical left, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — formerly the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state) and the Communist Movement (MC) held their congress of unification. This represented the outcome of a long-standing process of unification and common action.

ALFONSO MORO

AFTER the respective congresses of the LCR and the MC had been held, and had discussed and approved the draft resolutions: "Bases of the unification agreement", "On the type of organization that we want to create", "The agreement on the provisional internal regime" and "Faced with the new situation", 400 delegates — elected on a parity basis, 200 for each organization — decided after a day and a half of work that the new organization would bear the name of Left Alternative¹.

Given the conditions facing revolutionaries in Europe and at the international level, the constitution of Left Alternative represents a significant step forward. As one of the theses of the document "Bases of the Unification Agreement" puts it: "The current situation of crisis could constitute a stimulant for the renewal of our thought and for advancing in the construction of a more solid anti-capitalist and revolutionary consciousness which responds better to the difficulties of today".

Starting from this observation and aware of the fact that "the revolutionary forces in the Spanish state and in the neighbouring

countries are few; that the revolutionary perspective seems to be becoming distant and blurred; the possibilities for leading radical struggles are rare; the number of people who think that militancy retains a sense has decreased and that this affects the quest for a transformation of the social system through collective action", the militants of Left Alternative committed themselves to supporting "the struggle against capitalist exploitation and against all forms of domination and oppression" while fighting "for a revolutionary transformation which will change radically the current unjust political and economic order".

These positions are significant, above all at a time when many so-called left currents are tempted by a gradualist political vision implying a conciliatory attitude towards their governments (in a country like the Spanish state, where the Spanish Socialist Workers Party — PSOE — has governed for some years) or, quite simply, adapt themselves to the "least evil" social system, that is, capitalism.

Moreover, the fusion between the LCR and the MC is not the product of a crisis of these two organizations, a last attempt to

save a project on the verge of the collapse. On the contrary, during their 20 years of existence each of these organizations has built solid bases, deeply rooted in society. While their forces are still modest compared with what is objectively necessary, the fusion represents a conscious effort to unite forces on the basis of broadly shared concrete agreements, on which the militants of these two organizations have had the time to reflect, in key areas like the trade union, feminist and ecological movements, in opposition to dogmatism and Stalinism and also, very importantly, on the type of organization it is necessary to build today (democratic, pluralist, centralized) and on the model of society sought.

Obviously, all this does not mean that, in the new organization, differences might not emerge "on various theoretical questions, in conceptions on revolutionary perspectives, the analyses of reality, this or that current or historic episode, and so on". But faced with such an eventuality, which would be healthy, the Left Alternative wishes to respond on the basis of the common elements of the two organizations, while maintaining guarantees of internal pluralism.

Commitment to pluralism

The LCR and the MC have always been characterized by their firm commitment to the exploited and oppressed inside and outside the Spanish state, during the long night of the Francoist dictatorship, at the head of the mobilizations against the so-called "democratic transition", through support to the mobilizations of those who refuse to do obligatory military service, or by their solidarity with the Central American revolution.

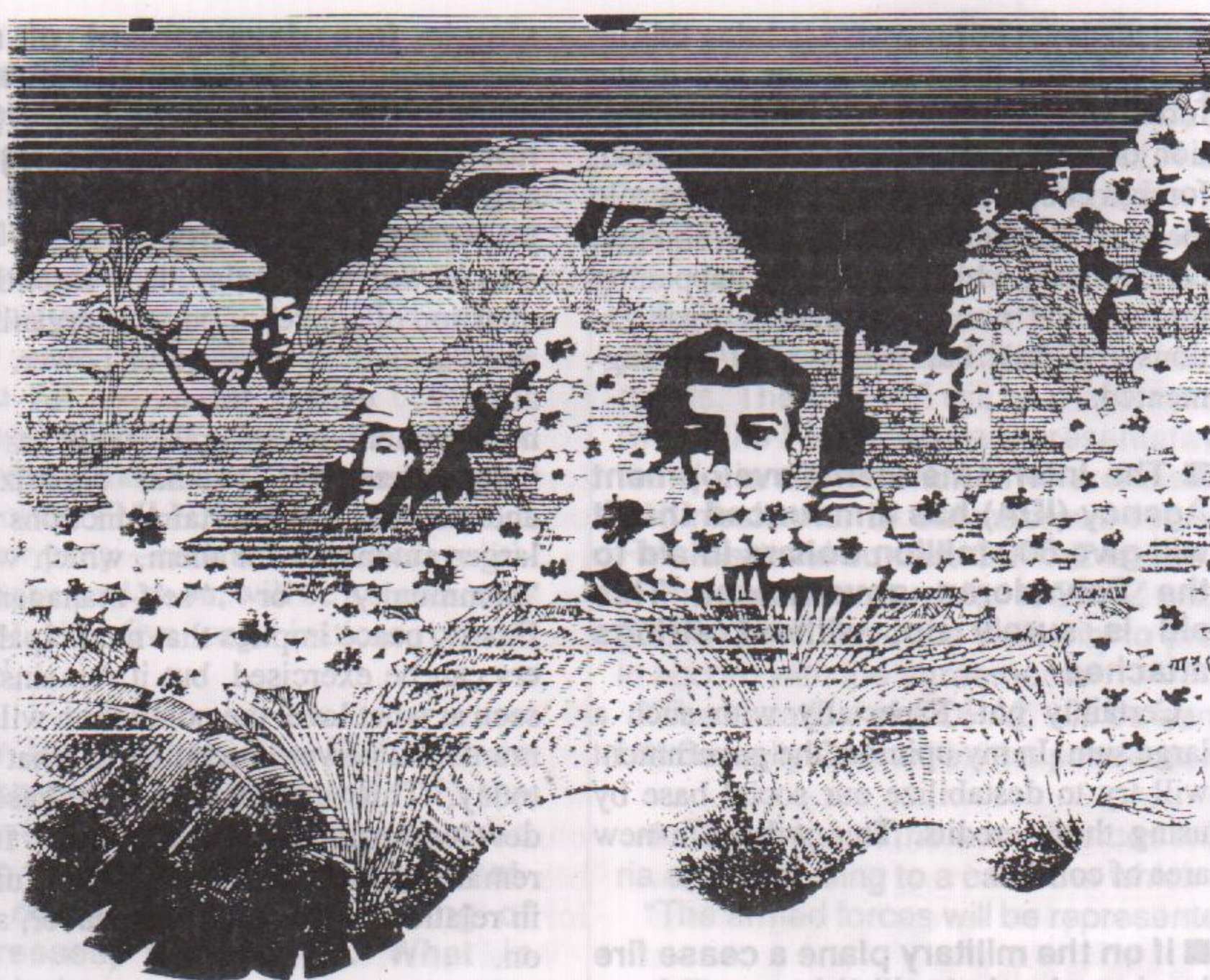
More than 2,000 people attended this congress, among them numerous representatives of other organizations. The following organizations, among others, were present or sent messages: the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), the Revolutionary National Union of Guatemala (URNG), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the United Left (IU), the Workers' Commissions (CCOO), the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT), the National Liberation Movement of Uruguay (MLN-Tupamaros), the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Herri Batasuna (HB) and the Party of Mariáteguist Unity of Peru (PUM).

Representatives of the sections of the French, Portuguese, Belgian and Mexican sections of the Fourth International were also present. Ernest Mandel represented the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Also represented were MIRAC (siglas) and the LCR from the Canary Islands, the EMK-LKI of Euskadi² and the Federation of Revolutionary Communist Youth.

As one comrade put it; it is only by looking forward that we can justify what we have done in the past. ★

1. The new newspaper will be called *Página Abierta* (Open Page) and the theoretical review *Aldebaran* (The Great Red Star).

2. See IV no. 205, April 29, 1991.



Behind the FMLN/ government accords

Interview with Mario Lopez

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW with Mario Lopez, a member of the politico-diplomatic commission of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), was conducted by Eric Toussaint during Lopez' European tour in November 1991. Lopez spoke at length about the current negotiations between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN, as well as the current debates among Salvadoran revolutionaries.

COULD you tell us about the recent accords signed in New York between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN under the aegis of the United Nations?

The Secretary-General of the United Nations initiated these negotiations at the request of [US Secretary of State] Baker and Soviet foreign minister Bessmertnykh, who figured that the Salvadoran discussions were at an impasse, or, as Perez de Cuellar put it, that it was necessary to cut the gordian knot.

The FMLN was interested in finding ways to become integrated into the legal political life of the country. We began by insisting on the total demilitarization of Salvadoran society so that all political forces be free to carry out their activities.

These are the demands that we put forward in the autumn of 1990 but which were never met.

Later, the FMLN made a proposal that constituted a turning point: rather than conducting negotiations in two phases, we proposed having a single phase which would consist of a definitive cease-fire with the participation of the FMLN in the armed forces as a guarantee. The government again refused, which brought the negotiations to an impasse. For our part, we figured that there were not enough guarantees if this condition was not met. At that point the Secretary-General of the UN called the meeting between the FMLN and president Cristiani.

We then proposed a series of various guarantees; if one failed there would be others. We demanded for example, that

the FMLN participate in a civilian police force, which was accepted; this demand was agreed to at the New York meeting. We will therefore be part of one of the armed forces which will be in charge of internal public order. This is part of a constitutional reform which has been provisionally approved, and which must be ratified. It will stipulate that the role of the armed forces will be limited to the defense of national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country. The maintenance of internal order will therefore be practically the sole preserve of the civilian national police.

■ **Besides the army there is also the police force of the Interior Ministry. What will happen to this body?**

It will be dissolved. All the former police forces will be disbanded and replaced by the Civilian Police.

■ **Will these forces be part of the army?**

Actually, the Minister of Defense also has authority in the domain of public security. One of the first agreements concerns precisely the separation of public security from defense. There will be separate ministers for each. Another guarantee involves the establishment of a multiparty body charged with overseeing the peace accords. This is the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ). The government has two delegates as does the FMLN, and each party or coalition represented in the national assembly has one delegate.

■ **And the army?**

The army participates as one of the two government delegates. In reality the government has designated two soldiers including one who has retired. Another guarantee is the involvement of the United Nations, not only as a supervisor of the accords through its El Salvador bureau (ONUSAL), but also through the involvement of the Security Council which has supported the proposals made by the Secretary-General.

All of this does not imply that we have abandoned our plan of totally demilitarizing Salvadoran society, which is part of our program; we have stated that we will continue to work for this.

■ **What has been obtained as far as the army is concerned and what will be the effect of the purge of the army?**

Those elements in the army who have been involved in crimes or corruption will be thrown out; this includes far more than just the officers of *La Tandonia*¹. An *ad hoc* commission will be formed charged with investigating each of its officers, in both the army and the security forces. This commission, which will be named by the president upon recommendation of the UN Secretary-General, will investigate

each officer and noncommissioned officer.

■ Who will be part of this commission?

This is one of the subjects of the discussion that has not yet been resolved. COPAZ will have to respect the recommendations of the commission.

■ There are several possible outcomes: military or civilian tribunals can be established or an amnesty law could be enacted. What is your position on this?

One of the items on the agenda concerns the retirement of army officers. This commission will decide who will be retired and who will be judged.

On the economic and social plane some progress has been made in New York. A very important gain has been the recognition of the current forms of property ownership in the zones controlled by the FMLN. Juridical forms must be found to legalize this situation. There is also an agreement to allow the peasants to remain on the land they have occupied at the beginning of this year. The government must give land holdings exceeding 245 hectares² to the peasants and begin to buy land put up for sale which will later be distributed.

In fact, after the agrarian reform decreed by former president Duarte, some lands should have been sold, the owners had to sell them, either at their own initiative or because they were larger than the limit. Many land holdings were put up for sale without the state buying them. In other words, the body formed to do this did not acquire any land at all. Today the government has begun to buy them in order to distribute them.

Another agreement that has been made deals with the means by which the government can arrange for communities to directly receive foreign financial aid. Finally, another agreement concerns economic and social policies with the participation of the government, private firms and workers. This involves a forum of consultation [roundtable discussions between the employers, the workers and the government] that has not yet been formed, and the workers will no doubt be disadvantaged because they lack the support of the experts that the government and private companies have. Popular organizations are today searching for this type of support.

■ This is a familiar problem in Latin America: the peasants succeed in obtaining land, but they lack credit which eventually forces them to sell their land to pay back their debts.

The same is true for technical assistance. We raised the question of revising the credit system for workers during the New York talks. The question remains of course how to apply these agreements. It

will no doubt be necessary to bring this up again during the negotiations and in the forum of consultation. As far as the question of technical assistance is concerned, foreign cooperation has an important role to play, particularly non-governmental cooperation, which is already happening through the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but which must be augmented.

■ The Inter-American Development Agency (IDA) has announced that it will give 500 million dollars in aid to the Salvadoran government. This aid is surely not without strings attached.

Certainly not. Especially with such a large sum. In my opinion, the government will try to destabilize our social base by using these credits. This will be a new area of conflict.

■ If on the military plane a cease fire is signed, what will this mean from the point of view of the arms you now possess?

Up until now we have never discussed the disarming of the FMLN. This has not been part of the negotiations and we have not been disposed to speak about it. A cease-fire implies putting down our arms, but what are the necessary criteria as far as a timetable is concerned? We have said that a cease-fire will be possible when the accords have been applied. But each party has a different reading of what this means. We will have to reach an agreement about this.

■ Are there still outstanding questions to be taken up in the negotiations?

Questions concerning economic and social matters, human rights, judicial power, the electoral system and finally the ways in which the United Nations will enforce the agreements must be taken up. When all this has been taken care of arrangements concerning the technical aspects of the cease-fire, for example the stationing of troops, can begin. A commission has already been formed to deal with this. At the end of the time table we will know how the cease-fire will take place.

■ If a cease-fire does occur, what objectives will the FMLN set for itself for the 1994 elections?

We figure that peoples' power must be strengthened. What we call peoples' power comes out of the framework of the dual power that today exists in the country.

This involves the expansion of various forms of social and political organization. The campaign for the 1994 elections will come afterwards.

■ "People's Power" can have different meanings. But when we speak of power it is something more than the

simple free development of mass organizations that demand power. It means the exercise of power, and not simply a demand, the right to organize. In your opinion what does popular power mean?

In El Salvador today, it is essentially a question of a level of popular organization and the limited exercise of power. There already exist instances of self-management at several levels: a broad independence of popular organizations and the exercise of certain functions with a larger autonomy for them, which we call "community" or "self-management". Firstly, peace implies that municipal powers can be exercised, but it remains to be seen at what level the population will limit municipal power in relation to what exists today. This involves in any case, the development of popular power. It also remains to be seen how that will function in relation to judges of the peace³, and so on.

We think that it is necessary that the people exercise broader control. The national civilian police in the contested zones must be that of the people themselves; this implies certain limitations of traditional power to the advantage of popular power. The joint employer-worker economic and social boards must become a mechanism which permits unions and popular organizations to participate in the elaboration of economic and social policy; this is part of popular power.

■ Will the FMLN participate as such in the elections of 1994, or will it be integrated into an electoral front or again support a coalition of other forces?

We think that the FMLN must participate in the elections as a party, but in the framework of a large left-center coalition. We hope that there will be a broad regroupment and we are already discussing with all political parties except the National Republican Alliance (ARENA) which is currently in power. We consider the participation of the Christian Democracy (CD) in this regroupment as essential.

1. *La Tandonia* refers to the leading military officers in the Salvadoran army. These elements supported the low intensity war strategy of the United States. They also directly profited from US economic aid.

2. In 1984 the Christian Democratic government of Jose Napoleon Duarte began to institute its "agrarian reform" (which had been decreed by a military junta in 1980). It sought to take the initiative on the land question and thus erode the FMLN's peasant base. 469 landholdings of over 500 hectares were distributed to 322 cooperatives as well as lands that belonged to the state. This affected 30,000 peasant families (there were officially 220,000 landless families at the time).

Most of the large landholders managed to avoid the provisions of the law which called for the limitation of landholdings to 245 hectares and the sale of lands larger than that size.

Many cooperatives suffered from a lack of credits and technical assistance as well as market fluctuations. Others were forced to abandon their land because they were located in the war zone.

3. In Central America the *jueces de paz* (judges of the peace) were responsible for ensuring order, which they often did through violent means.

■ **The FMLN is today composed of five political-military organizations.⁴ Do they intend to unify?**

The FMLN intends to act in the electoral field as it has in war — as a party — a party with five organizations. But the five organizations continue to function as currents, each with their own political bureau. Of course, the leading bodies of the legal electoral party will resemble somewhat what is today the general command of the FMLN. The various bodies of this new party — central committee, political bureau, and so on, will be a representation of the five organizations of the FMLN.

■ **For the moment the FMLN is an underground organization. If the cease-fire is obtained, it will need public representatives, public meetings, open recruitment, holding of congresses, and so on. What is going to happen?**

We must be able to have the same guarantees as the other parties. In fact, we even want to see more rights for all parties — a truly democratic system. During the negotiations we must not let our guard down, but there are always risks.

■ **Will each organization in the FMLN retain its own leaderships? Legal work is not the same as underground work, which for reasons of security demands a strictly hierarchical (even "vertical") functioning.**

Changes will be needed. There are already discussions in each organization of the FMLN about how to find a less hierarchical mode of functioning than that imposed by the war.

■ **What is the state of the mass movement in the framework of these negotiations? Has there been a setback or advance of the social movements?**

The peasant movement has been perhaps the most active and this has been in the zones under government control. There have been more than thirty land occupations since the beginning of the year of which only four have been violently suppressed by the authorities. The government has sought to negotiate with the peasant organizations on the condition that they do not occupy other lands.

On the other hand, on the trade union level the response to the measures taken by the government — privatizations, the dissolving of the Institute charged with price regulations and so on — has been insufficient, even if there have been some notable actions especially among public sector workers. The government was forced to announce that it would not continue with its privatizations due to the response of the workers. The neighborhood organizations have not been very

dynamic but I think that they will be in the future. These organizations and the most disadvantaged neighborhoods will be part of the forum of consultation. The strength of the workers in certain areas threatened with privatization, like social security, is considerable.

■ **Are you optimistic about the perspectives for El Salvador?**

We face many challenges, perhaps even more complex than during the war. During the war we had to resolve the many organizational problems of a popular armed force; buying boots, obtaining ammunition, but in the present situation we have more complex problems. But I am optimistic, we are all optimistic

today.

■ **Concerning the general political debate, do some of the recent declarations made by FMLN leaders represent a political shift?**

It is true that some of the declarations made by various members of the general command would suggest this.⁵ Statements by Joaquin Villalobos, Shafik Handal or

4. They are: the People's Revolutionary Army, the Popular Liberation Forces, the National Resistance, the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party, and the Salvadoran Communist Party.

5. See IV 206. Joaquin Villalobos is the leader of the People's Revolutionary Army; Shafik Handal is the Secretary General of the Salvadoran Communist Party, and Ferman Cienfuegos is the leader of the Popular Liberation Forces. They are all members of the general command of the FMLN.

THE NEW YORK ACCORDS

ON September 25 1991, the FMLN and the Salvadoran government signed a "general peace agreement" for the first time. The following are some of the points agreed upon in the text as well as those currently being negotiated.

* The creation of a national commission for the consolidation of peace (COPAZ), legally constituted by law and charged with enforcing the agreements. The COPAZ will be made up of two representatives of the government, two of the FMLN, and a representative of each party or coalition represented in the National Assembly. The archbishop of San Salvador and a delegate of the UN mission for El Salvador will serve as observers. "The government and the FMLN should consult COPAZ before adopting decisions or measures relative to the peace accords"; "COPAZ will be in direct contact with the president"; "COPAZ will have the authority to prepare the necessary legislative proposals in accord with the agreements".

"The creation of COPAZ will be sanctioned by the resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on the peace accords."

* The purge of the armed forces will be conducted according to the set criteria and according to a calendar which will be taken up by another accord.

"The armed forces will be represented by two of its members".

* The reduction of the armed forces will be defined by an accord between the two parties;

The doctrine of the armed forces will be revised according to a separate accord and should be founded principally on the defense of national sovereignty in the framework of respect for human rights and constitutional authority.

* Concerning the reorganization of the armed forces: according to the agreement signed in Mexico in April 1991, the army must be subordinate to constitutional authorities and respect for human rights.

* The creation of a national police force (independent of the army) and the dismantlement of the current security forces. The police personnel will be reconstituted after an investigation of each of its current members and by the integration of new police officers, ("the pluralistic system of recruitment and training"); the independence of the police vis-a-vis the Minister of Defense will be the object of a constitutional amendment.

* The agrarian reform. Land holdings will be limited to 245 hectares; confiscated lands will be compensated and distributed to the poor peasants as well as State lands which are not part of forest reserves; land that has been redistributed in the war zones will be maintained. The negotiations will also take up the question of reducing the social dislocations resulting from structural reform programs and measures to promote community development.

* A discussion of economic and social questions with the participation of representatives of the government, of labor and of management. ★

Ferman Cienfuegos vary from one another. But this does not prove that there are serious problems within the FMLN, but demonstrates on the contrary the richness of the discussions within the organization.

The FMLN is made up of five organizations; we are living in a wartime situation and each of the organizations has its own army. The choice of strategies, tactics, and sometimes even of battle plans requires serious debate in order to arrive at a consensus.

The meaning of the events in Eastern Europe, why they happened as they did, the validity of the socialist project today, the type of society we want to build are all questions that we are discussing today. What is new is that elements of this discussion have become public, which was not the case before. But this is not something that threatens to divide us. There are even indications that the new political situation will strengthen the unity of the FMLN.

■ **Some of the statements of FMLN leaders appear to be political positions of the FMLN rather than subjects for discussion, like for example, those of Joaquin Villalobos on Marxism and the abandonment of this doctrine. There have also been the statements of Humberto Ortega in Nicaragua which claim that the traditional conception of exercising power must be reexamined.**

Within the South and Central American left there is clearly a deep debate about socialism stimulated by the events in Eastern Europe. But it seems to me to be wrong to consider certain individual statements as positions of the FMLN. The statements of Villalobos for example, are different from those of Shafik Handal. In a recent interview, the latter said that the problems of Latin America can only be solved by socialism. This debate is not over in the FMLN.

There are some questions that have now become part of our common program.

For example, the development of a popular economic sector in the occupied zones has become one of the gains of the FMLN. The same can be said for peoples' self-management and the strengthening of political pluralism. Reality has imposed certain theoretical conceptions on our common vision like the debate about socialism. This enriches the discussions.

As far as Marxist-Leninist theory is concerned, one thing is clear for everyone in the FMLN: the neo-liberal model that has been imposed on our country and the rest of the world is not going to resolve the enormous problems that the masses face. On the contrary, these schemes have partly resolved the problems of the capitalist economy at the price of higher unemployment and increasing misery for the masses. An attempt has been made to resolve

the contradictions created by the system itself at the expense of the masses.

In our country, at least 70% of the people are poor. This means that there is a very low cultural level for the majority of the population. According to the neo-liberal model everything will be resolved by market forces; but the majority of people remain outside of the labor market because they lack the necessary qualifications.

■ **These people do not have the buying power that would allow them to have access to consumer goods.**

That's right. They find themselves outside of the market. The liberal model will not only not resolve these problems, it will aggravate them. Poverty is increasing even in countries where conditions are better, like Mexico and Costa Rica. Neo-liberalism is not solving these problems. There is complete agreement about this in the FMLN. We are all looking for an alternative model regardless of what we call it.

■ **But some seem tempted to propose an idyllic conception of the social democratic model to the neo-liberal model, along the lines of the Swedish model. This seems to be totally impossible.**

I agree that we cannot envisage applying the Swedish model nor even the Costa Rican model, not to mention that of the Asian dragons. The concrete conditions do not permit it. It is as if we wanted to make a revolution following the Cuban road without taking into consideration what we think about its current situation; it is impossible to repeat history.

Even the Nicaraguan model is today impossible to emulate. The international situation that helped the Sandinistas take power, not to mention the Cubans, is completely different today. We therefore cannot think in terms of analogous models. The same is true for Sweden which is part of the North and which built part of its economic power by exploiting the South. Even if we wanted to we could not repeat the Swedish model.

It is one thing to dream about this or that model, but another to anchor it in reality. It is clear that the FMLN must find a different alternative to the neo-liberal model. But as far as precise aspects of it are concerned, like the dictatorship of the proletariat, it seems to me that we must digest the lessons of the past in order to avoid repeating what has failed elsewhere. This doesn't mean that we should claim that those countries really had a dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore reject it.

■ **As a reference point, we can take either the Stalinist example or that outlined by Lenin in *State and Revolution* or Marx in *The Civil War in France*, which is far more democratic and opposed to what happened in**

the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920's.

I agree. From a theoretical point of view, the criticisms made in such declarations are correct. But the message that these authors wanted to transmit must be analyzed.

I think that as far as the dictatorship of the proletariat is concerned, the experience of the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, and even under a different form in Nicaragua, must be avoided. I think that this is the main point. It is clearly dangerous to make statements that can be interpreted in a different way to which they were meant.

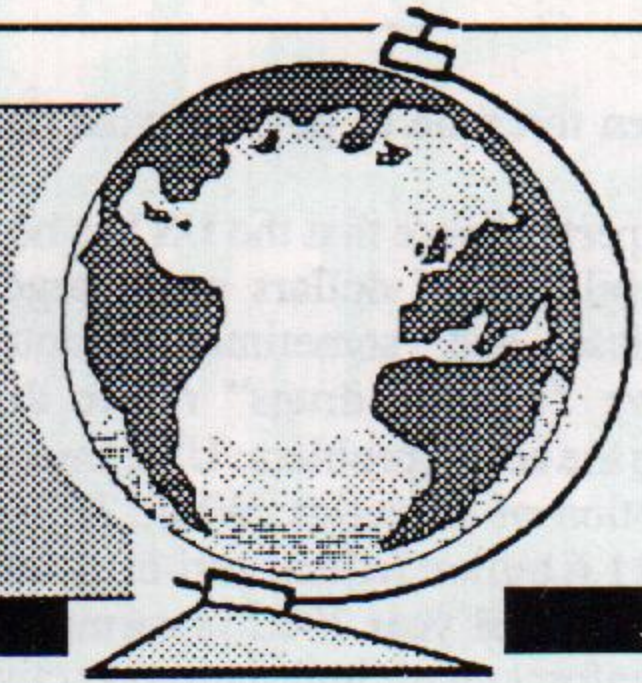
■ **You say that the international situation is today different from that which the Nicaraguan or Cuban revolutions faced. This is unquestionable. What do you think this means for El Salvador today?**

What had been our model before the events in Eastern Europe is today called into question. On the theoretical plane we must reconsider our alternative model of society. Archetypes are no longer sufficient.

On the practical plane, the model that we can build will be determined by our place in the international situation imposed by the capitalist system. We cannot change this even if we wanted to and even if we contribute to creating the conditions for an overall change of the system, which does not depend on us or the Sandinistas. We must accept and understand the international situation and that we cannot build an isolated model. In my opinion this is impossible — we must fit into the capitalist system. The relations that we had with the Soviet Union have completely changed; there is already a different social situation there, capitalist relations, international prices for oil, and so on. The terms of exchange have been modified; the changes that we can effect will therefore be primarily internal and will be to a large part determined by the international situation that we will have to be part of.

We also have to realize that the model that we develop will necessarily have to be realizable. We realize that any model must have a strong social base. We have therefore to be ready to modify our plans. If we refuse to do so we will isolate ourselves from forces with different interests and opinions. ★



AROUND
THE
WORLD

TUNISIA

Trial of six adjourned

ON October 13, 1991, six young people, some of them high school students, were arrested at Sidi Bouzid, in central Tunisia, while distributing leaflets outside a high school (see *IV* 216, November 11, 1991). Beaten by police and guards after their arrest, they appeared in court on November 13, 1991, accused of illegal association and of holding an illegal meeting.

On November 6, the six were released and their trial adjourned to December 17, 1991. As shown during the Gulf War, the Tunisian government is susceptible to international pressure and it is currently trying to improve its international image. It is thus necessary to continue the pressure for the acquittal of the Sidi Bouzid six.

Protests should be sent to the Minister of the Interior at Tunis, with a copy to the Tunisian League of Human Rights (fax: 216-1-79 54 66). ★

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Appeal against screening law

OVER 100 members of Czechoslovakia's Federal Assembly have signed a "Statement of the Group of Deputies for Study and Support of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms" against the so-called screening ["lustrace"] law adopted by the Assembly on October 4, 1991 (which is aimed at purging from the administration alleged collaborators of the former secret police, the StB, and effectively anyone who held a position of responsibility in the old Communist Party—see *IV* 216).

The statement points out that the law is in contradiction to the country's Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, adopted on January 9, 1991, which states that "citizens shall have access to any elective and other public office under legal conditions". ★

NICARAGUA

Far right provocations

COMMEMORATIONS were organized throughout Nicaragua on November 8, the anniversary of the birth of Carlos Fonseca,

founder of the Sandinista Front. At 2 a.m. the next morning, an explosion destroyed the mausoleum built to Fonseca.

The following night, a series of reprisal explosions shook the capital, Managua. The office of the mayor, Arnolodo Alem-

na, who was widely held responsible for the attempt on Fonseca's mausoleum, was completely destroyed. Radio Corporacion, a far right station, was put out of action. The headquarters of a number of right wing parties were also attacked. Three Nicaraguan right wing deputies have demanded that Daniel Ortega, general secretary of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, be brought to trial for "instigation of and association with criminals". Rodolfo Mejia Ubilla, William Frech and Daniel Tate Nelson, deputies for the Constitutional Liberal Party, claim that Ortega could receive thirty years in jail if found guilty on these charges.

Ortega has responded by publicly renouncing his parliamentary immunity, saying that "with such accusers, there is no need for defenders! These are the same charges with which Somoza accused me

IV/Inprekor goes East


THE first issue of *Inter-vzglyad*, the Russian language sister publication of *International Viewpoint*, came out last month in Moscow.

The 36-page issue includes articles by Daniel Bensaid on Leon Trotsky, and by Ernest Mandel on economic alternatives.

Sixty two years after Trotsky was banished from the Soviet Union, heralding the massacre of the militants of the Left Opposition by Stalin, *IV* sends its greetings to the new journal!

The new publication will be distributed by left wing groups and individuals in many of the USSR's cities and sold on university

campuses. The next issue is already in the pipeline and should appear before the end of the year.

The Fourth International's work in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is also shown by the quarterly publication of Czech *Inprekor* (see the logo below), and by the existence of reviews aligned with our current in Poland and the former East Germany.

Meanwhile, *IV* continues to do its best to give the fullest possible coverage to its readers of the changes underway in the former Soviet bloc, and, to this end, keeps contacts with many correspondents there.

To help us spread our ideas in these countries, and to enable us to sustain and improve our reporting on the region we need your help. Donations can be sent to:

IV/PEC — mention "Fonds Est"
2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100, Montreuil, France

Details of how to make payments are the same as those for *IV*, contained in the box on page 2.

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and for which I have been imprisoned seven times".

He has also challenged Alfredo César, currently President of the National Assembly, to renounce his parliamentary immunity so he can face accusations that his electoral campaign was financed by the CIA. ★

UNITED STATES

"War on drugs" questioned

A RECENT report from the Inter-American Commission on Drug Policy — a private group of experts from Canada, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and the United States — has called for a radical shift in Western drug policies. The report, released in June of this year, concludes that US drug programmes which concentrate on suppressing the supply of cocaine, marijuana and heroin have actually exacerbated the problem.

The increased role of the military in drug enforcement in Colombia and Peru, for example, has led to human rights violations that have weakened popular support for anti-drug programmes. Stepping up police activity has not reduced the number of addicts, but has increased the risk factor for pedlars, causing prices to rise. The growing number of addicts, in turn, have

ben driven to crime to pay for what they consume.

The experts charge that the US has been wasting billions of dollars on a largely meaningless and sometimes counter-productive "war on drugs" rather than attacking the actual problem: US domestic consumption of narcotics. While 70% of the US\$11.6 billion federal anti-drug budget for the fiscal year 1992 is earmarked for law enforcement, international activities and border interdiction, only 30% is set aside for education and treatment (information compiled from *Far Eastern Economic Review*). ★

SOVIET UNION

October Revolution celebrated

ON November 7, 1991, for the first time since 1917, the Soviet Union did not celebrate the victory of the October Revolution. However, in the capital, in response to the call of the Moscow Union of Workers (a trade union of a conservative orientation) 6-8,000 people demonstrated their continuing attachment to the popular revolution of 1917.

The mayor of Moscow, Gavril Popov, had forbidden any rally, under the pretext of avoiding confrontations with the inevitable "counter-demonstrators"; the latter

ultimately amounted to no more than 200, which illustrates graphically the difficulties the liberals face in mobilizing, and the disorientation of their supporters. However, at around 9 a.m., a lively crowd gathered on one of the boulevards around the centre of Moscow.

While around half of the demonstrators seemed to be over 40, young people, and adolescents in particular, were also numerous. The tone of the rally was fraternal and the slogans and banners were, for the most part, not demanding a return to the Stalinist past, being mainly directed against the anti-socialist changes imposed by Yeltsin and his team.

The demonstrators then headed off in the direction of Red Square in a spirited atmosphere of defiance. After negotiations with the police who were guarding the bridge giving access to the Kremlin, the stewards of the demonstration diverted it so that it entered Red Square from a side street.

Many of the participants were opposed to this detour, arguing that the centre of the city still belonged to them and that not everything had yet been sold to the foreigners. Young people participating in the demonstration sold the first issue of *Inter-vzglyad*, the Russian language sister publication of *International Viewpoint* (see ad on previous page!). ★

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