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РЕСТРОЙКА — КРОВНОЕ ДЕЛО НА

What's changing in the USSR?
Crisis in the French Communist Party
Irish vote shows instability

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

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The future looks good for *IV*

STEADY WORK, as well as special subscription drives, are necessary to build the circulation of *International Viewpoint*. Our first subscription drive ended successfully at the beginning of the year, with 200 new subscribers registered. We hope that this trend will continue. It is the result of the greater attention our supporters are giving to building the circulation of the magazine.

Our friends in the Netherlands in particular have given a good example of consistent work since the magazine was launched. During our subscription drive they stepped up their promotion of *International Viewpoint*, sending sample copies to activists and students of international politics, and regularly drawing attention to the coverage offered by the magazine. They have made *IV* a part of their regular political work. Similar work has been done in other countries, notably in Denmark, Britain, Canada and the USA. That is what we hope to see everywhere.

In our five years of existence, over seasonal ups and downs, there has been a steadily rising curve in *IV*'s circulation. That indicates that people find the magazine useful when they see it and hear about it. If our supporters remember to promote and advertise the magazine to those that they are working with, this process should continue and gain momentum, providing a bigger and bigger initial base for subscription drives.

On the basis of the progress that has been made, we are pleased to announce that we have been able now to purchase new computerized typesetting and design equipment, which will enable us to produce a more attractive magazine.

We hope that with your continued support and efforts to promote *IV*, we will be able to break all previous circulation records in 1987.

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Frameup continues against Warschawsky

THE SHUTTING down of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Jerusalem on February 16 and the jailing of its director, Michel Warschawsky, have become a cause celebre in the Israeli press and among foreign correspondents in the country. It appears that there is a real danger of a major frameup.

GERRY FOLEY

The prosecutor claimed when Warschawsky was brought before Judge Aharon Simha that the police had evidence that one of the sources of finance for the Center was the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is led by George Habash.

Refused bail on March 10, Warschawsky has now been held in jail for a month. The state has also reportedly assigned a top interrogator to the case.

In its February 18 issue, the magazine *Ha'olam Haze* reported that the closing of the AIC was "arousing outrage" among Israeli journalists and foreign correspondents who used its service.

In the February 18 issue of *Al Hamishmar*, the paper of the Mapam party, staff writer Pinhas Imbari wrote that the closing of the center deprived the Israeli press of a means of checking the official accounts of police operations against Palestinians. "What is sure in this case," he wrote, "is that democracy is the loser."

The Jerusalem paper *Kol Ha'ir* wrote February 20 that the publications of the Center — a daily bulletin, a weekly one, and a fortnightly publication, *News from Within* — had a high reputation among journalists. One of the users, for example, was Danny Rubenstein, the correspondent for the occupied territories for *Davar*, the paper of the Labor Party.

The Center collected information on repression of Palestinians, especially on the West Bank, relying extensively on the accounts of released political prisoners and their families. It was the only service, for example, to give an advance report of the exchange of Palestinian prisoners for Israeli military men held by Ahmed Jibril's faction of the PLO.

In various reports, the Israeli

daily press credited the Center's fortnightly bulletin, *News from Within*, with 250 to 500 subscribers around the world, including mass-circulation publications, such as the *Miami Herald*.

Not only written information was provided by the Center, but it also organized tours for press representatives and tourists who wanted to see the sides of the Zionist system not presented in official propaganda.

In the February 20 issue of *Kol Yerushalayim*, a Jerusalem local paper, the journalist Haim Bar-Am described Warschawsky as a sensible and careful person. He thought that it was unthinkable that, as director of the Center, he would have done anything that would give the police a pretext for a prosecution. Bar-Am pointed out that Warschawsky's Trotskyist politics were opposed to adventurism and support for terrorism.

Center under constant surveillance

Since Warschawsky and other workers for the Center are members of the Revolutionary Communist League, the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state, the Israeli papers gave potted histories of the LCR, none of them very accurate. Bar-Am's statement helped to make it clear that Warschawsky's politics in fact ran counter to the police accusations.

Lea Tsemel, a well-known defence attorney, and Warschawsky's wife, told reporters that they were well aware that the Center was under constant surveillance, and that it would have been crazy to indulge in any illegal activity there.

The raid on the AIC was carried out in an extremely brutal and intimidating way. The police came in, cut off the telephone and electricity, and took away all those in the office at the time. They also seized the publications in the premises, including the Center library, and confiscated all the printing and reproducing equipment. The arrests were televised.

After interrogation, all those arrested were released except Warschawsky. According to Ya'ir Fidel, writing in the February 19 issue of *Hadashot*, a right-wing popular paper, he was taken before the judge unshaven and handcuffed.

The reports of the hearing in the Zionist daily papers themselves indicated an unconcealed prejudice on the part of the judge, Aharon Simha. For example, *Maariv* of February 19 noted that when Lea Tsemel asked the military interrogator, Yossi Mizrahi, why the authorities had waited so long before staging the raid, the judge replied for him, "They were waiting for the big fish."

One of the state's accusations, according to *Maariv*, was that Warschawsky had drawn up a guide to help persons arrested by the security services face interrogation. The prosecutor claimed that this constituted a danger to "future interrogations whose aim is to defend state security."

The drawing up of leaflets about "What to do if arrested" is one of the basic functions throughout the world of centers involved in civil-rights work. This may be the first time, however, that the police of a parliamentary democracy have tried to make this a crime. It speaks volumes about how much the Zionists rely on intimidation in their dealings with Palestinians.

The police also claimed to have found "illegal agitational materials" in the Center. Staff members said that there were publications of banned Palestinian groups in the office, but they were part of the library and necessary to any journalists who tried to follow Palestinian politics. Even right-wing journalists would have them, they said.

The police officer responsible for the raid, Commander David Krauss, invoked the 1948 "Decree Against Terror" to justify the action. It states: "The police commander is authorized to order in writing the closing of any premises serving a terrorist organization or its members, either continuously or occasionally, whether it is a place of activity, meetings, propaganda or storage."

In its February 18 issue, *Ha-Aretz*, Israel's prestige newspaper, noted that this is the first time in the history of the (not terribly squeamish) Zionist

state that this decree has been utilized.

The police accusation reported in the Israeli press are generally quite vague: that the Center served as a place of "hostile" propaganda and was frequented by "hostile" people.

Lili Galili of *Ha-Aretz* asked Eli Aminov, a spokesperson for the LCR, in particular about one of the Center's employees, Ali Jedda, a Palestinian political prisoner released in Jibril's exchange. He was involved in a terrorist action 20 years ago.

Obviously in order to present the other side of the official accounts of police and army actions against Palestinians, the Center had to have considerable dealings with Palestinians who at one time or another have been in trouble with the Zionist authorities. To move against the Center on this basis is like shutting down a defense lawyer's office because it is frequented by "suspicious people."

The Association for Citizens' Rights in Israel issued a protest against the closing of the Center that was published in *Ha-Aretz* of February 18, in which it pointed out:

"The Center's activity took place under the rules of the censorship, and this was sufficient to assure that there was no violation of state security. If, in the view of the police, activity contrary to the law went on in that place, they have the means to bring to trial those suspected of such activity. There is no justification for closing the offices — with the violation of the freedom of the press and information that this entails — before criminal proceedings are undertaken."

Speaking in the wake of the raid, Lea Tsemel also stressed that the Center has been operating "under licence for three years and its news reports were submitted to the censorship." She made this argument to

WE WILL NOT BE GAGGED!

On February 16, 1987, the Israeli authorities iron fist came down within the green line against Israeli Jews. By order of Police Inspector General Kraus, the Alternative Information Centre's office in West Jerusalem was closed down in a move all too similar to the modus operandi of the South African police state. Israeli and Palestinian members of the AIC collective were arrested, stacks of printed material were confiscated and the centre's equipment was seized. Our "crime" lay in providing Israeli, Palestinian and foreign journalists with accurate and up-to-date information on human rights violations in the occupied territories and political issues generally.

Simha, the quick-on-the-draw judge who heard the initial appeal. His rejoinder was that "90 per cent" were submitted to the censorship, but "10 per cent were not." It remains to be seen what this 10 per cent were.

International protests needed

The police also charged that the Center printed material for the PFLP and other "terrorist groups." That is also a very vague charge in view of the fact that the groups supported by most of the Palestinian population are considered "terrorist" by the Zionist authorities.

Eli Aminov told Lili Galili: "The office simply provided printing services, and in that we solved a technical problem. The left did not have a place where it could do its printing. Most printshops opposed the content and refused to do the printing, or else charged double.

We provided printing services to anyone, except Kahane [an ultraright Zionist organizer of attacks on Palestinians] of course."

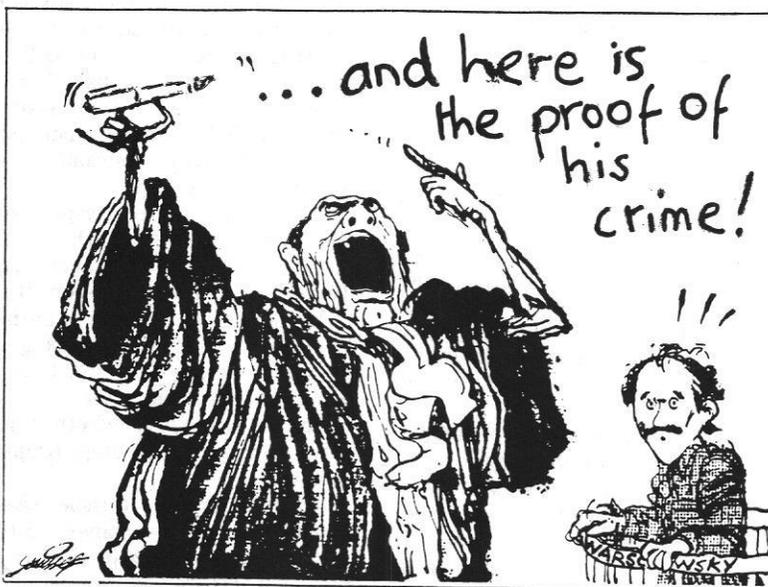
Such a violent attack on normal news gathering and civil-rights activity has not only created a sensation in Israel. It is sending shock waves internationally among journalists, democrats and defenders of human rights. A growing list of internationally known personalities have signed a protest against the closing of the Center and the jailing of Warschawsky.

Signers now include Yves Jouffa, president of the French Ligue des droits de l'homme; Didier Motchane, French SP Euro MP; Erwin Lanc, former Austrian minister of foreign affairs; Michael Ferris and Michael Lanegan, members of the Irish Senate; former Danish minister for justice, Ole Espersen; foreign affairs spokesperson for the Social Democratic opposition in the Danish parliament, Lasse Budtz; British Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn; and several members of the Mexican, Italian and Danish parliaments.

The Danish Journalists Union also sent a protest to the Israeli minister for justice on March 5, declaring, among other things, "We protest this attack on the right of expression and the democratic right to gather and disseminate information."

It is important that as many protests as possible be sent to Israeli embassies now to stop the prosecution of Warschawsky from going any further and to allow the Center to resume its work.

Despite the fact that all their equipment was confiscated, the staff of *News from Within* have managed to get out another issue of their bulletin. But they need all the material help they can get. A fund has been established to help with Warschawsky's defence. Contributions can be sent to "Campaign for the Release of Michel Warschawsky," 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil, France. □



“Revolution, comrades!”

THE CRISIS of the French Communist Party has recently erupted into the centre of the political stage with the publication of an alternative manifesto by oppositionists led by Pierre Juquin.

The manifesto, “*La revolution, camarades!*”, is the most public expression of the *renovateurs* [renewers], who have taken the unprecedented step of organizing national and local coordinations. Both internal and public discussion meetings around the document are being held all over the country.

Alain Krivine, a leading member of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), the French section of the Fourth International, explains the impact of this extraordinary new development and its potential ramifications.

ALAIN KRIVINE

A centrepiece of the situation in France today is the crisis of the Communist Party (CP), which is a major, daily topic for the press and the rest of the media. The CP has now been in a truly historical crisis for the last two years. In the past the CP has had many lesser crises, involving only small groups centred around intellectuals who opposed the leadership. This was the case, for example, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the 1968 uprisings in Czechoslovakia. (1)

Today, the main difference is that all the sectors of the CP are affected by this crisis. First, what we can call the electoral apparatus — those CP members in publically elected positions — who have represented the main forces of the Communist Party. In France until now the CP have had approximately 20,000 people in elected positions in councils and so on. The majority of them, even if they are not organized in the new opposition, are globally politically in opposition to the present CP leadership. The second historical force in the CP is the trade-union apparatus, and the third component is the CP's own apparatus — members of its Central Committee, leaders of the regional federations and so on. All these sections of the Party have been affected by the crisis.

The main reasons for the upsurge of this crisis can be summed up in four points. First, because of the dis-

appointment of many of the CP's militants with the policy of the Party during the experience of the Union of the Left — the coalition of the CP with the Socialist Party (SP).

The policy of the leadership zig-zagged for years. At first they had a policy of fighting for the Union of the Left, and then they split with it before the general election, in 1978. Following this, they unconditionally supported the policies of the Socialist Party government after they won the 1981 election, in spite of all their attacks upon the working class. Then, when Laurent Fabius became prime minister after Pierre Mauroy in a governmental reshuffle, the CP again changed its position to attack the Socialist Party. (2) Now, in a situation of a big division between the CP and the SP, they are attacking the Socialist Party once again.

All these zigzags, and the fact that the Communist Party supported the SP government's austerity policy for three years, led to discontent among many of the members, especially the workers in the CP.

The second main contributor to the CP's crisis was their disastrously declining election results, which were due to these vacillations. For a long time they have given their cadres an electoralist education, and consequently their militants are very sensitive to the Party's electoral results.

Over the last seven to eight years, the CP has lost half of its voters. From an average of 20 per cent of the total vote in 1979, for example, they have declined to 10 per cent or even less today. It is a terrible blow for them, and has caused the members of the Party to think about why there is such a terrible collapse in support. It meant that at the last general election in 1986, when the Socialist Party government was replaced by a right-wing coalition under Jacques Chirac, the CP's vote equalled that of the extreme rightwing National Front — an unprecedented result in the history of France.

The third motorforce of disagreement in the Party has been the policy of the CP's leadership in relation to Eastern Europe: the fact that they support Jaruzelski's regime in Poland and refuse to support Solidarnosc; the fact that they totally backed the invasion of Afghanistan. These subjects are very sensitive ones, particularly among workers, but also among the population at large.

The final contributory factor to the Party's crisis, which is linked to the other three, is the beginnings of an understanding among CP militants that the general functioning of the Party is bureaucratic, and that there is no internal democracy. They are calling into question the bureaucratic nature of their organization.

Crisis erupts in the Communist Party

These four themes have converged in the last few years and have sent shockwaves through the whole organization. This crisis erupted in a public way a year ago when a petition was published, signed by around 3,000 members of the CP, calling for an exceptional national congress to draw up a balance sheet of the CP's electoral collapse.

The opposition in the Party made their own assessment, explaining that it was impossible to keep a leadership that had failed so drastically, and that a thorough and open internal discussion was needed. Of course, the call for a congress was immediately condemned by party leaders as factional. Among the signatories to the appeal were well-known members of the CP, people in the apparatus, trade union-

1. See “The spectacular decline of the French Communist Party” by Jean Lantier, ‘International Viewpoint’ No. 69, February 11, 1985.

2. See “What does the new government hold in store?” by Philomena O'Malley, ‘IV’ No. 58, July 30, 1984.

ists and also a lot of Communist mayors [elected officials of towns and villages].

But at this time the appeal was solely around the fight for internal democracy. The leadership of the Party, of course, refused to accept the appeal and no emergency congress was held. After this initial experience of fighting for internal democracy, many of the leading signatories to the appeal began to understand that a fight simply around democratic questions was totally insufficient and that it was necessary to tackle the political problems, to initiate a new fight in the CP around political analysis and demands.

It has taken a long time for this discussion, because the one thing that gave the opposition some homogeneity was around the question of democracy. On the political questions there were a lot of differences between them. After a great deal of internal discussion, finally the oppositionists decided to start work on a political document that could present an alternative to the official policies of the CP's leadership.

After months of working on it, finally this document appeared as a draft for discussion in February this year. It is in the form of a manifesto, with a very significant name: "La révolution, camarades!" — "Revolution, comrades!" It is a very long manifesto, a total alternative to the official policies of the leadership, and has been identified closely with one of the leading authors and organizers of the opposition, Pierre Juquin.

It is very interesting for many reasons. Outside of any political differences we may have with it, the capacity of the opposition to write such a political document is worth noting. While it is a compromise, it is nevertheless at a very high political level. Also, it is the first time in France that an opposition inside the CP has been able, and has dared, to write an alternative document. The last time it was done was in 1965, during the time of a split in the CP's student organization, but this was only among students. (3) Now the situation is totally different.

The document contains a series of points that are raised as subjects for discussion, where the authors do not take a set position. The other part of it is a series of affirmations, which are very political. The main positive point is that these people identify themselves as communists, they say that they are for socialism and that we need the revolution. Even if it is only words, this is very important because there is a lot of political and ideological disarray in France today among the working class.

They emphasize in the manifesto



Opposition leader Pierre Juquin (DR)

that they are fighting for revolution, socialism and class struggle, and that they support all the main struggles going on today in the country. They want to reaffirm what they call their "communist identity", explaining that this is very important for them in a movement where many people are putting into question communism and Marxism.

They also say that to reclaim this communist identity, they have to separate themselves totally from the social-democratic and Stalinist experiences, and they place themselves clearly outside the framework of both — a section of the manifesto polemicalises against the capitulation of social democracy. This is important because there are some people in the CP who have been attracted by the Socialist Party.

Manifesto unclear on some central questions

They claim to be internationalist, giving total support to the struggles of the Nicaraguan and South African peoples, and what they describe as all the fights for democracy in the so-called socialist countries. These are the main positive points of the document. Finally, they say at the end that it is necessary to build a real revolutionary current in France.

There are many points in this document that need to be discussed further because they are not at all clear. The main area that is not clearly explained is around "what is a revolution?" — this is fairly normal for people coming from a Communist Party. They raise the questions of what a rupture with capitalism means in our country today, and what are the links between reforms and revolu-

tion. In a sense, there is a certain gradualist feeling in the document, even if everything that is written is followed by a question mark. But it is obvious that on the question of the state, they are not very precise. This is the main area of debate.

Another aspect that is very unclear, as a result of a compromise between the authors, is on the question of Eastern Europe and the so-called socialist countries. They refuse to give open support to Solidarnosc in Poland. While they explain that they support all struggles for more democracy in these countries, in a certain sense they put Gorbachev and Solidarnosc on the same level.

The manifesto finally does not outline precisely what the next steps should be. This is most probably for tactical reasons, because they are conducting an internal debate to try to reform the Party from within, even though a lot of them do not think that this is still a possibility. On the question of the nature of a revolutionary organization they are yet again unclear, and do not really discuss it in the document. While they are totally disgusted by bureaucratic centralism, many of them confuse bureaucratic centralism and Leninism.

As well as the document itself causing a big stir in France, because it is something unprecedented, the opposition also decided to organize. This decision also attracted a lot of attention, and is also a first for any CP opposition. Publically they explain that they have set up a national coordination of communist *renovateurs*, with representatives from 30 departments [counties] in France. They now have regular meetings of the national coordination, they are establishing regional coordinations and are operating increasingly like an organization within an organization.

The opposition's manifesto is being discussed both inside the CP, in internal meetings, and also outside, because they say they want to discuss with revolutionaries outside the CP. They want everyone to read the document, to discuss it and to amend it. They have even established a channel on the Minitel home computer system to centralize all the amendments so that they can redraft the manifesto. (4) The coordinations

3. In 1965, several hundred members of the Union des Etudiants Communistes were expelled for refusing to support Francois Mitterrand's candidacy for president. (At the time, Mitterrand was not a member of the Socialist Party.) Many of the expelled went on to form the Jeunes Communistes Revolutionnaires.

4. Printed telephone directories are being replaced by Minitel computers, which are linked through the phone system to various databanks.

will organize public debates and meetings in all the main towns of France, as well as internal discussions open only to CP members.

Until now, all the people who identify with the opponents of the leadership — a leadership that is totally discredited today — are not yet organized in the opposition. Some of them say that it is too early for an organized coordination, that it is too dangerous. Others are in sympathy, but hesitate to join it. So, we cannot say that all the potential oppositionists in the CP are members, but as time goes on more and more of them are identifying with it.

It is difficult to define political tendencies at the moment in the coordination, because there is no homogeneity. This is one of the aspects of this crisis in the CP, which is usual in Stalinist organizations. Very often, the same people have revolutionary ideas on some things and rightist ideas on others — there is a lot of confusion.

The document is a progress in the evolution of political thinking of the oppositionists, and generally speaking the development of this coordination is going in a left direction. They do not consider the Socialist Party's politics or organization as an alternative, which is an important marker because the SP in France today is very attractive for a lot of people. This is a very big test, because between the SP and the Stalinists there is really no space to fall into.

The second thing that could help this leftward development is the fact that in the manifesto they explain that they are in total support with the recent strikewaves of students, railworkers, electricity workers and so on. (5) Not only that, but they support the *autogestion*, that is, the self-management and self-organization of the strikers, which happened for the first time in France with the organization of local and national coordinations independently of official union structures. This is not a usual position for people coming from the Communist Party.

If it is impossible to analyze the disparate political tendencies inside the opposition, we can talk about different social groupings whose reaction to new developments will depend to some extent on their material situation. There are bureaucrats at various levels of the Party — three or four members of the Central Committee plus other sympathizers who dare not join; a series of regional leaders; trade unionists, including even some leading members of the CGT (the main trade union in France); intellectuals; and a new development of various structures of the CP joining the coordina-

tion, some of which are workers' cells.

Finally, there are some whole towns in France who are totally linked to the coordination, Perpignan for example. And a big town in the north, Lille, where all the local leadership are affiliated to the coordination. Some other examples of the impact of this new coordination are the affiliation of workers' cells, such as that of the Peugeot factory in the east of France. Seven cells in the shipyards at Brest are affiliated, as are post office workers' cells in the same area of Brittany and Communist workers on the railways. The workers' cell at Michelin in Clermont-Ferrand in the centre of the country, one of the biggest factories in France, are all in the opposition.

All these layers represent the various components that make up the Communist Party — elected officials, trade unionists, workers, bureaucrats and intellectuals. For the first time the crisis has really touched everybody.

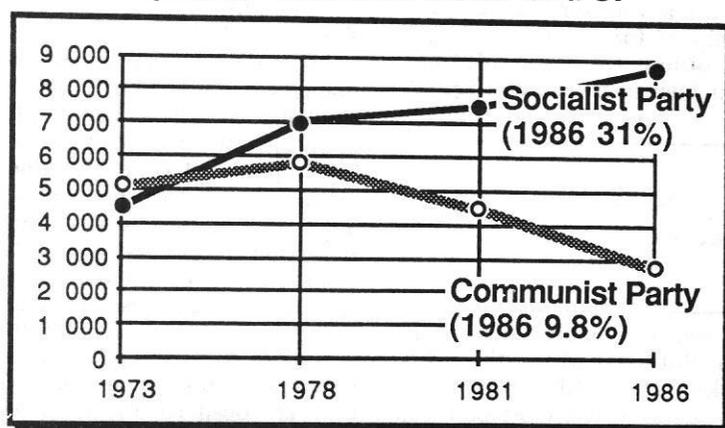
The coordination has taken some initiatives recently and are more and more acting as though they were the leaders of the Party. Of course, they continue to debate with the leadership, but they consider themselves as an alternative leadership. For

example, the official leadership refused to sign the appeal for an anti-racist demonstration taking place on March 15 against the new nationality laws until a few days before the march. Their turnaround only happened because of pressure from the coordination, who had declared their support for the demonstration two weeks earlier.

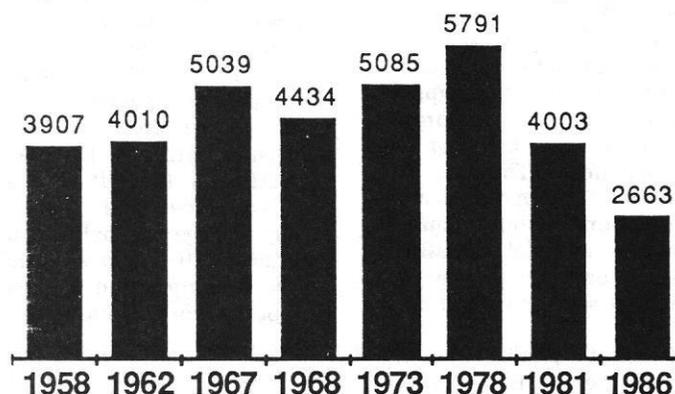
Two spectacular initiatives have now been taken by the coordination. The first will be that during a local by-election in the steelworking area of north-eastern France, Alain Amicabile has decided to present himself as a candidate openly as a member of the opposition with the support of the cells and the CP members locally. He was previously First Secretary of the departmental federation of the CP, and a worker who is well-known and respected for his leading role in the fight against redundancies and closures in the steel industry in 1979 and 1984.

Amicabile has been condemned publicly by the leaders of the CP, who explained that he could not represent the Party — although he is

Comparative results of the SP and CP



Electoral results of the CP (in tens of thousands of votes)



5. See 'IV' Nos. 111 and 112, December 22, 1986 and January 26, 1987, for articles on the students' and workers' strikes.

still a member — and that they would not call for a vote for him. But the relationship of forces has meant that now the official CP has decided not to present their own candidate against him.

Next steps for the coordination

The second initiative is being taken in Brittany, where the crisis is very deep in the CP. Around 300 members of the Party, most of them workers and including two-thirds of the elected officials, have not yet received their membership cards. They have now split, and organized a more or less separate Communist Party in Brittany, with their own newspaper, dues and so on. They say that they need a real communist organization nationally, but until that happens they will construct their own organization locally on the basis of the *renovateurs* manifesto. They are officially members of the national coordination, an important step because it means that the national opposition is beginning to organize people who do not want to say, or cannot stay, in the CP.

It is difficult to predict what the next steps will be for the coordination. One question will be their ability, or not, to structure their forces on a national scale and try to prevent losing potential supporters who individually walk out of the CP.

Another will be the question of political homogenization, and the development of the discussion around the manifesto. It is possible that some of the layer of elected officials who have until now supported the coordination will find even the present draft manifesto too much to swallow, concerned as they are with electoralism. They need the votes of the Socialist Party to get elected, which means that some of them will find the manifesto too leftwing and may be individually attracted to the SP.

The final unknown factor is what the coordination will do. On this question, they are also divided. Part of them think that it is necessary to stay in the CP with the illusion that it is possible to reform it from within. However, most of the leadership of the coordination now understand that this is an impossible perspective, but they have to take into account the fact that they have a number of supporters who are with them, but are not ready to split.

But to date, there have been no moves to make such an organizational break from the CP. For the opposition, a premature move in this direction

would risk blowing it apart, with all the consequences of demobilization and demoralization.

The Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire is debating with these comrades at all levels, locally and nationally. We hope that in the coming months the coordination will develop a greater political clarity, and in a not too distant future take a decision to break with the CP. Many comrades of the opposition consider that the Ligue is the most interesting and significant political force in France from the point of view of potential future allies. Of course, they are open to discussion with all currents, but they are impressed by the strength of the Ligue in the workers' movement, and with our role in the recent strikes.

Our public position towards the opposition is very clear, and it will of course be one of the elements of our internal debate running up to our national congress in May this year. The position of the Ligue's leadership until now has been to take the crisis in the CP very seriously, and to understand that it could totally change the political landscape in France — it will be a central feature of the decomposition and recomposition of the workers' movement.

We hope that these people will be able to build a revolutionary organization after an eventual split from the CP. There are as yet many unknown factors which will determine our future attitude to them: whether they will split; whether such a split will be on an acceptable basis — that is, on a class struggle, revolutionary

and internationalist basis (although obviously it will not, of course, be on a fully-fledged Trotskyist programme); whether they will be able to build a real nationally structured organization, even if it is not a Leninist organization in our understanding of the term, but an organization able to fight and allowing a full internal democratic debate.

Finally, there is the question of how large they will be in terms of support. If they end up being just a few hundred people, of course we will discuss with them. But what is needed is the possibility of a qualitative change before the Ligue would consider plunging in any deeper.

If they split with thousands of people, people implanted in the working class — elected officials, trade unionists and so on — then it is a different ballgame. Then, and bearing in mind the qualifications mentioned before, the Ligue will be ready to discuss the possibilities of building an organization together. But for the moment these conditions have not been met, and the LCR has to concentrate on strengthening itself and building support in the broad labour movement.

The appearance of the opposition in the CP has created a new hope for thousands of people on the left who have become disenchanted with the CP — not only the thousands of individuals who have left the Party over the past years, but also many others who can now see some possibility for building a really credible revolutionary alternative. There is a real climate of *attente*, or waiting, in France today. □

CP leader George Marchais (centre) has plenty to worry about (DR)



Pravda since the Central Committee plenum

SINCE THE January Central Committee plenum that marked the consolidation of Gorbachev's new course, the Soviet CP's official organ, *Pravda*, has been continuing and widening a campaign for the new policies.

Articles and statements dealing with domestic matters have ceased to be merely bureaucratic litanies, and give the impression that the leadership is actually trying to talk to, and convince, at least the cadres and the intelligentsia.

Unattractive realities are being admitted. That was notable in the material published on the all-union congress of trade unions at the end of February, the most important event since the Central Committee plenum.

GERRY FOLEY

In his report to the congress, published in the February 25 issue of *Pravda*, the union chief AS Shalaev stressed the poor performance of the economic authorities in providing housing:

"We can no longer reconcile ourselves to the fact that many ministries, departments and building organizations systematically, year after year, violate the government's plans for housing construction.

"In the last six years, not once have the housing construction plans of the Ministry of Coal Mines, of Light Industry, of Machine Construction for Light, Food Industry and Household Appliances, of the Machine-Tool and Instruments Industry, of Appliance Construction, Means of Automatization and Management Systems been fulfilled."

Furthermore, there had been numerous and serious violations of the rules governing management of housing funds.

"In the recent period, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions [VTSSPS] organized a review of 14 thousand enterprises. Some facts came to light about violations of the housing law and various departures from the established rules. And in most cases, they occurred with the complicity of the unions, owing to a lack of principle on the part of the union committee chairs and a lack

of collective leadership and openness."

The union chief also pointed to corrupt practices in allocating vacation trips: "In many union organizations in the Tadzhik and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics and in Astrakhan, Tiumen and Orenburg oblast's and the Khabarovsk territory, trips have been allotted purely on the say so of the union committee chairs; there has been a lack of collective leadership and openness in this area. It has even happened that some union workers have been assigned vacation trips on the basis of personal relationships. That has aroused just remonstrances from the workers."

Call for greater working class political control

Shalaev devoted a special point to women: "In the next five year plan there are already real possibilities for actually freeing women from physically hard and harmful work."

He evoked the need for democracy in general terms several times. For example: "It is impermissible for questions around improving the forms of economic and social work and planning to be decided by narrow circles of administrative personnel,

without the participation of the work collective. Sociological studies have shown in a number of enterprises that a large part of the workers lack any clear idea of how the wage fund is accumulated and distributed In such circumstances, how can we seriously expect the participation of all the workers in the introduction of new methods of management?"

At the same time, Shalaev called for political control going deeper into the working class. "We must support the efforts of the workers themselves to introduce discipline and order. In this connection, it is especially important to support in every way the initiatives of brigades that have accepted responsibility for giving a collective guarantee of productive discipline.

"In the Severskii pipe factory in the Sverdlovsk oblast' since the initiative was introduced, lost work-time in the factory has decreased by seven times, absenteeism by eight times, and the number of violations of social order by 200 per cent The VTSSPS and the USSR State Labor Committee [Goskomtrud], along with the local party organs have taken measures to propagate the experience of the Sverdlov oblast' people in other territories of the country

"That makes the Production and Social Discipline — Collective Guarantee Movement an important factor in reinforcing the collective bases of our life. The trade-union councils and committees are obliged to take the principle of organizing this movement to every collective."

Further on in this section of his report (entitled "Resolutely Reconstruct the Educational Work of the Unions"), Shalaev stressed: "At the center of our attention must always be the questions of patriotic and internationalist education."

What he meant by "internationalism" immediately became clear: it was combating national feeling among the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union. There has in fact been a lot of combating "nationalism" among non-Russian peoples and not much sign of fighting Great Russian nationalist sentiments, evidence of which is hardly difficult to find.

The example that Shalaev chose was that of the Kazakhs, the outburst of nationalist feeling touched off when the Kazakh party secretary was removed in December and replaced by a Russian:

"Not infrequently, trade-union organizations, especially among the student youth, as was the case in Alma Ata [the capital of Kazakhstan], have taken passive positions toward manifestations of localism, narrow nationalism and nationalist vainglory."

It should be remembered that up until now the bureaucratic rulers have faced active and enduring mass opposition only from defenders of the national rights of non-Russian peoples. For example, there were tens of thousands of people in Georgia and Armenia who demonstrated openly against the draft of the new Soviet constitution, adopted in 1977, which originally would have removed Leninist guarantees for the languages of non-Russian peoples.

Attacks on "nationalistic" articles

It is notable how often the names of the Central Asian republics come up when the Soviet press is mentioning problems of corruption. Of course, it would be logical that in conditions of national oppression, standards of public morality would be lower. All over the world, the local agents of an outside power tend to be charlatans and thieves. But it is also generally true that oppressed peoples prefer that these agents at least be of their own nationality.

The December 18-19 demonstrations in Alma Ata obviously alarmed the Gorbachev leadership. This theme came up many times in *Pravda* in February and early March.

In the February 11 issue, for example, there is a long article under the rubric "Party Life, Review of the Press," entitled "The Price of Self-Love." It was an attack on the Kazakh language press for failing to combat "nationalistic" moods. The author, T. Esil'baev, wrote: "The majority of the [Kazakh] papers and magazines have not had a system for teaching about the questions of internationalist education As a rule, these publications did sort of campaign on the occasion of holidays. But this is not a subject to be taken up occasionally, but a vital political task that requires constant attention. . . ."

"It is clear that most press organs treated this important question only in a formal way."

Some did worse: "In many newspapers and magazines published in the Kazakh language — especially *Kazakhstan Ayel'deri* ["Kazakh Women"], *Madinet Zhane Turmys* ["Culture and Life"] . . . only Kazakh names are to be seen, and the pictures generally only show representatives of the original nationality. This one-sided representation of the life of the multinational republic hardly helps educate people in an understanding of the unity of interests of all Soviet people."

Worse still: "On December 10, 1986, the article 'Welcome to Er-Tostik' was published in *Vechernaya Alma Ata* [in Russian] . . . about the opening of a kindergarten. The author did not hide a feeling of enthusiasm 'There they are, the future masters of this splendid stone palace. Black-eyed, smiling, happy.'

"Further on, the paper reports that 'all instruction . . . will be in Kazakh, as the children themselves and their parents wanted' And that is said about two five-year-old kids who have hardly learned to talk One wonders, is it necessary to publish such material propagating national specificity even from kindergarten age?"

In the March 5 *Pravda*, a so-called Kazakh national writer, Abdizhan Nurpeisov, seems to try to strike a balance. There is a problem, he says, about rural Kazakh's learning Russian. But many Kazakhs in the cities are losing their native language. In the style of "national writers" in the USSR he says that the languages of the "two brother peoples" are like "two breasts of a common mother," both of which are needed to sustain a "healthy infant." But he does not say anything about Russian infants needing Kazakh, and they are certainly not losing their language.

A long "theoretical article" in the February 13 *Pravda* took up the problem of nationalism on a more general level. It pointed especially to two problems. "Every third person in the non-Russian nationalities does not speak it [Russian] fluently. Moreover, the spread of Russian among the original populations of the union republics has proceeded unevenly. Therefore, improving the quality of the knowledge of Russian remains a task of the day, especially among the rural populations of Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Baltic."

The second problem was that "the normal process of internationalization of culture and mixing of populations can sometimes be perceived in an unhealthy way. Some representatives of the different nationalities where this is especially intensive see this process even as a threat to the survival of their national character, culture and language."

It might be noted that Esil'baev also balked at accepting "normal processes." One of the things he objected to in the Kazakh press was a reference to the fact that the birth rates showed that the Kazakhs were becoming a majority again in Kazakhstan.

In fact, Gorbachev's first tour after the January plenum was in the Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia where there have been strong feelings and protests against Russianization.

The Soviet leader's speech to the Estonian "aktiv" of the party, soviet and economic leaders, published in the February 22 *Pravda*, raised the national question in a prominent way:

"I have already had occasion to say during my stay in Latvia, and I want to tell you, that the united efforts of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR have many times over increased the possibilities of these peoples to accomplish every sort of task."

Gorbachev went on to say that the Leninist nationality policy had not always been applied without difficulties, but "the important thing is that we have created a powerful multinational flourishing state, in which extensive possibilities are assured for each nationality . . . We are all bound together by indissoluble ties."

"Patriotic and internationalist education"

In the March 2 *Pravda*, an interview appeared with I Kubilius, hero of socialist labor and rector of the Kapsukas University in Latvia. The first question put to him was about "patriotic and internationalist education." Kubilius said that it had not been a great success:

"Not long ago, the party committee at the university analyzed the work of giving the students an internationalist and patriotic education. The conclusion was not very reassuring. Not everywhere have we freed ourselves from dogmatic declamatory stereotypes"

"In the opinion of the students, teachers shy away from analyzing the complexities of national policy; and, using boring and useless phrases, talk about Latvia's contribution to the all-union chest, about the fraternal aid of the other republics and about the internationalist duty of the Latvian people."

"Patriotic and internationalist education" is obviously going to be a focus of tensions and contradictions in the "reconstruction." Judging from the Soviet press, "reconstruction" in this area seems to mean tightening up rather than liberalization. In fact, in general "liberalism" is used as a pejorative term of laxness of all types, from corruption, to undue toleration of expressions of national feeling among the non-Russian nations.

A frequently recurring theme in the weeks since the January plenum has been the need for a press that seeks out abuses and offers objective information and education in applying

new techniques. The upcoming all-union congress of the journalists' union will probably be an important event.

Three journalists' congresses were held on lower levels in February — in Byelorussia, Ukraine and Moscow. The criticisms raised at the first, as reported in *Pravda*, concerned the failure of the press to educate about the "transformation of the material-technological base, the deepgoing reconstruction of the national economy on the basis of advances in science and technology."

The Moscow congress, on the other hand, raised more sensitive and fundamental questions:

"The journalists of *Moskovskaya Pravda* started a feature study on the special schools in the capital. It turned out that a lot [of the students] were children of leading comrades In the first place, they went to school in government cars. Secondly, these were not schools but palaces, with heavenly quarters, fountains, swimming pools. When the influential papas found out about the investigations, they put the heat on the editors, applied 'muscle,' to 'stop this thing!'"

The *Pravda* report continued: "Speakers talked about the need for increasing the authority, prestige of our union, they criticized its leadership for passivity: 'With my own eyes, I have seen staunch correspondents broken, but I don't remember a single case of the USSR Journalists' Union defending any one of them,' was heard in the hall."

The electronic media are also a focus of attention. The March 3 *Pravda* ran a long article on the reconstruction of the TV, under the rubric, "Monthly TV Survey," in which it was said: "The party has given the mass media the tasks of not limiting themselves to critical ardor but presenting the whole truth." What the article called for in fact was a better and more attractive presentation of economic and technical problems.

A back-page article two days before had denounced the illegal circulation of video cassettes smuggled in from the West in vintage Stalinist terms as "poison" responsible for rising criminality. It noted: "Are the punishments strong enough, one wonders, if you consider that the dissemination of home video is being used by some to propagate alien ideas."

The "reconstruction" as it has appeared in the pages of *Pravda* since the January plenum is a tightly controlled but contradictory process. Nevertheless, it is revealing a great deal about the workings of Soviet society and the party apparatus. The contradictions are likely to sharpen, and the revelations increase. □

Gorbachev's reforms and daily life

A MARXIST student of the Soviet Union just returned from the USSR gave the following interview to Catherine Verla in January. The Central Committee plenum that launched a new stage in Gorbachev's reform course concluded at the end of that month.

Question. It would be interesting if you told us first about how the population been affected by the changes underway, and how does it see them?

Answer. In the streets you don't get the impression of any important changes. Even when you talk to people, there are no very visible signs. Life, the queues, supplies — nothing has changed for the moment in Moscow. So, you could think that everything is as it was before.

The feeling of change, and that is in itself significant, comes from reading the papers, going to the movies, to the theater, watching television — in a nutshell from everything that has to do with communications and the media. There, you see fantastically rapid change, both in what is being said and the way in which it is being said. But you don't see anything like that in the streets.

This is not a society in ferment, as Poland was in 1980, where you had the impression that everything was starting to move. Let's say that what is moving is above all — aside from talk — in the cultural field, creative work in the fields of literature, theater, cinema, art and the management of cultural affairs. The major events have been the various congresses of writers, artists, theatrical workers and so on.

Q. What are the most striking features of this "renewal"?

A. There are three things that should be said. In the first place, the terms used to describe the process underway have changed a lot. They have gone from "acceleration" (of economic development) to "revolutionary reform". I could quote you a bit from *Sovetskaya Kultura*: "You can't go on living the way we have been living. The Twenty-Seventh Party Congress told the party and the people that they have to transform themselves and reconstruct before it is

too late. It called on us to radically reshape all the mechanisms of our society, our state, to profoundly transform our consciousness."

The first time you read that, it strikes you. The second time also. But the fifth time, when you see that real life is not changing, you wonder if you are seeing the introduction of a new set of pat phrases. This is especially so when they say that this "revolutionary" process "will take a lot of time". This is in tune with the official slogan that you can read on walls in Moscow, "Don't be afraid to go forward boldly and decisively."

The second point that should be stressed is the "focusing" of the publications. At the beginning, the "renewal" affected magazines and papers published in outlying areas, such as the magazine *Eko* published in Novosibirsk; or of a cultural nature, such as *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, which are produced for intellectuals. Now you find "radical" articles in *Pravda*, and even in the theoretical review of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

As an example, you could take the trajectory of Tatiana Zaslavskaya. Three years ago, her ("secret") report to the Central Committee on the economic situation and the stalling of the necessary reforms circulated only in samizdat form. In February of this year, she published an article taking up the same themes in the magazine *Eko*. In September, she was published in *Kommunist*.

Q. Do you find in these published texts what she said in her first report?

A. In the context of the present situation, they are at least as critical. She is taking up the reform in a more and more frank way. She says that the regime does not know the society, that it is ignorant of the social interests of the different social groups and classes, that these interests are anta-

gonistic, and that a reform has no chance unless it tries to take account of these interests; that elements (especially in the apparatus of the intermediate bureaucracy) are opposed to the reform because it would endanger their material situation.

Q. What does she say about the workers?

A. She does not separate them out from other working people. She says that in every layer of society, there are elements of resistance, especially in the intermediary administrations, that is in the industrial ministries, the regional administrations and so on.

The third striking point is the evolution of the themes being taken up. At the start, they talked especially about "openness," and criticized corrupt and incompetent functionaries — and in general, the stubbornness of the Brezhnev period. Now, there is also a refocusing on the themes of "democratization," "social justice" and economic reform, with the last two themes being profoundly intertwined.

Q. What content is given to these words?

A. The notion of "democratization" is given very varied meanings. They talk about "democratization in economic, social and political life," they talk about self-management. For example, there was an article in September in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, reprinted in October in *Pravda*, that criticized the form of elections to the soviets, and put forward the idea that there should be several candidates. That was above all an avowal of the formalistic character of these elections and of the functioning of the soviets.

But the party seemed untouchable, at least until Gorbachev's January 27 speech [on the occasion of the Central Committee plenum]. The repeated postponements of the plenum that was to touch on cadre policy very likely indicated internal struggles. The touchstone of what Gorbachev is willing and able to do will be the extent to which the job security of the bureaucrats is really put in question. He knows that it was this thorny problem that probably determined the fate of his more remote forebear, Khrushchev.

The first accounts of the plenum, which was finally announced with much fanfare, show that the small changes proposed by Gorbachev have run into considerable resistance.

Q. What is being said, and what debates are there on "democratization" in planning and in the enterprises?

A. At the enterprise level, they are talking more about giving free rein to the workers' initiative, making more or less clear references to self-management. In fact, what they are interested in is leaving more leeway for the economic players through relying more on indirect means of managing the economy.

Q. But that could mean several things — dictating planners' choices by the system of prices, taxes and credit instead of administrative orders, or orienting toward more systematic reliance on market mechanisms.

A. None of that is yet clear, and there is a lot of pragmatism and caution. In some articles, it is being said that the very notion of self-management is unclear (cf. *Kommunist* of last September). The most interesting thing in all this is rather what it reveals about the present society than any positive plan, which is still in the dark.

Q. Democratization of decision making at the level of the big economic questions has not been raised?

A. No, never really.

Q. And "social justice"? What does that involve?

A. It is contradictory. First of all, in some articles, notably Zaslavskaya's, it is explained that the USSR is an inegalitarian society, that there are inequalities among regions, social inequalities, inequalities in education.

But there is also a line of talk on inequality, which is closely linked to the debates on price reform. For example, there is criticism of subsidized rents. This is very ambiguous. Some criticize the fact that you can pay the same rent for very different types of housing, or that the way in which rent subsidies are applied enables privileged layers to benefit from them, while there is a general scarcity.

But housing subsidies are also criticized — and this may be the dominant line — because they make it possible to obtain housing without regard for the "real cost." And here what is being challenged is the whole range of prices for major goods and services that have been kept very low for decades.

Q. We'll come back to social inequality and the reform. But are they talking about the bureaucrats' privileges?

A. At the time of the party congress, the party secretary for Moscow, Eltsyn, published an article criticizing some "legal" privileges of the bureaucrats. It made a big impact. This is a very touchy issue, as shown by the letters to the press. Since the congress, with the exception of

some rare articles, there has been very little evocation of these privileges. You might wonder if the question was raised around the time of the congress in order to put pressure on the delegates.

In the articles that are now talking about "social justice," there are more allusions to the mechanisms of distribution, to the standard of living of the general population, that outside the bureaucracy, I might say. There is a systematic campaign against corruption (in all its forms and first of all in commerce).

In *Komsolka*, they tell about a group of youth who call themselves Robin Hood's Children and attack those who exploit their positions for wrongful gain. Another theme that has popped up recently is criticism of the present judicial system (and this is no unimportant question for the population, or, it seems, for the KGB).

There was for example an article in December 1986 in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* that denounced the veil of secrecy cast over crime statistics. It reported a large number of cases of summary justice (such as the execution of 14 innocent people) and denounced the practice of assuming that any person is guilty. It also highlighted the almost insurmountable obstacles to any demand for judicial review.

What emerges from all these publications is important, a "stripping naked" of the present society and its contradictions. In particular, there have been a lot of articles on youth, on the fact that they are totally alienated from the system, about youth gangs "on the fringes" (and there is an astonishing variety).

There was also recently the film made in Riga in Lithuania which presented interviews with young people returning from Afghanistan, who explained that after what they went through their lives were shattered. And the debate over the environment continues in full swing. It may be that it is from this angle that the stakes in planning are being discussed most directly. One of the sore points is the "death" of the Aral sea, which is "shrinking" at a rapid rate.

Q. Regarding social justice, you mentioned the criticism of the present system of distribution. If I understood correctly, the idea is to drop distribution by administrative means in favor of distribution by the "economic" mechanisms. The objective that lies behind this technocratic term is to assure a more direct link between the work performed and real remuneration of the workers in goods and services. We were just talking about "social justice." Isn't what this involves

in fact "equality" and "social justice" for the strongest?

A. Before the gainers were also the strongest, but under the conditions of bureaucratic organization of planning, which also involved social advantages. Now the gainers are to be the strongest with respect to the market. In my opinion, they are talking about social justice in order to put over a very "liberal" line in the economic sense of the term [that is, free enterprise].

I think that that is not to the liking of the workers and a large part of the bureaucracy, but for different reasons. The former will see it as meaning that they are going to have to work harder; and, as for the bureaucrats, a lot of them have nothing to gain in seeing their incomes linked to their "economic performance."

Q. Doesn't this turn to reliance on "economic mechanisms" threaten to bring greater inequalities at the end of the day?

A. Yes, especially among the population at large, and it threatens to wipe out a certain minimum of material security that exists now, even if it is really very minimal. The logic is the withering away of the social wage in general (subsidized prices, nearly free housing, etc.), which is made possible precisely by these subsidies.

This would tend to eliminate certain mechanisms by which the workers can defend themselves today. The relationships in the factories at present are very different from what we know in capitalist enterprises. This does not necessarily mean that they are "better," if only because of the absence of trade-union rights. But what is striking is that precisely in the absence of such rights the workers can impose a tempo of work that is generally recognized to be much less than what prevails in capitalist factories.

In "normal times," the management neither has an interest in, nor the means for, increasing the intensity of labor (except on the eve of inspections to verify fulfillment of the plan, when everyone runs like crazy — for example they talk about a "bicycle-racer syndrome"! It should not be forgotten that in the USSR, the demand for labor is far greater than the supply! But where there are "too many" workers, they cannot fire people.

Q. Are people talking openly now about "the right to a job" and unemployment?

A. The right to a job remains, but job security is being put in question. Today, neither de jure nor de

facto can a worker be fired for economic reasons. This is first of all because the plant managers have an interest in having the largest possible number of workers to fulfill and overfulfill the plan — and get the bonuses.

With the reform, it would become necessary and possible to fire workers. In her article in *Kommunist*, Zaslavskaya says that the plant managers questioned said both that in the present situation they had a lack of labor power and that, in a situation where there was more autonomy for the enterprise, it would be necessary and possible to reduce the number of workers.

Q. To go back to the question of the reform, is there any different project than what they have already been able to try out in the past?

A. At the beginning, (the first period of the Gorbachev reign), things were very fluid; there was no plan. Little by little, we are seeing the emergence of the elements for a reform. But it is not possible to get a clear overall view of what the reform will be.

By comparison with the 1960s, the starting point of the debate over reform is less technical. They are talking a lot about the "human factor," the social cost of the reforms, the necessary relays for mobilizing the workers. We might say that there is a more social approach to reform and the conflict of interests that could be brought on by its implementation.

This was the question evoked by Zaslavskaya's report, which said that without taking account of social interests and without a social base, the reform would fail. In fact, a whole part of the debate on social justice intersects with, and carries forward, the debate over the reforms. For example, in her article in *Kommunist*, Zaslavskaya raises the problem of unskilled workers, who risk being the losers from technical progress.

On the other hand, there has been a lot of experience and debate on the role and place to be given to the market and to autonomy for accounting purposes. But so far these have been only partial experiments.

Q. You speak of technical progress. What role can that play with respect to the social and economic blockages?

A. This question leads us back to the problem of the lack of motivation in general, as it is maintained by the system itself. According to Zaslavskaya, two-thirds of the workers are working at less than a real workday. A majority of plant managers say that they would rather have less responsibilities.

They have gone from Brezhnev-style technological fantasy (all the problems can be solved by importing technology from the West) to an understanding that there will be no progress without a transformation of motivation, without attacking the method of administrative orders. Unless this is done, the technological innovations cannot be carried through.

Q. It is in this connection that they are putting forward the theme of democratizing management?

A. In fact, there is still a gulf between the talk about democratization and what is being said about economic reform. Introducing economic mechanisms (more market play) is being presented as the means for solving the big problems. Of course, they are also saying that the workers have to feel that they are the masters in their factories. But that sort of talk has been very common for a long time.

Q. What about the brigades [work teams]?

A. This question is not being discussed very much today. In 1985-1986, organization in brigades was to be generalized throughout the entire economy. But now this has faded as an issue, or a panacea.

Q. Could you say something about the workers' attitude to the brigades?

A. It varies a great deal. The brigades were often seen as an attempt to break the solidarity and egalitarian sentiment that is common among the workers. The objective was also to put an end to the complicity between the workers and the plant management as regards carrying out the plan. The results have been very ambiguous. There has been not inconsiderable resistance, but it is hard to evaluate.

Often going over to brigade organization was purely symbolic. In any case, this system has not brought the expected fruits. Today, there is a lot of talk about including engineers in the framework of the brigades in order to try to reinforce their "responsibility" for defining and achieving objectives.

The introduction of the engineers is supposed to change the nature of these collectives, a section of which have apparently reproduced the "faults" that the brigade system was supposed to combat — solidarity among brigade members, maintenance of a form of wage equality.

Q. This seems somewhat to be a counterpart of the "quality groups" and individualized remuneration.

A. It has been said that above all



Mikhail Gorbachev — telling fishy stories to the workers? (DR)

the engineers who at present earn less than the skilled workers should be paid more. On this level also, "egalitarianism" is being denounced. Overall, under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, white-collar workers and those with higher education experienced a relative decline in their material situation by comparison with the workers. "Catching up" is not just a question for engineers. Quite recently, the minister for health was dismissed for delaying the introduction of new wage scales.

Q. All that is not very revolutionary...

A. In any case, on the official level, they are not talking about replacing the present system of administrative management but of complementing the existing system with so-called economic tools.

The official line reflects a compromise. But the underlying debates among "specialists" are often more polarized. The gamut is very wide. It goes from ultra-free-enterprise currents ("everything for the market") to currents that want to link economic reform with democratization of the society.

Q. And what about the private sector? Two interpretations are possible of the measures that have been announced: One is that they only want to legalize what exists, in order to be able to suppress better what goes beyond that. The other is that there is a certain desire to widen the room for private initiative, notably in the services and agriculture, which could in fact improve the quality of day-to-day life. What do you think about that?

A. For the moment, the modifications remain marginal. The professions concerned are limited in number,

and there are also geographical restrictions. There is apprehension. But the first interpretation is too Machiavellian. Rather, you can see an impact of the Hungarian experience.

Q. In the background to these reforms, let's talk a bit about the arms question.

A. It is clear that the disarmament proposals made by the USSR are designed, among other things, to enable it to lighten a great burden it has had to bear and to free resources for reform. The Soviet spokespersons do not conceal this interest.

Q. Some people, such as Castoriadis, have rightly pointed out the concentration of resources in the arms industry. Can reconversion of this to civilian industry be envisaged?

A. There is no economic obstacle to this. A partial reconversion already occurred under Khrushchev, as well as after World War II. It is a question of political choices.

Q. And the conservatism in the army?

A. The army has never held a predominant or decisive place in national politics, even though it is a real interest group. It is the Political Bureau that has the last word, and that is a "civilian institution," you might say.

Q. Without getting involved in guessing games, how do you think these events are likely to develop?

A. I think that the USSR is heading for a political crisis, probably the most serious the country has known since the 1920s. We are seeing an attempt to redefine the terms of the bureaucracy's rule and the way the society is run. That is always risky. For the moment, there is no

coherent plan, precisely because of the resistance. The forces favorable to the reforms have the initiative at the top level. But the anti-reform forces in the apparatus are still far from having said their last word.

Other "remedies" for the crisis have also been proposed. In the October 1986 issue of the magazine *Molodaya Gvardiya*, you find "tough" talk. What is needed to get out of the crisis is a vigorous type of person. It denounces the perversions of the intellectuals and sings the praises of manual labor. Women's place is in the home. A good censorship system is needed for the theater and literature considered decadent or overly liberal.

The counteroffensive will come when the attempts at reform can be portrayed as failures. If there are no substantial changes in a year or two, there will be the basis for a counteroffensive. In the meantime, the struggle is going on under cover. There is a fight. People feel it. They know it. They say it. But the adversaries are anonymous, as in all the previous struggles. If you get a chance to find out who they are, it is after they have been defeated. You can interpret the talk and initiatives concerning democratization as an attempt by the reformers to build up popular pressure for the reform and against recalcitrant elements in the apparatus. This is a kind of authoritarian populism.

Q. In many respects, the situation resembles that in Czechoslovakia in 1967, when the reformers still lacked popular support. Dubcek's appeal for democratization was essential in order to combat the blockages.

A. But it may be doubted whether these attempts to gain popular support will get a positive response, if there

are no concrete results in daily life, because in the media the reform can easily be seen by the workers as a threat to their interests, since if it were consistently applied it would mean a deterioration of their situation.

Q. Novotny also tried to play on that against the initiators of the Prague Spring.

A. There are probably elements of a crisis coming simultaneously at the top and in the society. The crisis in the society will be all the more powerful inasmuch as the population is being encouraged to mobilize (in a "controlled" and "responsible" way of course, but not without some reality), even against the apparatus. The process of limited democratization can get out of control.

Without a real democratization (which is out of the question for the present leaders of the USSR), the social basis for any large-scale reform will remain very scanty. There are real contradictions, in the sense you cannot get off scot free talking about democracy, self-management and forces hostile to democracy and self-management and so forth. This sort of talk tends to get out of the control of those who start it. Moreover, there is a phenomenon of initiatives developing at the base that is not much reflected in the press.

Q. For example?

A. In various cities, quasi-autonomous groups have been set up, looked on ambivalently by the authorities — the Robin Hood's Children I talked about, study groups. There is a social dynamic, which is possible in the present situation, but it is not on the authorities' wavelength. That is what is important.

"Gorbachevian" talk can be compared to the play by Shatrov that created a sensation in Moscow last year. All the burning questions were taken up. There was a lot of sharp repartee. At the same time, everything was done to get the spectators to applaud, of course, but to stay in their seats. I would contrast this play with another that also aroused a furore in the last theater season, but which shows up much better both the limitations of the renewal and the stakes in the present situation.

I am talking about the play, "Speak!" In it, it is shown that there is no difference between good and bad leaders, that the crucial problem is those below speaking out, those who (I am quoting part of the repartee), "for fifty years they have been trying to get to forget that they are the masters of the country." It is this mobilization of those below that we have to watch very carefully in the coming months. □

"Turn to the people, to the workers"

WE HAVE translated the following interview with the leading Soviet dissident Yurii Orlov from the October 31 issue of *Russkaya Mysl*, a Russian paper published in Paris. The interview took place in New York City. It has been slightly abridged.

Question. What about the conditions you faced in the camp?

Answer. I spent half my term in the camp prison and in the punishment cell. In the punishment cell, they give you 450 grams of black bread per day, and every other day the other food, which is extremely sparse. They give you only the lightest clothing. They don't give you any bedclothes. I suffered from cold and hunger. When at night the plank bed was laid out — boards with steel connectors — I spent five to ten minutes adjusting the planks, then I lay down for five to ten minutes until the boards got warm, then I got up and started adjusting the planks again. That is how the night passed.

Early in the morning, the plank bed was fasted to the wall. You could sit on the cement post, but you could not close your eyes. If the guards noticed that I closed my eyes or that I opened them but my eyes were red, they put me on report, and I got extra punishment.

What is a punishment cell? It is 1 meter, 20 centimeters by 3 meters. In a corner stands the so-called *parasha* (chamber pot). The first time I was put in the punishment cell, I asked for a newspaper for the *parasha*. The "inspector" (that is what they call the soldiers assigned to guard duty these days) said: "I'll call the duty officer right now."

He called the duty officer, who came and said that I could not have any paper. There were a lot of little things like that.

They generally gave me six months in the camp prison at one go. There the conditions were a bit better. They gave you bedclothes and slightly better food. But the work was very hard. I rolled barbed wire by hand.

When I was in the camp itself, not the prison, what bothered me most was the hard work. I worked on the lathe on which generally younger

people (20 to 30) worked. And most of them did not meet the [production] norm. But for those who collaborated with the administration, that was overlooked. In my case, it was not overlooked. They took my visits away. For five years straight, I was deprived of visits.

Q. The camp left you terribly exhausted. But you wrote a series of scholarly articles there (some of them have already been published in the West). In the camp one of the most extensive of the documents of the Helsinki group on the situation of the political prisoners was drawn up. It was published six years ago in Kontinent [a Russian emigre journal]. How did you manage to do that? Where did you find the time to think?

A. I am always thinking. Whether I'm sitting, walking or working, I'm thinking. While I'm talking to you, I'm thinking. In penal exile, it became easier to write. It was not necessary to ask for paper. But over time, everything did become difficult.

Q. A lot of people have told about today's prison camps. But there are almost no reminiscences, in particular "fresh ones," about penal exile.

A. The hardest thing of all was to find a place to live, I mean buy. The peasants agreed, but then the prosecutor's office would not permit it, or the KGB intimidated them, or the police frightened them. I was turned down by everyone.

At first I lived in a trailer, along with building workers. Then, they gave me a room in the airport area. When I had made some contacts, I managed to move into a house, but it ended badly. They took the woman away from the village and started criminal proceedings against her, for other reasons, of course. But at least I did manage to buy a house.

"Where did the money come from?" an interrogator asked me in Lefortov.

I answered. "Friends collected the money for me. I have a lot of friends who are academics with good salaries, and with that money I bought a house."

I planted and harvested potatoes. I had a greenhouse, that some physicist friends helped me build. (You can't grow anything out there without a greenhouse.) I had tomatoes, cucumbers. I bought cabbage at the Sovkhoz [state farm]. I caught carp in the pool (they are very tasty food). And so I managed to live on my pension of 60 rubles. But in order to do that I had to spend 80 per cent of my time on providing for myself.

Q. In the summer of 1985, we learned that you were beaten up in penal exile. What do you remember about that?

A. When I came to Kobyai, they "explained" to the people of the village that I was a spy. The first months, when I lived in the trailer, children threw stones at me. Afterward, the people saw that I was normal, and they started getting more and more friendly.

They beat me up, as I explained, under the influence of the propaganda in N. Yakovlev's pamphlet *The CIA Against the USSR*. Besides that, I don't think that there was anything else. Wow, "the spy Orlov" had come

Official Soviet demonstration for peace (DR)



to Kobyai. As I later learned, there were a few copies of the pamphlet in the village, and everyone had read it. I took it to read myself. I had not seen it before then.

After the beating, a good deal changed. Those who were friendly toward me talked to the fellow. He denied that he had beaten me up, but he brought me a bottle of cognac. I did not take the cognac but showed him all my documents, showing him that I was a professor, that I was 60 years old, that I had been in the war. He asked if it was true that I had been with Sakharov. "That's true," I said, "is it a crime?" "No," he said, "it isn't." Afterwards everything changed. The young people especially started to take a better attitude toward me.

Q. Did police investigation, trial, prison camp and penal exile change you?

A. Physically, of course they did. Otherwise no. My outlook on things was formed basically 40 years ago. It later became filled out. I understood more, learned more (I now know more than I did ten years ago), but the principles remained the same. I do not feel any bitterness. That is my character, or more accurately the way I think. I am not interested in bitterness. I am interested in the goal, which is democratization. Bitter-

ness is a bad counsellor, isn't that so? A bad counsellor.

Q. What do you think about the human rights movement, its present and future?

A. It seems to me that repression has greatly weakened it in its old form. What is the old form? It has been a movement without its own means to disseminate ideas and information. Printing presses, let's say, there is no such thing. And influencing Soviet citizens through the Western mass media, the use of the Western information media for purposes of propaganda within the country, that method, I think, is entirely excluded for the future.

That is one side of it. On the other, I think that this stage is more or less concluded, and that the next stage will be work among the workers, among the ordinary people. And the methods will be different, perhaps in the conditions in the Soviet Union, illegal.

In the camp, I met people who had organized a "Communist Party of a different type." That may be even more understandable for the workers. I am certain that no bourgeois-type party will be popular now among Soviet workers.

If you remember, in the history of Russia there was the "Movement to the People." It was an illegal movement. People were arrested and others took their place. The people did not understand at first, and turned them in to the police. I am convinced that a similar thing will happen in the Soviet Union. And something will come of it. At first, Soviet citizens will turn them into the KGB, and later they will start to think about it. They might even inform on them at the start. "That person must be a propagandist." They might write about them to the KGB, and then think it over, "maybe all that they said might happen."

I am well aware of the attitudes of ordinary Soviet people. In penal exile I talked with a lot of them. I remember that I used to visit the regional center. And there was a group of working people standing there, and they asked me, "tell us about so and so." They were ready to listen to people who criticized the economic management and policy of the Soviet authorities. Soviet people in general understand that. What they do not understand, do not accept and condemn is relying on the Western media. They all condemn that.

In recent years, I haven't met a single ordinary person who thought that we should take our internal problems to foreigners. That is the psychology of Soviet people. It is

the result of long-term work by the entire Soviet system. And we ourselves? Were we anxious to do that? So whoever wants to make headway within the country, among ordinary people, cannot lean on the West. And if they do use the West, they have to explain at length and carefully why that was unavoidable, why there was no other way, that we are not relying on the Western governments or their radio stations. We use them, but we don't rely on them.

We might accept support from the Socialist International, if the situation in Russia concerned it, or the unions. That is easy to understand. The rest is a lot harder. They listen respectfully to criticism because they see that there are a lot of inadequacies. And they are prepared to discuss. They are even ready to accept the idea of a new party. I mean, the workers are. The peasant population is much less enlightened. The intellectuals, basically, are like the workers.

However, in principle Moscow and in general the center differs sharply from all the rest of the country, including in this respect. In Moscow, they have sort of become used to foreigners. There a part of the people (even a considerable one) readily associate with foreigners. It is quite a different thing in the rest of the Soviet Union. I came to understand that the only objection to the dissidents was their attitude to the West. The people can understand any fundamental criticism, although they do not necessarily accept it.

Q. Do you think democratization is possible? What sort of system could it lead to?

A. I consider that capitalism is not impossible in Russia, in particular because a return to capitalism on the part of this people (this people, not any other) would mean national destruction. If, suddenly, God sent down "capitalism," it would be national destruction. I consider that the most suitable thing for this country (for *this one*) would be democratic socialism, with all the freedoms.

I would like there to be a legal opposition, of any type, except fascist. For this country the existence of any sort of opposition would be helpful. I am talking about an opposition of a social democratic type, which would be supported by the masses. I think that it would be the most understandable sort of opposition for the workers. Or even of a communist type, say like the Italian Communist Party. That would also be met with understanding.

In the first stage for Russia, probably, a lot of parties would not be necessary. Our people are on a level of development where they don't

like too much variety. Something in the middle is necessary. Such are our national characteristics today. But the managers of industry and the economy have to have room to maneuver in economic and all other matters. I'm not talking about private ownership. It's sort of like a lease. They are only managers. But they have to have freedom. And they should be appointed and monitored not by the party but by some sort of democratic mechanisms — a council of managers and the like.

As regards a private sector, I think that should be introduced only in agriculture.

There should also be protection for the workers — unions, with all the implications of that.

For Russia, I don't think that the Yugoslav system is suited, or, say, what the Poles wanted in their country.

Q. Why not?

A. I was interested in the Yugoslav system a long time ago. Their variant is a contract with specialist-administrators for a fixed period, with specialists being hired on a competitive basis. The Poles (they have told me that here) don't even want hiring of directors or contracts with them. They want to choose the directors from among the personnel. That's already closer to anarcho-syndicalism. The Polish variant is unity of everybody, national unity.

In the Russian system, that won't work. Only one thing is possible, that some manage and others protect themselves. That's my point of view. Insofar as I have a feeling for Russia (and I think that I have a good feeling — I have worked in factories, been in the army, lived in the countryside, I have seen a lot), I think that such a system would be more understandable.

If there is a legal opposition, unions and the like, then freedom of the press follows automatically from that. It is necessary also to permit a press based on cooperative principles. In Russia, there should not be any push for a return to private ownership, except perhaps of a small-scale kind.

And free elections, of course, with candidates put up both by the opposition and the Communist Party. I even think that in the first elections the Communist Party will win, and not the opposition. In the first, that is.

There is no point in discussing the other details. Because if there is freedom of discussion, the people themselves will work it out later, and do it better.

Q. By what road can these changes be achieved?

A. We realize how difficult it

would be for the Communist Party to agree to this. But if you look at the history of various countries, you see that such situations have gradually developed. Kings willingly give up their power, the bourgeoisie relinquishes power. So, you can't say categorically that such a thing is impossible. In Egypt under Nasser, there was a one-party system. Sadat changed that. It seems that a one-party system would have been more advantageous for him. But no. He introduced another two parties and then four. Because there are people on the top levels too who consider the interests of the state.

I am sure that Gorbachev considers the interests of the country, that he thinks. He himself, it may be, will only move the country forward a little bit. But others will come forward. They will think. Of course, they are bound by a lot of dogmas and by the structure that holds them. But if they are patriots, they will strive for reforms, and I am sure that such reforms will lead to a much faster technological development of Russia.

Today, we are a strong military power, and that's all. In everything else, we are a second-class or third-class state. And we only live by the old Russian culture. Soviet culture does not compare with it. In science, of course, we are not the first. But if we were free, we would overtake America.

I don't think that those who stand at the head of the state are necessarily in their hearts enemies of the state. Maybe they are also patriots. But they are bound by dogmas.

If we are in conflict with Gorbachev, it is primarily over tempos and the final results. But in the short run we are not even in conflict with him. I think that he is moving in the right direction now. In the last year or two, a certain freedom of the press has started to appear. It is very little in comparison to my ideal, but nonetheless things are moving in that direction and not the other.

There is also a certain liberalization in the management of industry. There is not yet freedom in planning, but there is more freedom in financing. I also approve of that. Such steps as the fight against corruption and drunkenness I think are good, because people will think more and not pickle their brains in alcohol.

But Gorbachev is very much tied to the KGB. And they are resolutely opposed to being deprived of the power to exercise thought control. While Gorbachev is tied to the KGB, he cannot move in the necessary direction. Russia will develop and overtake America only when there is freedom of thought. □

A warning for the anti-imperialist movement

FIANNA FAIL leader Charles Haughey was elected premier (taois-each) on March 10 at the first meeting of the new Irish parliament chosen in the February 17 elections. He gained only a technical majority. The abstention of independent left member for the Dublin inner city, Tony Gregory, made it possible for him to get a tied vote, 82 for 82 against. The tie was then broken in Haughey's favor by the president of the chamber, who can only vote in even divisions. Thus, the new Fianna Fail government is extremely weak, and is not expected to last long.

The Irish political situation is in a delicate stage. Unfortunately, the anti-imperialist forces also revealed grave weaknesses and disorientation in the elections.

JOHN MEEHAN

The February 17 general election in the South of Ireland produced a hung Dail [parliament]. The outgoing Fine Gael (FG) government suffered heavily at the polls, but the main opposition party, Fianna Fail (FF) failed to secure a clear majority. (1)

Fianna Fail, a bourgeois party that has traditionally most exploited nationalist sentiment, took 81 seats, but faces a combined opposition of 85.

This is the third election out of four since June 1981 that has produced an indecisive result. The Fine Gael-controlled government that came to power as a result of the June 1981 general election lasted only eight months. Its Fianna Fail successor, brought in by the election of February 1982, fell in November of the same year.

The current result is virtually an action replay of February 1982, but with one major difference: the strong showing of the new Progressive Democrats party (PDs). The PDs are a split from Fianna Fail with the politics of Fine Gael: very pro-austerity, mildly liberal on such questions as divorce, women's rights and Church control, and very anti-Republican [that is opposed to militant nationalism in general and particularly to the national liberation organizations, Sinn Fein and the IRA].

The PDs took 14 seats and 11.8% of the vote. This score was obtained mainly at the expense of FG, which dropped from 70 seats to 51 — a loss of 19 — and saw its share of the

poll plummet from 39.2% to 27.1%: a fall of 12.1%.

Compared with November 1982, Fianna Fail went from 75 seats to 81, a gain of six; however, its share of the vote declined by 1.1%, going from 45.2% to 44.1%.

Disillusionment with the three traditional parties

The other traditional major party — Labour — which caused the election by pulling out of a coalition government with Fine Gael over the proposed budget — dropped from 16 seats to 12. Its share of the vote slipped from 9.4% to 6.4%, a loss of three percentage points. Overall, the disillusionment of the electorate with the three traditional parties was very striking:

* Fianna Fail got its lowest share of the vote since 1961 (and its fifth lowest out of 19 elections since it first took power in 1932).

* Fine Gael got its lowest share of the vote since 1957 (and again its fifth lowest out of the 19 elections since 1932).

* Labour got its lowest share of the vote since 1933 (its second lowest ever in all the elections since the 1921-1923 Civil War!)

Besides the PDs, the renegade ex-Republican Workers' Party (WP) also made gains. (2) The WP increased

their number of TDs [teachtaí Dála, members of parliament] from two to four. It got 65,263 votes throughout the state, or 3.8% of the votes cast.

The remaining four seats in the 166-seat Dail are accounted for by four independents, including two notable personalities — Neil Blaney and Tony Gregory. The former was forced out of FF at the beginning of the 1970s, when he was accused of running guns to nationalists in Northern Ireland. He has retained something of the nationalist and populist appeal of the older FF. The latter is a radical who opposed the turn of the old Official Sinn Fein to the right. He has won a base as a defender of the Dublin inner-city poor.

Sinn Fein, the Republican political organization, took 1.99% of the statewide vote, and gained no seats. This result for the Republicans compares badly with what they got in the EEC election of 1984, when they won 4.8% of the poll, and with their score in the 1985 local elections in the South, when they received about 54,000 votes (this time, they got 32,933 votes). For the first time in recent years, Sinn Fein fell well below the Workers Party's statewide score.

Overall, it can be said that the ruling class also did badly in this election. Most big business interests backed FG and the PDs, but would have been quite happy with a clear victory for FF. Irish capitalism finds itself in a more and more difficult situation. And the vote in this election reflects serious divisions on strategy within the ruling class, despite the evident failure of the anti-imperialist movement to mount an effective challenge to it.

The state itself is insolvent: the national debt is IR pounds 24,300 millions, 148% of GNP. Alternating FF and FG/Labour governments have watched this debt spiral out of control since the early 1970s. The state has forced the working class and its allies to pay for the cost through high direct taxes and cutbacks on already meagre social services.

Unemployment is above 250,000 according to official figures. At 20% of the workforce, it is the highest in the EEC and a record for the state. Even this appalling statistic understates the problem because it does not take account of the numbers of people

1. Fine Gael had led a "national coalition" government, including the Labour Party, which was brought down by the LP's refusal to accept FG's austerity budget. See 'International Viewpoint' No. 114, February 23, 1987.

2. The leadership of this organization, formerly "Official Sinn Fein," transformed it in the mid-1970s from a wing of the Republican movement into a pro-imperialist organization in the name of the economic interests of the working class.

who have been driven to take the despairing step of emigration. Some 70,000 to 100,000 people left the state last year, according to the preliminary results of the 1986 census.

(The revival of large-scale emigration represents a re-appearance of the curse of blocked Irish development that "modernist" Irish governments claimed to have solved, or essentially solved. The population of Ireland fell continuously owing to emigration between the great famine of 1845-1849 and 1961, when net emigration stopped and the population started to rise.)

The economic stagnation of the last few years has simply convinced the Fine Gael leader and premier Garret FitzGerald and his cronies that future cuts have to go much deeper. That perspective was reflected in the budget they proposed, and it explains why they did so badly at the polls.

However, on the political level, FG did manage to exploit glaring contradictions in the line of the FF leader, Charles Haughey, on the Anglo-Irish Deal. (3) Just over a year ago, Haughey denounced the deal as "an astronomical setback." Today he only disagrees with its "constitutional aspects" and would shamelessly implement it. At the end of the campaign, Fine Gael hammered on this contradiction and won back lost ground.

The bourgeois parties have been forced to maneuver by the mass discontent with the tough austerity of the last few years. Above all, the ruling class fears a revival of the national liberation movement. The Southern state was badly shaken by the mass movement in support of the political prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh prison camp and Armagh women's prison in 1979-81. However, the positive gains of that period are now ebbing away. No challenge on that scale was mounted for this election.

This absence of mobilizations represents a very big danger, because in the absence of an effective challenge from socialist Republicans, the bourgeoisie will work out its differences, and the offensive will roll on without mercy.

There is a basis for organizing an alternative. One sign of simmering discontent was a high turnout in the elections in working-class areas, most of it benefiting FF. This clearly indicates that Fianna Fail stand to lose ground by implementing the outgoing government's budget. Under normal circumstances, FF could carry out a hypocritical operation of that type without too much difficulty. But when they cannot control Dail votes, it is a different kettle of fish.

However, the extent to which FF will be gored on the horns of this



John Joe McGirl, a veteran Republican, speaks for dropping Sinn Fein's abstention policy (DR)

dilemma depends to a considerable extent on the lessons that Sinn Fein draw from their poor performance. The other self-proclaimed left alternatives, such as Labour and the Workers Party, are only snares for working people.

SF's newspaper, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (AP/RN) has acknowledged that the election results were poor. Several constituency reports noted the drop compared with the 1985 local elections. For example, the report on Dublin South-West says, "the vote did not live up to expectations," and "hard work on the ground did not materialize in votes on polling day."

New approach for Sinn Fein in the South

In fact, in Dublin, SF chose to make work on local issues the dominant feature of its campaign. This was part of SF's efforts in recent years to be seen as a working-class party. This orientation has also led Sinn Fein to stand candidates identified with groups of striking workers, such as those at Packard Electric and Leinster Paper Mills in Tallaght [an area of new housing estates to the southeast of Dublin, inhabited predominantly by the poor and unemployed]. These efforts are a relatively new feature in SF's profile.

In a general sense, this attempt to be seen as a working-class party is an important step forward for SF. It goes hand in hand with the decision to end the movement's abstention from the Dail, in the hope of making the party more

relevant to Southern workers. It reflects an understanding in the party that securing a base in the South is a decisive task in winning the struggle for national liberation.

These factors led the Irish section of the Fourth International, People's Democracy, to work for Sinn Fein in this election and to encourage supporters and sympathizers to do likewise.

However, the campaign exposed weaknesses in SF's electoral strategy. The Republicans have a perspective of building up a base through steady work on local community issues, and eventually becoming a credible national alternative as a result of the accumulated gains of this work.

The outcome of this election should help dispel these illusions. It is clear, in fact, that many former SF votes went this time to Fianna Fail, owing to the absence of any major national mass movements like the H-Block/Armagh campaign.

SF leaders have argued that their movement can steer clear of this slippery slope by pursuing its armed campaign in the North. But this argument does not hold water. In fact, in the late 1970s, the IRA's armed campaign was at a dead-end; only the emergence of the H-Block/Armagh campaign revived the fortunes of the Republican movement.

Inevitably SF has suffered heavily from the lack of organized mass resistance to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the austerity offensive and the attack on women's rights. As the main anti-imperialist organization, SF has to take some responsibility

3. For an analysis of this deal and its results, see 'IV' Nos. 109 and 110, November 24 and December 8, 1986.



Gerry Adams (left) with Tom Hartley — two leaders of Sinn Fein (DR)

for this state of affairs.

The Republicans are of course not to blame for the very difficult objective situation that exists, with the pressure of unemployment and so on. The responsibility for that lies squarely on the shoulders of the bourgeois forces. But it does have an obligation to pursue a strategy geared towards the revival of an independent mass opposition.

The weaknesses of SF's general political perspectives were shown in its electoral propaganda, which in many cases could not be distinguished from that of the WP, since it did not go beyond very abstract and general left-wing catchwords. Indeed, SF's main slogan — "For real change" — was also that of the right-wing Progressive Democrats! SF did not even highlight the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Moreover, its leaflet on women's rights concentrated exclusively on economic questions, making no references to contraception, divorce, or the closedown of the women's clinics. (4)

SF was unable to point up clearly the connection between austerity and the crisis of the capitalist system and thereby to challenge the assumption that workers and the oppressed should pay for the crisis.

Of course, SF has had to fight against big handicaps, above all Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, which prohibits the state broadcasting service, RTE, from giving it any coverage. At first RTE journalists inserted a "health warning" on every report affected by this censorship. But after the first two days of the campaign, this practice ceased, and SF were ignored.

This open censorship was just one example of the barriers the state

put in the way of Sinn Fein. A huge arsenal of repressive legislation is used selectively against the Republicans. In the past, SF played into the hands of the rulers by moralistic boycott tactics that meant refusing to challenge such legal obstacles (in particular by making it a principle not to take seats in the 26-County Dail, the parliament of the formally

independent part of the country). In this respect, the dropping of this principle at SF's November 1986 ard fheis [congress] was a big step forward.

The decision to participate in the Dail laid the basis for developing a political strategy on a much higher level. Inevitably, at the same time, such a move creates its own problems. Nobody should expect them to be resolved over night.

The immediate response of many SF members to the experience of these elections has been to want to try to analyze reasons for this disappointing result and to discuss the strategic problems. This is a healthy and positive response. But at the same time it is necessary not only to look inward but to take full account of the dangerous objective situation. Time is ebbing away. Unless the incoming Fianna Fail government is effectively pressurized by socialist Republicans, the ruling class will get a chance to put its house in order and then hit all of its opponents very hard.

Already the parliamentary wheeling and dealing has begun. Fine Gael leader FitzGerald has offered not to oppose an FF budget, if it is broadly similar to the one that even the craven Labour Party could not stomach. Such a maneuver by FG would temporarily take pressure off the parliamentary left, who want to vote against the budget but avoid bringing down the government.

Moscow smiles on pro-imperialism

IN THE "Commentator's Column" in the February 22 issue of *Pravda*, the Soviet Communist Party organ, Arkadii Maslennikov took a favorable view of the Fianna Fail gains in the election: "In these elections, Haughey's party presented a positive program for developing the state sector of the economy, reducing taxes and the budget deficit and increasing employment."

Maslennikov went on to give honorable mention to the Communist Party of Ireland (which has no electoral significance), and the Workers Party (which does). "Reflecting the interests of the workers and the left and democratic forces, the Communist Party of Ireland and the Workers Party put forward a sharp criticism of the policy of the main bourgeois parties." The Workers Party is a former Republican faction that first embraced Stalinism and then imperialism.

Maslennikov did not mention Sinn Fein at all. □

4. See "Holy War against Women's Rights," in 'IV,' No. 115, March 9, 1987, and "Dublin government's collapse forces general election," in 'IV,' No. 114, February 25, 1987.

As regards the national liberation struggle in the North, the parliamentary left has a pathetic record. It has, in fact, served rather as an ideological fifth wheel of Fine Gael, joining in with Thatcher and FitzGerald in violent condemnations of Irish nationalism in its revolutionary form.

Disastrous pro-imperialist stance

Inevitably, even the practical results for the parliamentary left of this pro-imperialist stance have been disastrous. The eruption of the Northern crisis in 1968 produced a spectacular crisis in Fianna Fail. The FF government then headed by Jack Lynch was confronted with charges that a number of party leaders were involved in providing guns for nationalists in the North. Charlie Haughey and others were fired from the government, and then unsuccessfully tried on the gun-running charge.

The Labour Party used this crisis as an excuse for forming a coalition with Fine Gael. This operation was facilitated by the fact that the bulk of the anti-coalition left shared the right-wing leadership's hostility to revolutionary nationalism. FG thus appeared to be the "lesser evil" compared with Fianna Fail.

However, in coalition with FG, Labour's strength was ground away. It seems impossible for the time being that it could renew its coalition with Fine Gael.

Labour's shift away from coalition left the Workers Party in a dodgy position. Initially, the latter wanted to do a deal, hoping to maneuver against FF from the right over the Anglo-Irish Deal. They boasted about their "reliability" compared with the "independent FF" deputy from County Donegal, Neil Blaney, who opposes the Anglo-Irish Agreement from a nationalist point of view.

As party spokesperson, Tony Hefernan made the offer in these terms: "It could be easier for Fianna Fail to deal with a political party like the Workers Party rather than three or four independents. Especially like Neil Blaney, whose price would appear to be the ending of the Anglo-Irish Agreement." (5)

On the other hand, the WP support the frenzied Unionist campaign against the Agreement, favour suspending it indefinitely, and want a return of devolved government for Northern Ireland under Loyalist control.

Although there is an apparent contradiction in the WP's attitude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement here, there is a consistent logic of seeking

alliances against militant nationalism.

However, the WP have to follow Labour's lead, and vote against both Haughey and FitzGerald — any other course would destroy the WP's "left of Labour" and "anti-coalition" image. Coalition government is no longer an option for the parliamentary left. But coalition politics remain alive and well.

Such antics expose the hypocrisy of the parliamentary left's talk of "socialist opposition" and its proposals that all the right-wing parties — FF, FG and the PDs — should get together and draw a clear dividing line between left and right. However, this call does have the merit of pointing up the need for drawing a clear line between the bourgeois and working class parties, and this would be a principled policy, if it were linked to the fight for national liberation.

Socialist Republicans need to integrate this line into their politics. They have to take a clear stand against all capitalist coalition politics and all forms of lesser evilism. That means voting against FF and FG nominees for taoiseach [premier], against capitalist budgets, and so on. Unfortunately, there is still confusion within SF about such questions. For example, they are leaning now towards a position of not blocking an FF government within a hung Dail.

An effective fightback will have to be based on mass action. The first opportunities are likely to be offered by FF's budget and their hypocrisy

on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It would be useful to propose united action against any budget similar to the one presented by the outgoing FG government, calling for a clear vote against without parliamentary deals.

In the somewhat longer term, People's Democracy is calling for a remobilization of the national liberation movement around an Irish "Freedom Charter." In this, SF could be expected to be the leading force, but not the only one, in a new mass movement, rather like the situation in the H-Block/Armagh campaign.

Such a strategy seems to us to offer the best guarantee against further isolation of the struggle in the North, which is a big danger now after the setback suffered by the anti-imperialist forces in the February 17 Southern elections.

The impact of these poor results casts a shadow over SF's electoral gains in the North, with a British general election coming up this year.

Without forward movement on the political front, the danger of ultra-left militarist adventurism of course tends to increase. The Southern general elections could foreshadow a serious weakening of the workers' movement, if the necessary lessons are not drawn from them. They are a serious warning. A new strategy is overdue. □

5. 'Irish Times,' February 20, 1987.

INPREKOR

THE FOURTH issue of *Czech Inprekor* is now available, and includes the following articles:

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Women and the "apron economy"

SEVEN YEARS after the victory of the revolutionary forces in July 1979, the Sandinista government have published a report analysing the situation of women in Nicaragua today. (See box.) Women are now an integral part of the workforce, and equality for women is written into the new constitution adopted in January this year. But many difficulties still remain, both in law and in women's daily lives.

With so many men involved in the war against the counter-revolutionary contras, women are often the sole breadwinners for their families. With few qualifications, many of them turn to the so-called informal sector, or black economy, to scratch a living. This is particularly the case in the capital, Managua, where nearly 45% of the active population work in the informal sector.

The following article is based on a study by Nicaraguan sociologist Aida Redondo on the position of women in relation to the informal sector. It was published in *Pensamiento propio*, a review published by the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Studies (CRIES).

Long before it was given its economic baptism, the phenomenon dubbed the "informal sector" was known in the slang of several countries by such terms as "chiripeo" and "rebusque" ["game of chance," "rumaging"] that give more of the flavor of this activity. The various names, however, describe the same complex reality — the activities of "the workers who produce, rework or sell by their own efforts in forms of petty industry, petty commerce, crafts and services."

An outstanding feature is the participation of women in this sector. In Brazil, 56% of those involved in

it are women. In Mexico, it is 40%, and in the Caribbean, 50%. In Nicaragua, women make up about 65% of those involved in the informal sector. And, according to a study of the markets made in 1982, women account for 83.8% of retail sellers and 42% of wholesale sellers.

It has been pointed out that the informal sector "arises in societies where there are no general policies governing production and distribution of income, where the economic strategy is directed to growth and not toward a real development whose fundamental objective would be an

overall improvement in the situation of the people, and where the distribution of property is based on great inequalities."

How, then, can we explain the recent expansion of the informal sector in revolutionary Nicaragua? To answer this question and understand better the features of this phenomenon, it is useful to go back a bit in history.

Under the Somoza regime, a lot of women — especially peasant women — had to supplement the wages of their husbands, who were left without work during the "dead season," or simply did not earn enough to support their families. In other cases, single women or abandoned wives brought in the only income they had to sustain themselves and their children.

Migration to the cities

In both Nicaragua and other Latin American and Caribbean countries, migration to the cities in search of means of earning a better living has been an integral part of this phenomenon.

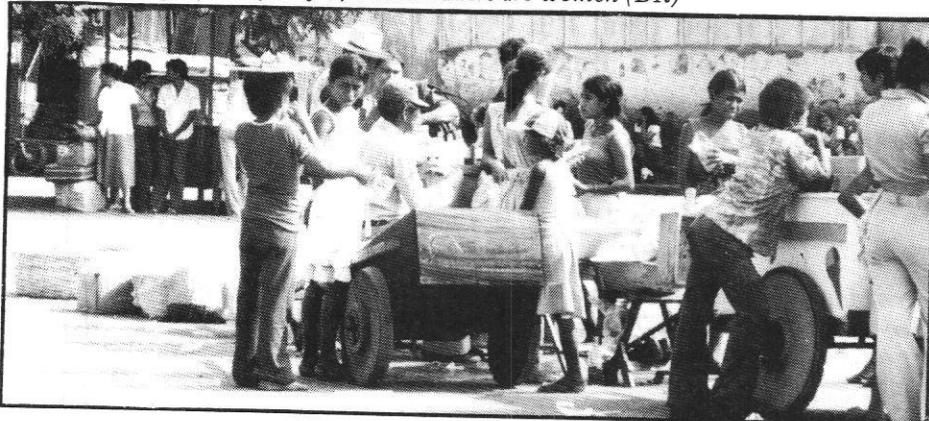
In 1979, the revolution began dismantling this old economic and social model. In these past six years, the government has enacted measures of economic policy, carried out an agrarian reform, and launched actions in the areas of education, culture, public health, transport and so on designed to increase production and achieve a rational distribution of income.

However, the close tie between this model and the world market, as well as the war of aggression waged against us by the US, has placed serious obstacles in the way of turning agri-industry toward a course of accumulating capital that at the same time would expand employment and satisfy the basic needs of the population.

Moreover, some official measures — indiscriminate granting of credit, currency incentives to producers, handing over dollars to importers (*buhoneros*) and the subsidies on fares and foods — favored the expansion of the informal sector.

The government's very limited ability to assure a supply of the basic products at official prices promoted speculation and stock jobbing, which became a source of higher incomes for thousands of people. A long chain of middle people between the producers and the consumers also helped increase the number of small merchants.

In Nicaragua, a majority of street traders are women (DR)



Thus, this subsector has an average annual growth of 23.9%. In part, this growth has been fed by skilled workers, technicians and professionals who have switched over to more lucrative jobs as merchants.

Besides offering higher incomes, the informal sector provides other advantages: It offers job opportunities for a workforce with a low level of skills emigrating from the country to the city. It is easy to get into, since it requires little or no capital. The working hours and conditions are more flexible.

Women want to be free and independent

Because of their lack of schooling, their need to contribute to the support of the home and at the same time look after children, women tend to go mainly into this sector.

In her study, Redondo noted a high percentage of women between 25 and 44 years of age. The majority of them — 70% — were heads of families, and 27% had husbands but in fact provided the family's principal economic support through their activity in the informal sector.

Through their personal experience, these women managed to overcome the belief that they needed a husband to survive. "I prefer not having a husband, because that way I am free and independent." Likewise, they overcame the notion that they had to submit to their husband's will.

These women display a self-esteem that comes from being workers and women of great fortitude, who have been able to provide for themselves and their children through their own labor, despite difficulties and misfortune.

"Women need to work and not to live under the thumb of a man. I don't need one. Only when I have things to communicate to someone. What men give is little, and they take more than they give."

However, personal affirmation alone does not solve other concrete problems, such as childcare. The average age of the children of these working women is four. Although the majority were over seven, others were small. These small children are left in the care of some family member.

The Centros de Desarrolla Infantil (CDIs — Child Development Centers) do not meet the needs of these women because their hours are incompatible with the working day of women whose toil begins at 5am. "Besides making enough to survive, we can take care of our children, when we do not have



Women working in agriculture now do many jobs once reserved for men (DR)

anyone to look after them." The possibility of looking after the little ones while they work is another one of the attractions of this activity.

The amount of schooling these women have is not as low as the average for the sector — 42% have completed up to three years of secondary school. As for their school-age children, they have a real chance to study, and among their adult children, we find technicians and even professionals. This is another aspect of the informal sector here that differs from other countries where the levels of subsistence barely make it possible to keep children alive, much less set them on a road to a better future. On the other hand, these women, even in Managua, lack any preparation to take on specialized jobs.

The study demonstrated that these women came into the working world in various ways. About 33% started as domestics (maids, cooks, ironers). Some 32% were peasants and agricultural workers. Others tried to be seamstresses or saleswomen in stores. But the majority opted to become merchants owing to the possibility for improving their income and "rebellion against working for a boss or for a wage."

Like other Latin-American peddlars, some started selling products — tortillas, *atol* [a non-alcoholic corn flour drink] *pinol* [a popular drink made from germinated maize crushed in water], etc., with little or no capital. Many of them were trained by their mothers, who were in the business before. Others had relatives or friends that helped them, giving them products to sell or teaching the "technique" of selling their stock in trade.

"In Nicaragua, we call it the apron economy"

The entry of women technicians and professionals into petty trade is a common phenomenon not only in Managua, and it has distinctive expressions — from secretaries who sell their goods between dictations, to professionals shifting from their offices to the market.

The view of a female bookkeeper illustrates the possibilities the informal sector offers for the unemployed or underemployed population. "As a bookkeeper, I could not support

myself and my children. Before, under Somoza, you didn't make so much because to get work you needed contacts. Today, you can get work, but you earn less at it than selling."

Doing their business as an extension of the family economy, the peddler women do not keep accounts of their sales and profits: "In Nicaragua, we say that we have an apron economy. You put it into an apron pocket and take it out."

For their calculations, they base themselves on their surplus each week, and the general tendency is for the capital to keep shrinking. The peddlars of fruit and vegetables are considered the poorest, because of the kind of produce they sell. They do not have much of a profit margin, because part of their merchandise ends up in the garbage cans, since it is perishable.

Despite that and the debts that they sometimes get into, the waste of meat and milk products, the lack of access to the basic grains, and their complaints that they hardly earn enough to live, these peddlars have incomes that equal, if not exceed, those of technical professionals.

Peddlers of fruit and vegetables, and of groceries, face difficulties in getting these products and resort to the black market, thereby exposing themselves more to fines and penalties. Despite the fact that they criticize the official policies, they also support the revolution, and even suggest possible alternatives for solving the problem of growing inflation:

"This rise in prices is a result of the fact that we have to buy on the black market in order to sell to the consumers, who cannot get these products through secure channels. This will end when the government lets us sell our products again. What we need to do is distribute these products among ourselves and have police control the prices, as they do with meat."

There is a fear among these women of being driven out of business. A lot of them say that they are not prepared to do any other kind of work, and that spending so many years in trade had made this activity an integral part of their lives.

"We worry about being forced out of business. We feel that trading is a part of us. The happy time that we spend here will be taken away from us. Now we feel more like working people and more united."

Contrary to the stereotyped image that exists of merchants as reactionaries, speculators, and so on, Redondo offers a more rounded view.

Many of the women interviewed participated in the insurrection, and today belong to one or another mass organization, have a high estimation

The changing role of Nicaraguan women

THE WOMEN'S Bureau of the government has published a report on the situation of women today in Nicaraguan society. Since the overthrow of Somoza in 1979, thousands of women have become more integrated in both the workforce and in social and political organizations.

Seven years after the revolutionary victory, many more women now work outside the home. This is due to the war, which has mobilized tens of thousands of men, and to the grave economic crisis that is threatening the country. Women represent 35% of agricultural workers. The report underlines that in some regions, "Women constitute the bulk of the workforce" and are doing work that has until now been a male preserve.

In the towns, especially the capital Managua, women are in a majority in the textile, garment, canning and pharmaceutical industries. In many factories in these sectors, they represent 80% of the workers. A much larger number work in the "informal sector" (see article). 70% of shopkeepers are women.

The report deals at length with the obstacles encountered by women, notably the strain of the double workday. In an underdeveloped country like Nicaragua, which in addition has glaring shortages, the hours spent on domestic work necessary to reproduce the family weigh heavily, since these tasks are far from being shared. In a family where the man and woman both work outside the home women spend 56% of their time on domestic work as opposed to 9% for men. In the countryside the women's total work time is currently up to a total of 18 hours inside and outside the home, while in the towns it is 16 hours.

Discrimination at work

Examining the relationship of women to work, the report finds discrimination in training and promotion, and towards pregnant women.

Because abortion is illegal in Nicaragua, many women die each year after backstreet abortions. What is more, it is the main cause of maternal deaths - making up 27% of the total. The majority of women who have had backstreet abortions already have children, and only 23% of them are single. The report points out that: "This reality contradicts the commonly held belief that abortion is resorted to by single women not wanting to suffer social ostracism."

The agrarian reform established by the revolution, and the growth of the cooperative movement, has laid the basis for equality in the countryside, but much needs to be done for this equality to become a reality. Half of the cooperatives have women members, but still women only represent 6% of the total membership. The idea still prevails "that they 'help' their husband with agricultural work, and that they are not themselves full producers. The men are reluctant for their wives to become full members of the cooperative, and they are not very motivated by the growth of women's involvement in social management."

Laws inherited from Somoza

Notable progress has been made where agricultural workers are concerned, even if their participation in trade unions is still far from being equal with that of men. They explain that this is because of the extra work that childcare and responsibility for domestic work gives them. But even if these obstacles remain, 81% of women agricultural workers are now unionized.

In its conclusions, the report stresses that some women's problems originate in the laws inherited from the Somoza dictatorship. "The old laws and the laws established by the revolution coexist, creating obstacles and contradictions which prevent them from being resolved." Thus, although numerous centres for battered women have been set up since the revolution, this violence against women is not punishable by law. 51% of women turning for help to the Women's Offices set up by AMNLAE are fleeing domestic violence. They also go there for abortions: "The criminalization of abortion is a danger for the health of women. It increases female mortality, puts a strain on hospital budgets and is in flagrant contradiction with government action to improve conditions of health in the country."

Finally, the report concludes on the necessity for a revision of the government's policy towards women. "The war, the economic crisis and the social changes in the country have changed the role of Nicaraguan women. Today they assume enormous responsibilities and are increasingly integrated in the whole production process. But until now no policy has redefined the role traditionally given to women in society. The traditional sexual division of labour has not been challenged, no more than the ideology which assigns a role to each of the sexes.

"It is necessary for women, and for the defence of the revolution as a whole, to overcome these inequalities between the sexes, to resolve the problems of women in order to construct a new society. The transformation of the social structures, which this inequality perpetuates, requires changes in policy, in civil and criminal law, the system of land ownership, the Work Code, ideology, attitudes and personal relationships." □

of themselves and of their work, are united by a feeling of solidarity and exhibit various degrees of consciousness and collaboration with the revolutionary process.

All these women belong to a Sandinista Defence Committee (CDS), and the great majority of them stand revolutionary guard duty. They take their personal problems or those of the association to which they belong to the CDS, since all of them are organized in accordance with their stock in trade — meat, dairy products, perishables or groceries.

Contradictions of an economy in transition

Some of the peddlars were in the militia, but they are not active for the moment. Nonetheless, they express their willingness to do active duty in the event of an invasion of Managua. For now, they express their solidarity with the Batallones de Lucha Irregular [army units specialized in combating the *contras*], and take part in the cotton-picking brigades. Some of them think that if a different sort of attitude were taken towards the less conscious merchants, more peddlars could be won to the revolution.

Without wanting to get into the theoretical debate on the informal sector, we agree with Redondo that the recent expansion of this sector in Nicaragua reflects the contradictions of an economy in transition. Therefore, more than attempting to offer conclusions, the need is to continue and deepen interdisciplinary analyses in order to confront the problems of this sector.

Despite the advantages that women enjoy in petty commerce (higher incomes, access — in principle — to social benefits, a level of organization) concrete problems persist, such as the lack of childcare facilities, difficulties in obtaining medical services (since they cannot wait in the Health Centers), alcoholism of husbands and sons in law, physical abuse and the inability to offer another alternative when children do not want to study and spend the day in the market.

As one of the peddlars pointed out, "being in the market is not the same thing as being of the market." This phrase sums up the problems of the peddlars and points to the need to offer overall solutions. The answers involve not only the women and their families, but have a greater social impact.

A joint effort among the peddlars, the Ministry of Internal Trade, the Nicaraguan Women's Association



Waiting at a health clinic in Managua (DR)

(AMNLAE) and the market administration could be a step forward toward breaking from the prevailing economic outlook. An attempt has been made to advance with other sectors — workers, peasants, and so on, but not with women as a whole, who lack security in all economic activities and have their own special problems.

In this way, not only is the creativity and fortitude of this extensive sector being wasted, but in the long run we are running the risk that this potential power will take on a negative form for the revolution.

Despite the economic crisis, these

organizations have made it possible to overcome, to some extent, the competition and marked individualism typical of women workers in the informal sector in other countries such as Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, for example, where these activities have helped to fragment the working class and its organizations.

A better knowledge of the Nicaraguan informal sector will not only benefit the revolutionary process but offer another perspective for the work of academics, leaders and women throughout the continent. □

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST REVIEW

THE SPRING 1987 issue of the English language theoretical journal of the Fourth International, *International Marxist Review*, is now available. It contains the following articles:

- Women and work in Western Europe — Jacqueline Heinen
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- Italy: discussion between *Democrazia Proletaria* and the LCR
- Crisis in the PLO — Document of the Fourth International
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AROUND THE WORLD



South Africa

Amon Msane arrested

AMON MSANE, the chief trade-union steward at the 3M company's plant near Johannesburg, South Africa, was arrested on February 19 while supporting a supermarket strike. He is being held in an undisclosed location without charges under South Africa's emergency law.

Msane spoke at a conference organized by the US publication, *Labor Notes*, last November. (See IV No. 111, December 22, 1986.) At the conference, *New Directions for Labor*, he emphasized the importance of international solidarity and cooperation among workers who work for the same multinational corporations.

Previously, Msane led a strike of South African 3M workers in support of 3M workers in New Jersey whose plant was being closed.

This is the second time within the last year that Msane has been arrested. Last summer, he was held for a month after his return from the trip to the United States. He was released after widespread protests to the South African government and the 3M company.

Labor Notes is urging people to publicize the arrest and to send messages of protest to South African embassies to demand Msane's release. Copies of letters and resolutions should also be sent to Solidarity Network, *Labor Notes*, PO Box 20001, Detroit, Michigan 48220, USA. □

Czechoslovakia

Charter activist on trial

PALACH PRESS, an independent press agency based in London has sent us details of the arrest on January 22 of Petr Pospichal, a 27-year old Czech worker from Brno, Moravia and a Charter 77 activist.

On February 3, Pospichal was charged with the criminal offence of subversion of the Republic, under an article of the penal code which carries a prison sentence of 3-10 years and possible subsequent sur-

veillance.

In the words of the indictment, Pospichal is alleged to have "from a date which has not been ascertained, but certainly at least from mid-1985 until his arrest, out of active hostility to the socialist and state system of the Republic, collected written material, both foreign — particularly Polish — and domestic, in whose production he participated, and made the contents of these documents, notably so-called *Informace o Charter 77* and others, known to a wider circle of young people . . . and established active contact with the Polish hostile grouping, so-called 'Solidarity', as well as with hostile persons in the Czechoslovak emigre circles abroad."

The Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) have issued an international appeal calling on labour movement, human rights and religious organizations to take up Petr Pospichal's case, particularly organizations in other Eastern European countries.

On February 12, in Prague and Brno, a Committee for the Release of Petr Pospichal was established including well-known Chartists, religious figures, writers and so on. Several members are staging hunger strikes to draw attention to his case.

The Provisional Council of Solidarnosc issued a declaration protesting against Pospichal's arrest on February 17, and expressing their special affinity with Charter 77 activists. Included among other Eastern European organizations to express their solidarity was the independent Polish peace movement, Freedom and Peace.

This case is of particular importance because when the trial takes place, it will not only be Charter 77 and VONS who will be in the dock but the cooperation between the Czechoslovak and Polish democratic oppositions and the basic principle of the right of East European citizens to travel between their countries and have access to information about each other. To convict Pospichal on these charges would mean a violation of the principle of "detente from below" embodied in the Helsinki Final Act.

It is believed that one of the main reasons for the trial and the harsh sentence is that the Czech government is increasingly worried about the growing exchanges, and even cooperation, between Charter 77, Solidarnosc and other opposition groups in Hungary and East Germany.

This cooperation was highlighted last October when 122 prominent dissidents from these four East European countries signed a joint statement commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. (See IV No. 108, November 10, 1986.) □

Belgium

Marxism vs liberalism

A PACKED meeting of over 600 people at the University of Louvain on February 17 listened to a high-powered debate around the theme of whether Marxist or free enterprise ideology was the best basis for combatting the capitalist crisis.

The protagonists in the debate were both well-known economic theorists. Ernest Mandel, a leading member of the Fourth International and its Belgian section, the POS/SAP, and a world-famous Marxist economist and writer defended a materialist analysis of the crisis and the need for a working class response. In the opposing corner was Paul De Grauwe, a specialist in monetarist economics.

The discussion covered a wide area, centering around the argument of "who should pay for the crisis?" and was registered as a great success by the student organizers, the Werkgroep Andere Keonomie — Alternative Economics Working Group. □

Britain

Fight racism rally

"FIGHTING racism, defending Labour councils and campaigning for socialism" was the theme of the first public meeting organized by Campaign Forum on January 16 in London.

The rally was jointly organized by the Campaign Group of Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Labour Party Black Section — a national organization of Black people in the Labour Party that is not officially recognized by the LP leadership.

Over 600 people came to hear a broad range of speakers, including leader of Lambeth council Linda Bellos, Gul Zarina Khan from the

Black Section, National Union of Mineworkers' leader Arthur Scargill and MPs Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Jeremy Corbyn. There were also other speakers from various defence campaigns, and from the Women's Action Committee in the Labour Party.

The meeting was important in two respects. First, because of the vital need for the most united and broad campaign against racism both inside the labour movement and in general, particularly in the context that a general election could be declared at any time this year by the Tory government. As Linda Bellos explained: "In every general election in living memory, the Tories have played the race card. Let us hope that this platform presents a change. The change is that Labour isn't going to play it as well."

Second, it was a significant meeting because it was the first time that leaders of the Black community and

traditional left leaders in the Labour Party had organized such an event jointly. In the words of Tony Benn: "What we have seen tonight is the shape of the politics of Britain in the 1990's." □

South Africa

Boycott busting

SHELL OIL, the US branch of the Royal Dutch Shell Group, has engaged the services of a company in order to defend itself against the boycott campaign by anti-apartheid activists in the USA.

The company is known as Pagan International and was involved in breaking the five-year long boycott campaign against the food multinational, Nestle, in the "Babykiller" scandal.

Pagan International is especially active in the USA, but its magazine, *International Barometer*, has also gathered information about anti-apartheid movements in Western Europe.

Last summer, Shell Oil signed a contract with Pagan in which it was agreed that Pagan would provide them with research reports about the various groups involved with developments in South Africa. The initial contact was made at the beginning of last year, soon after the start of the boycott campaign in the US. Last February, Pagan International sent a letter to 110 companies in Western Europe and the US, offering its services in the fields of "research, analysis and the reviewing of themes which concern the business



community", meaning the investigation of the activities of action and pressure groups who direct their activities against multinationals.

In 1982, Rafael D Pagan jr., managing director of Pagan International, addressed the Public Affairs Council in New York on "The struggle against the critics of multinational capitalism". "Our objective is to separate the fanatical activist leaders — those who deny that free enterprise institutions have a legitimate role to play in the development of the third world — from the large majority of their followers — decent, concerned people who are prepared to judge us on the basis of our openness and our usefulness. Moreover, we should strip the activists of the moral authority they receive from their alliances with religious organizations." □

Obituary

Juan José Gonzalez

WE RECENTLY learnt of the death of comrade Juan Jose Gonzales, "Alvaro" of the PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International. He died suddenly at the age of 35 from a heart attack.

Juan Jose was of Colombian origin. He had been active for years in building the PRT and was a member of the Central Committee for several years and of the Political Bureau over the last year. In 1985 he participated in the 12th World Congress of the Fourth International as one of the delegates of the PRT.

His main activity was in solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution and the revolutionary movements of Central America and the Caribbean. As director of the journal *Panorama* he had often travelled to El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. During one of these trips in 1985, he was kidnapped by the Nicaraguan contras on the Atlantic Coast. The Sandinista government obtained his release in exchange for prisoners.

In November 1986 Juan Jose was again in Nicaragua to join in the celebrations for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the FSLN.

We join the comrades of the Mexican PRT in paying tribute to his political activity, his courage and his serenity, and share their painful loss. □

Notebooks for Study and Research

ISSUE NUMBER 2 of the *Notebooks* is now available. The first edition of this Marxist educational series contained a study by Ernest Mandel on "The Place of Marxism in History". The second edition is the first of a two-part study of the Chinese Revolution by Pierre Rousset.

This deals mainly with the Second Chinese Revolution, that of 1926-27, which ended in the disasters at Shanghai, Wuhan and Canton. It includes, in addition, a brief chronology of the republican revolution of 1911 led by Sun Vatsen; a review of little known facts about the 1921-24 period (during which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang were actually able to collaborate), and an analysis of the long-lasting effects of the defeat, notably the formation of the so-called red or "soviet" zones with their red armies; and the rise of Mao within the CCP. A final chapter entitled "The quest for the Chinese road" examines the problem of adapting Marxism to non-European societies. These topics usefully complement the works of Trotsky and Harold Isaacs on China in 1926-27.

In Part Two (issue number 3 of the *Notebooks*), the author will examine to what extent the Maoist project of the early 1930s was applied in the reality of China in the 1940s, and its contribution to the victory of 1949.

Single copies of the *Notebooks* are 20FF, £2, or US\$3.50. A subscription for 9 issues is 180FF, £18 or US\$31 (surface mail). Add 20% to cost for airmail. Payments in French francs preferred. Cheques to Pierre Rousset. Mail to: CER/NSR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Paris, France. (Please write for information on bulk orders.)



Journalism — the fatal profession

OVER THE LAST 16 years, 358 journalists have been murdered or "disappeared" in Latin America. This figure has been given by the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP) in Mexico. The country hardest hit by this wave of murders was Argentina under the last military dictatorship, where 90 journalists lost their lives.

Today, there is a new rise in murders of journalists in Colombia. The situation of journalists in this country has become one of the most dangerous in all of Latin America.

On December 17, Guillermo Cano, editor and publisher of the daily *El Espectador*, one of the oldest papers in Latin America and one of the most important in Colombia, was assassinated as he left his office.

Although murders of journalists have been not uncommon in Colombia, this event aroused a wave of indignation that rocked the country. Three months later, another journalist, Raul Echavarría, was shot down in Cali. Along with Cano, he was the most respected figure in the Colombian press and a man of democratic convictions. He was the fifth journalist to be murdered in 1986 alone.

The journalists of Bogota called a demonstration that brought out 20,000 people. All the country's TV and radio networks and newspapers went on strike for 24 hours.

In the December 29 issue of the Paris daily *Liberation*, Christian Martin devoted an article to the subject. It was entitled, "Journalism in Colombia, a fatal profession."

Martin described the context in which Guillermo Cano was murdered. Over the past ten years, 26 journalists have been assassinated in Colombia, most of them "for daring to write on two burning issues in national life — the truce between the guerrillas and the army and the drug business, with the corruption that is spreading at all levels."

Almost all of them were shot down after coming into conflict with the local authorities, mayors, chiefs of police and so on. Only a minority were victims of common-law criminals. It should be noted

that out of the 26 journalists assassinated, 17 lost their lives during the last four years.

Parallel to these murders, many journalists have been forced by death threats to leave the country. Colombia's best known editorial writer, Daniel Samper, has taken refuge in Spain for that reason.

But even exile has not always meant safety from persecution. Olga Behar, TV journalist and author of a book on the Colombian guerrillas, had to flee to escape harassment by the military. Exiled in Mexico, she was arrested on October 26 by the US Immigration Service at Miami airport while in transit through the US.

A few days before, Patricia

Lara, another journalist, was arrested when she arrived in New York, held for four days and then expelled from the US as a "subversive." Her explanation of this strange incident was that a Colombian state service had provided a list of "suspect" journalists to the US government.

Liberation mentioned another case of a journalist who also suffered political reprisals abroad. Eduardo MacKenzie, Paris correspondent of a Colombian magazine, was fired after his embassy accused him of participating in a demonstration against the massacre in Bogota's Palace of Justice.

In a climate of economic crisis and prevailing self-censorship, renowned journalists such as Juan G Rios and Heriberto Fiorillo have been fired and then blacklisted for refusing to submit to the self-censorship demanded by the government and the bosses.

On two occasions, bombs have gone off in the headquarters of the Communist weekly *Voz*. In April and October last year the journalists Heriberto Cardenas in Cali and Cesar Perez in Medellin were shot.

Three *Le Monde* journalists were also expelled from the country last year for doing a feature in the guerrilla zones. Two years ago, two American journalists, Timothy Weich and Joyce Holmes, disappeared while they were working in a "zone of violence."

Those are the signs of the times in a country where journalism has become a "fatal profession." □

[From the March issue of *Murmure*, bulletin of the journalists of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, 9, rue de Tunis, Paris 75011.]

