

# International VIEWPOINT

Issue 128

October 26, 1987

£0.85; \$2; C\$2.50; 12FF

**SPECIAL FEATURE: 70 YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION**

## GORBACHEV AND GLASNOST

★ *Ernest Mandel* on the rehabilitation  
of the Moscow trials  
defendants

★ *David Seppo* on democratization  
and  
economic  
reform

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## International Viewpoint

A 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.

All editorial and subscription correspondence should be mailed to: International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC). Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 0294-2925. Imprimé par Rotographie.

International Viewpoint is catalogued by the US Alternative Press Index.

● News closing date: October 19, 1987

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# A key political test

**A SHARP class confrontation is shaping up for the Mexican presidential elections in July 1988. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the ruling party in what for 58 years has been virtually a one-party state, has chosen a candidate who personifies its right-wing evolution and an attempt to solve the country's economic crisis at the expense of working people.**

GERRY FOLEY

**L**IKE A MONARCHY, in the Mexican bonapartist system it is the incumbent head of state who chooses the heir to the throne. As his successor, President Miguel de la Madrid named Carlos Salinas, Secretary of Planning and the Budget, the man directly responsible for the regime's economic policies.

Even the US journal *Newsweek*, sympathetic to Salinas's "modernist" economic program, commented in its October 19 issue that his record was "a load of political baggage to carry into any campaign." His record includes a sharp devaluation of the peso that drove up the price of imports. The Mexican currency is now exchanging at 1,500 to the dollar. Inflation has risen to nearly 200%. Since 1981, real wages have fallen by 50%

Consumption of basic foods such as meat, milk and eggs has fallen. Two million workers are without jobs, of whom 675,000 were thrown onto the heap of the chronically unemployed over the last four years. Some 56% of the state budget is drained off for payments on a foreign debt of over \$100,000 million.

The "reconversion" of Mexican industry demanded by the International Monetary Fund, of which Salinas is an acolyte, has meant the multiplication of

"maquiladoras" along the US border. These are units of production specially designed by transnational corporations to have no independent viability, whose function can be shifted easily to other plants if the local workers rebel against sweat-shop conditions, and which are useless if nationalized.

Salinas also openly favors privatization that would undermine the basic gains of the Mexican revolution, as well as opening up the country to imperialist imports. All of this has made him popular with the Mexican capitalists. The day after his nomination, the stock market reflected their rejoicing. Trading mounted so rapidly that the authorities had suspend it to keep the frenetic activity from getting out of hand.

## Flying the right-wing banner too high

From working people, there was different reaction. Even the PRI trade-union bureaucracy choked on him, and it has an extremely strong stomach. The official unions operate largely as strong-arm labour lieutenants of the state. They serve to regiment the workers, to keep them from organizing independently and fighting for their own interests. Workers who challenge their dominance or the government's economic directives are apt to face the official unions' goon squads, and even assassination.

Nonetheless, Fidel Velázquez, the patriarch of the official union bureaucracy, which has kept the majority of the workers tied down while the government has been fleecing them, felt obliged to make a demonstrative exit from the platform during Salinas's acceptance speech.

Moreover, like the party of the capitalist offensive in Britain, the PRI also has its equivalent of wets, a current that fears that the party is flying the right-wing banner too high and risking explosive confrontations. It is the so-called Democratic Current, one of whose principal leaders is Cautehmoc Cardenas, the son of the radical PRI president, Lázaro Cardenas, who presided over the great nationalizations of the 1930s.

In its September 28 issue, *Bandera Socialista*, the paper of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), Mexican section of the Fourth International, analyzed this current as follows:

"The first question that arises is why did its promoters think that it was necessary to form the Democratic Current (DC)? The concerns of the members of the DC are those of many religious, peasant, trade-union and business leaders of the PRI, including sections of imperialism. How to maintain the in-

stitutions of the PRI regime and first of all the party itself, in the face of its growing incapability to cope with the country's crisis and to control the process of class struggle.

"Muñoz Ledo, one of the founders of the current, reflected this situation, saying that the country is facing a grave problem, which he called 'the political legitimacy of the regime'.

"'We might reach the conclusion,' Muñoz Ledo said in this respect, 'that the number of voters who...are supporting those who govern the country amounts to barely 20 per cent'." Adjustments, however, are very difficult in the corrupt and authoritarian PRI machine. The PRI president De la Vega Domínguez denounced the DC as a "fifth column," and Muñoz Ledo and Cautehmoc Cardenas were suspended. The October 19 *Newsweek* quoted the reaction of Adrián Lajous, an important defector from the PRI: "Even the political pros are saying, 'this can't go on, this has got to change, it has got to become more democratic.' But it's not that simple. Some people in the system fear that if you start to open [it] up, it will fall apart."

## Two left coalitions run candidates

Despite the PRI grip, important struggles have developed in recent months. Hundreds of thousands of university students mobilized in a four month struggle at the turn of the year against plans to "re-convert" higher education to serve the needs of business. (See *IV* 117, April 6, 1987.) The Electrical Workers' Union (SME) staged a six-day strike, the first national industrial strike for long years, for better wages and working conditions. Thousands of strikers supported the students and participated in their mass rallies in February. In March, teachers in Chiapas, a state on the Guatemalan border, fought a 60-day strike for higher wages. At the Volkswagen plant in Puebla, 10,500 workers have been on strike for two months against the management's attempt to cut wages by 15% and lay off 250 workers.

Two left coalitions will run candidates against Salinas. They represent quite different responses to the crisis of Mexican capitalism and its political system. The Unidad Popular coalition was formed on July 22 by the PRT and three other left organizations. Its position was described as follows in an editorial in the September 28 issue of *Bandera Socialista*:

"Its campaign is based on class independence, in particular from the PRI and the PAN [a historically right-wing bourgeois party], defence of the independent mass organizations; sup-

port for the basic demands of the people; and popularization of socialism.

"The revolutionary campaign proposed by the Unidad Popular is reflected in its candidate for the presidency — Rosario Ibarra de Pieda. Her intransigent opposition to the government, the militancy she has maintained throughout their political life, the rebelliousness that she has infused into the struggles in which she has participated, the spirit of unity that she has brought to all organizations she has had dealings with will also be the features of the political and electoral work of the Unidad Popular.

"Unidad Popular identifies with the main struggles that have been developing since 1985 with a special dynamism. It identifies with the intransigence of the earthquake victims and those demanding housing; with the militancy shown by the strikers at the Hermosillo Ford plant and by the SME strikers; with the indomitable fighting spirit of the teachers in Chiapas and Oaxaca; with the rebelliousness of the University Student Council [the leadership of the student struggle]; with the firm and united advance of the peasants throughout the country." The UP will be represented on the ballot by the PRT, which has legal status and six seats in parliament.

### Unidad Popular fights for class independence

Such a campaign, the editorial said, reflected the concrete need for the left to march in the same direction as the Mexican workers. But it also involved a struggle against the conceptions of part of the left "that want to lead the workers to ally themselves with sections of the PRI and even the PAN. The Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) has insisted that it is a good idea for the left to ally itself electorally with the Democratic Current of the PRI and the PAN, and has in fact turned itself into a spokesperson of the PRI opposition."

The PMS is a fusion stemming from a regroupment dominated by the Mexican Communist Party, the United Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM) and four other parties. The implications of its policy of alliances with bourgeois forces has already been shown by its opposition to the student struggle at the turn of the year. At that time, the PMS's candidate for president, Heberto Castillo, attacked the student leadership as "reactionary" and "unrepresentative of the students." Leading intellectuals in the PSUM lined up behind the university rector, who led a red-baiting and violence-baiting campaign against the students. The PRT, on the other hand,



Rosario Ibarra, Unidad Popular presidential candidate (DR)

threw itself completely into the students' fight.

The parties forming the PMS called on the PRT to join in an all-inclusive union of the left. The PRT rejected this proposal in April in a statement entitled "Left unity must be forged in class struggle." (See IV 119, May 4, 1987.)

However, the PRT and the UP have proposed a coalition with the PMS for the upcoming elections. In its September 28 editorial, *Bandera Socialista* wrote: "In contrast with proposals of alliances of the left with sectors of the PRI or the PAN, Unidad Popular proposes another kind of alliance, one of all the independent left through a total electoral coalition between the PMS and the Unidad Popular, an alliance that would clearly distinguish itself from the government and bourgeois parties, and which through a process of primary elections organized by all the forces in the alliance will choose its presidential candidate, as well as its candidates for the Congress and the Senate.

"So far, the PMS has responded negatively to this proposal, saying that it would accept it only if Unidad Popular immediately endorsed its presidential candidate, Heberto Castillo.

"We think that such ultimatums have no place in the left if unity is desired. Just as Unidad Popular is not trying to impose its candidate, Rosario Ibarra, it will not accept the imposition of a candidate not chosen democratically by all the left. Therefore, we say, without any sectarianism, that we must form an electoral coalition of all the left under a program of class struggle and independence."

The PRT congress on July 25-August

2 prepared the party for the political struggle around the elections. It reflected a period of rapid growth for the PRT, which in ten years' time has been transformed from a relatively small nucleus of radicalized students to a small mass party with 3,400 members and many more thousands of supporters, a party rooted in key sectors of the mass movement. The congress rally on July 25 drew nearly 4,000 people.

"PRT peasant delegations came by buses and trucks from as far north as Sonora and as far south as Chiapas," Alan Benjamin reported in the September issue of *Socialist Action*, a US Fourth Internationalist newspaper published in San Francisco. "As they entered the auditorium, they were loudly cheered with deafening chants of 'PRT, PRT!'" In the Swedish Fourth Internationalist paper *Internationalen*, Lars Kjellander wrote that as the peasant delegations arrived "some shouted, 'Long live the land occupations!'" There was powerful applause for the peasant delegates from Sonora, who a month ago were in the forefront of extensive land occupations in the big northern state. Every delegation that arrived was greeted with applause. Some had travelled more than 30 hours to reach the capital."

### "Make the voices of the oppressed heard"

Speakers at the rally included two PRT members of Congress, Rosario Ibarra, leaders of the parties in the UP and a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Rosario Ibarra stressed that "the earthquake victims — together with all the victims of this oppressive system — need an electoral coalition that will serve as a vehicle to strengthen the mass movements and to make the voices of the oppressed heard." She said that any presidential campaign that genuinely tried to promote the mass struggles had to be totally independent of the bourgeois parties and personalities.

The keynote speaker was Edgardo Sánchez, a member of the PRT Political Committee, who described the party's election program. He summed it up by saying: "Our overall objective in these elections is to stimulate the independent activity and organization of the masses and in this manner build the party as a necessary instrument to advance our revolutionary goals.

"The PRT is not willing to trade its political objectives for a mess of potage. It is not willing to dissolve itself for a mere electoral agreement." ★

(A full report of the PRT congress will be published in the next issue).

# Mass protests follow left leader's murder

**KNOWN AS** the country of "la violencia," Colombia probably has the longest continuous tradition of armed political and social warfare in Latin America.

Under the previous government, which left office in August 1986, there were attempts for a time to negotiate a cease-fire with the guerrillas in return for democratic guarantees. Over the last two years, however, the rulers have been turning increasingly to military and paramilitary violence to prevent protests and struggles against a putrescent neo-colonial capitalism increasingly dependent on drug traffic.

**RODRIGO O'FARRELL**

**G**ENERAL Fernando Landazábal Reyes must be satisfied. Jaime Pardo Leal, whom he called the "supreme commander of the guerrillas, the kidnappers and the extortionists" on a radio broadcast last May, is now dead. He was machine-gunned by mercenaries on October 11 while he was driving near Bogotá with his wife and children.

Organizer of the paramilitary murder gangs in 1981 when he was minister of defence in the government of Belisario Betancur, General Landazábal was removed from his post for plotting a coup. He appealed publicly for someone to shoot Pardo Leal, a 48-year-old former judge and university professor, after the latter had exposed the fact that active-service and retired military officers were involved in the murders and terrorist attacks directed against the Unión Patriótica (UP) and other personalities in trade-union and intellectual circles in Colombia.

Pardo Leal ran in the 1986 presidential election. He got half a million votes as the candidate of the UP, an organization formed in 1985 by the Communist Party and smaller left groups. This coalition was set up after the cease-fire negotiated between the FARC, the country's oldest and strongest guerrilla group, and the government of Belisario Betancur. (After the August 1986 elections, Betancur was replaced as president by Virgilio Barco.)

Continual death threats did not deter the UP chair. On June 2, Pardo Leal handed over written proof of his charges. On September 2, he reiterated his

accusations. He specified that retired generals Landazábal and Camacho Leyva were promoting "a plan for destabilizing constitutional rule reaching into the armed forces" that included "the annihilation of the UP." With fresh documents and witnesses, he pointed to new murders and "disappearances" carried out by the army.

These revelations brought no results. The murders continued. In two years alone, more than a thousand politically motivated murders were registered. Roughly half of the victims were leaders and rank-and-file activists of the UP, including two senators, a member of Congress and several mayors. Pardo Leal was the 471st member of his organization to die in this way.

Until a few months ago, this slaughter did not cause any great political commotion. The government of Virgilio Barco sat back and let the murderers do their job. At the beginning of July, television reporters noted that the paramilitary groups were getting arms and training from the armed forces, and that they were waging a campaign against the UP and other left currents to keep all of them from participating in the mayoral elections scheduled for March 19, 1988.

To the consternation of jurists, journalists and defenders of human rights, the minister of defence justified the existence of such groups. The same was done by the ministers of justice and agriculture. All three pointed to a 1969 law authorizing military officers to organize "self-defence" groups. The UP called for the repeal of this law and the

dismissal of these three ministers. Virgilio Barco did nothing. Congress did likewise.

The effect of this state protection for the paramilitary groups was soon made clear. In August, a wave of murders terrorized the country. Gunned down in less than five days' time were a UP senator, a mayor and two regional leaders, as well as a trade-union leader belonging to the Frente Popular group and two doctors who were leaders in human-rights work in Antioquia.

## General strike against the blood-bath

Heading off a visit to the South Korean dictatorship, Barco remained indifferent to the blood-bath. On August 26, the press published a list of 33 people of the most varied political and professional connections (the full list was said to contain a hundred names) who were the next targets of the ultrarightist gangs. One of those named, Hector Abad Gómez, was murdered hours before the list was published. Jaime Pardo Leal was in the fourteenth spot, just after Hector Abad.

The October 13 general strike and the violent clashes with the police that followed the murder of Pardo Leal left eight people dead and dozens imprisoned in Bogotá, Barranquilla and Barrancabermeja. They shattered the government's hopes that the population would remain apathetic while it pursued its policy of picking off left activists and leaders.

The method of mass mobilization against the political murders was initiated on May 7 when people in the oil port of Barrancabermeja attacked public buildings following the murder of a 14-year-old girl. She was shot in the back because the night before she had witnessed an unsuccessful murder attempt on two UP members.

In the latest protests in Bogotá, two police and three civilians died in stone throwing incidents. The iron gates of the Palace of Justice were torn down. This building is the sinister symbol of the official brutality that led to the slaughter of 95 people in November 1985, when the armed forces went on a rampage against an M-19 guerrilla unit that had occupied the premises.<sup>1</sup>

Since September, demonstrations have been increasing against the application of a blanket death penalty against the left. They have taken place in the context of what is called "The Right to Life Campaign." But the regime has not shown the slightest interest in altering the gruesome course of events. ★

1. See "The reasons for the bloodbath," by Rodrigo O'Farrell in *IV* 88, December 6, 1985.

# Workers' insurgency revives

GRASSROOTS trade-union leaders and activists representing 200,000-300,000 workers met in Falun on September 12 to launch a campaign to influence the negotiations of the 1988 national labor contract coming up at the end of the year. Falun is in the province of Dalarna, identified in Swedish history with rebelliousness.

GERRY FOLEY

**T**HE LATEST Dalarna rebellion, which began developing two years ago, was a workers' rebellion against falling real wages and social-democratic austerity. It was expressed in the Dalarna Appeal launched in December 1985. Since that time, it has been signed by 75,000 people. The rebellion was stopped by mass shock at the murder of Premier Olof Palme in February 1986. But with the approach of a new contract, workers' insurgency is rising again.

"It has been a long time since the 'Internationale' has rung out so forcefully in the Swedish workers' movement," Håkon Blomqvist wrote in the September 17 issue of *Internationalen*, the paper of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International. "From a chock-full community center in Falun the signal went out to Sweden's workers and low-wage earners that the time when they have to take a beating is over."

In the opening speech, Åke Wiklund, leader of the Dalarna rebellion said "...We want to fight together for the cake we have baked but which is being eaten by those who are already rich."

Before the last national contract negotiations in 1985, the union leaderships at ASEA in Ludvika and Saab-Scania in Falun issued an appeal for an economic redistribution in favor of the workers, the Dalarna Appeal.

Wiklund described the purpose of the Falun meeting in the following way in the July 16 issue of *Internationalen*: "Our idea is to have people come from the lower levels of the unions, ordinary shop stewards and deputy shop stewards from the clubs. And we are not thinking only of industrial workers. We are thinking of all wage earners who are having a hard time economically: hospital personnel, poorly paid public workers. For my part, I think we

should bring in retired people living on pensions too."

The Falun meeting was not welcomed by the top union leaderships. They launched a campaign denouncing it as an attempt to create a parallel union.

In the run-up to the Falun meeting, *Internationalen* interviewed Göte Kilden, a leading SP member and trade-unionist at the Volvo truck plant in Göteborg. He said that the union leadership's campaign had faded. "Before, people tried to brand the national meeting [in Falun] as some sort of 'alternative' LO [National Labor Federation]. But we stressed that it was in no way an alternative to the LO. We even asked for travel money from the plant local, since we see the meeting as entirely within the framework of the activity of the metalworkers' union."

## Radical trade-union solutions

The Dalarna Appeal had gained broad support, even from social-democratic workers, Kilden said. "In Volvo, Group 6 [the spare parts department] with 7,000-8,000 members joined in. Its leadership is made up of members of the social-democratic party, but they backed the appeal and are sending a representative to Falun. The majority in the union clubs at Saab-Scania are social democrats and they decided unanimously to participate...."

"Many social democrats are interested in radical trade-union solutions. They admit that they were taken in by the talk about the budget deficit."<sup>1</sup>

The Falun meeting was to discuss proposals for the contract negotiations. Kilden described the program that was to be recommended by the delegation from Volvo Group 19: "[State] hands off the negotiations, no state incomes policy! Metalworkers and mu-

nicipal workers side by side, an end to the splitting! A proposal for a real-wage increase that strengthens solidarity among workers, a thousand crowns more a month for everybody! Open negotiations and a referendum on the contract!"

The agenda at the Falun meeting included three points: the negotiations, the policy of economic distribution and democracy in the unions. The hall was filled all the time. Messages came in from many groups of workers, including one from 72 hospital supervisors in Göteborg calling for an end to the "reverse Robin Hood policy." A letter from Doctor Lars Persson in Göteborg, who started the People's Campaign Against Social Cutbacks, got thundering applause.

Rolf Häggman from the 1,800-member Ludvika ASEA club put forward his organization's program calling for a stress on benefits for the low-waged and a general increase for all. He called for a wage scale by which the lowest paid would get the biggest raises: "That was our proposal to the metalworkers' negotiating committee two years ago, but it was voted down," he said. The Volvo workers argued that a wage scale was too complicated. "Our proposal is for a thousand crowns for everyone."

Bosse Lindström from the 800-member Boliden Kemis factory supported the thousand crowns demand, but also proposed cost-of-living increases. This was supported by speaker after speaker.

Christer Hagman from the Fix factory in Göteborg stressed: "We have to recognize that we only represent people to the extent that our people are active....Passive representation is pulling the union movement down."

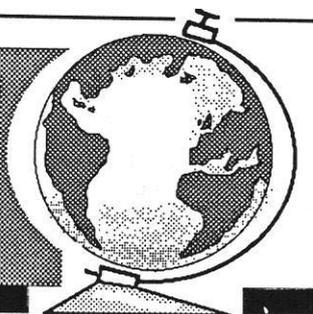
*Internationalen* noted that Kilden got probably the biggest applause of the day for an attack on a proposal from LO leader Stig Malm for a punitive tax on wage increases that exceeded guidelines: "That is pure trade-union suicide," Kilden said.

Support came from many groups of public workers: the Östra hospital in Göteborg, the Falun general hospital, pre-school teachers, playground leaders and postmen. The largest group were the 10,500-strong Stockholm public workers, in which the transit workers are a major force. They called for unity between private and public sector workers and for opposition to privatization.

The demands finally adopted included a thousand crowns for all, cost-of-living increases, a one-year contract and the demand proposed by women in the Falun general hospital for a seven hour day for day-shift workers and six hours for those on night-shifts. ★

1. See the interview with Göte Kilden in *IV* 126, September 28, 1987.

# AROUND THE WORLD



## U S A

### **"For love, for life and for liberation"**

MORE THAN a quarter of a million people demonstrated in Washington on Sunday, October 11 for equal rights for lesbians and gay men and against the persecution and discrimination they currently suffer in the United States. The huge march was the highlight of five days of events organized by a broad-based national coalition, around the slogan "For love and for life, we're not going back!" (see IV 125). The success of the actions signalled the opening of a new stage in the battle for lesbian and gay liberation.

From early the same morning, demonstrators unrolled a gigantic quilt on Capitol Mall, made up of two thousand patchwork squares each containing the name of a dead AIDS victim and with an object sewn on or an embroidered picture symbolizing their life.

On June 30 this year, Supreme Court judges voted to affirm that laws against "sodomy" were constitutional, a decision that boosted both anger and support for the October actions. So, on the Tuesday following the demonstration, over two thousand protestors gathered outside the Supreme Court in a civil disobedience action (it is illegal to demonstrate there). According to *Le Monde* (October 15), over 600 of the protestors were arrested by police who, in a disgusting display, put on leather gloves before making the arrests.

An important initiative was taken during the days of action with the establishment of a lesbian and gay congress, with 350 people attending an initial meeting to help coordinate political activities nationwide.

In spite of the success of these actions in bringing heterosexism and the plight of AIDS victims onto the public agenda, the US Senate voted on October 14 to cut off federal funds for AIDS education programmes that "promote or encourage" homosexual sex. Their decision was prompted by the publication of a comic book showing safe sex between two men. The Senate's action is just one illustration of the uphill fight facing the movement.

As one of the organizers of the days of action, Kay Ostberg, said: "We've

come to Washington to show our visibility, but also our strength, our anger, our resilience and our hope. This civil rights movement has come of age politically, and we are not going back to the days of silent suffering. We are here to demand an end to discrimination now." ★

## S R I L A N K A

### **Accord won't bring peace**

THE DEAL concluded between Sri Lanka's president JR Jayawardene and Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on July 29 has already turned the terms of the conflict between the Sinhalese dominated Colombo government and the Tamil rebels upside down twice.

The following are excerpts from statements by Fourth Internationalists in the region made before the outbreak of fighting between the Tamil Tigers and Indian forces. The first excerpts are from *Marxist Outlook*, the English-language magazine of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, Indian section of the Fourth International:

"For revolutionaries in India, the central task must be point out the [Indian] hegemonistic implications of this Accord and the fact that it has been imposed on the militants. Opposition to India's hegemonist regional aspirations must be unconditional....

"Does it follow then that Indian revolutionaries, since they cannot at this stage say that they are for the Accord, must oppose it? It is not for us to take such a stand. We can only affirm that we fully support the oppressed Tamil people's right to define their political future and to give them support in this respect....In that sense although we oppose the *imposition* of the Accord we must continue to back the efforts of the legitimate representative organizations of the Sri Lankan Tamils to take the steps they see fit to secure their future."

In a statement issued September 25, the Revolutionary Marxist Party, a sympathizing group of the Fourth International in Sri Lanka, declared:

"We do not consider that the Peace Accord....will ensure either the liberation of the Tamil people of the North and East or guaranteed peace and stabil-

ity in the country as a whole. The essence of this agreement is the creation of a new division of power between the Sinhala and the Tamil bourgeoisie....

"Although the more backward sections of the Sinhala capitalist class are seeking to create the impression that this agreement was imposed on Sri Lanka by the Indian bourgeoisie, in fact this is not the reality. JR Jayawardene made this agreement because he realized that he was not capable of suppressing the Tamil resistance movement in the North and East militarily.

"The Indian government wanted to sign this accord because they wanted to prevent American and other imperialist forces from getting a foothold in the country [the Sri Lanka government received military aid from Israel and South Africa], and by preventing the establishment of a separate Eelam state it helps to weaken separatist national movements in India.

"The most important lesson that will be drawn from the Tamil resistance movement is the fact that it was able to bring to its knees the Jayawardene government...."

The statement concluded that in offering at least a temporary respite to the Tamil people, it could create a "limited democratic opening", and continued:

"In this context progressive and left organizations in the South should make every effort to build a united front on a minimum programme with similar forces in the North and East....This would undoubtedly create the conditions for re-emergence of the class struggle in the North and East." ★

## I R E L A N D

### **Stop the use of plastic bullets**

MEMBERS of the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets (UCAPB) are presently visiting Europe in an effort to awaken public opinion to protest against the British Army's indiscriminate use of plastic bullets in the streets of the North of Ireland.

Rubber, and subsequently plastic, bullets have been used by the British Army in the Six Counties since 1970. Despite an official report from the US Law Enforcement Administration describing these weapons as having an extremely high probability of causing "severe injury", the British government still describes them as "non-lethal" weapons.

This description is belied by the facts. Sixteen people have been killed since the introduction of "baton rounds" and many more injured. Despite British Army regulations, they have been frequently used at close range and hit their victims in the chest or head area. This "anti-riot" weapon is widely

used in peaceful situations.

Seven of the victims have been under 16 years of age. In the majority of cases the families of victims have received substantial amounts in compensation and a vindication of the total innocence of the victims. Yet only one member of the security forces has ever been charged with unlawful use or killing, and he was acquitted!

In just one case, Nora McCabe was shot as she went to buy a packet of cigarettes at the end of the road. Canadian television had filmed the incident and the video was produced by the lawyers for the McCabe family. As is common, large (but undisclosed) compensation was made but no one was prosecuted. The policeman who swore on oath that the soldiers had been aiming at "rioters" further down the street was promoted and is now Assistant Chief Constable.

UCAPB was formed by relatives and victims after the death of the fourteenth victim, John Downes, in 1984. Despite condemnations of the use of these weapons by Irish politicians and bishops and a vote in the European parliament in 1982 banning the use of plastic bullets in the European community (a motion opposed by the 42 British Tory Euro-MPs and the Ulster Loyalist Euro-MP Enoch Powell alone), these deadly weapons continue to wreak their havoc. This could well extend to England, Scotland and Wales, where all police forces have now been equipped with plastic bullets.

Messages of protest against the use of plastic bullets should be sent to the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1, GB with copies to the Labour Party spokesman for Northern Ireland at Walworth Road, London SE17, and the United Campaign for Plastic Bullets, c/o 195 Whiterock Road, Belfast 11, Northern Ireland. ★

**Erratum**

APOLOGIES to our readers for the following errors, which occurred due to transcription problems caused by our ancient dictaphone. (Perhaps someone could donate us a new one?)

- The article on Denmark, "Surprise setback for austerity government" in IV 126: a) 2nd col., 5th para should read: "It comes from a split in the CP in 1958 [not 1985] ..."; b) 3rd col., 5th para should read: "The CP gained [not got] 5,000 votes..."

- The article on the Philippines, "Assassination of a militant" in IV 127: the final paragraph should read: "On September 21, tens of thousands demonstrated...." ★

SOUTH AFRICA

**Get the Shell out!**

THE ANGLO-DUTCH oil giant Shell has adopted a secret plan, code-named "Neptune", to defend itself against the international boycott campaign organized by anti-apartheid activists.

According to the *Observer* on October 4, a confidential report commissioned for the company by Washington consultants Pagan International warned Shell that "it was in danger of facing a worldwide boycott campaign". (See news short "Boycott busting" in IV 116.) Pagan are now spying on organizations such as the British Anti-Apartheid Movement in an attempt to sabotage the boycott campaign.

The Boycott Shell campaign is currently strongest in the USA and Scandinavia, but is growing in Britain, Belgium and Ireland. Dave Craine of

South African military and police — a barrel every 20 seconds. It also provides methanol for military aircraft and raw materials for napalm, nerve gas and defoliation agents....

"Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, has condemned Shell's union-busting practices and its treatment of Black workers [Shell jointly owns the country's largest refinery and the Rietspruit coal mine]."

Dave Craine also reported that an international week of action will be held from November 7-14 to "emphasize local authorities' role in the boycott, including a disinvestment appeal by mayors from around the world." ★

BASQUE COUNTRY

**Bayonne demo against raids**

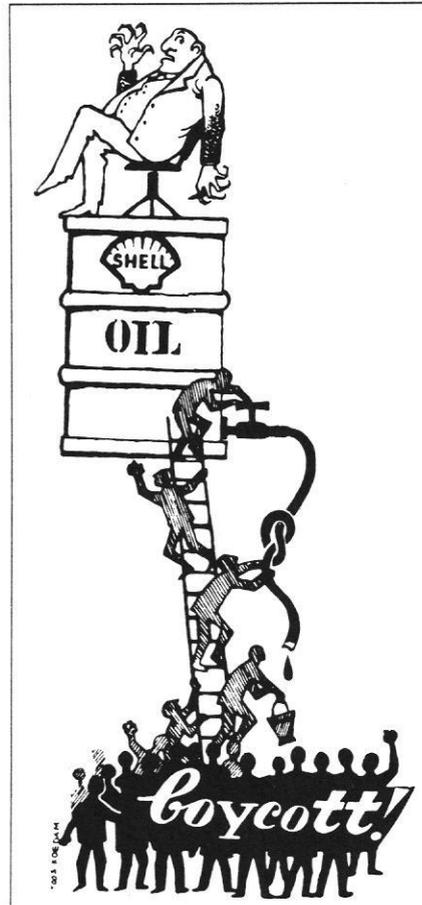
LAUNCHING extensive raids in the French Basque country at the beginning of October, the Chirac government stepped up its collaboration with the Spanish authorities in the campaign to crush the militant Basque nationalist movement. In its October 8 issue, the Paris daily *Libération* described a protest demonstration in the French Basque center of Bayonne, a large one for the small French Basque population:

"At 6pm traffic was stopped in Bayonne. In compact blocs, the CRS [riot police] blocked all the streets leading off the Place de la Liberté. The demonstrators were lining up. There were a lot of them, a thousand, perhaps. Megaphones blared. Alain Krivine, leader of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire shouted, 'This is an out-and-out declaration of war against the Basque country.'

"The crowd moved a hundred meters toward the first stage of the demonstration, the resting place of René Cassin [a leading human rights figure]. The CRS blocked the exits, although the demonstration had been authorized by the prefecture....

"People were forbidden to pass. Three red warning grenades were fired. In Basque and in French, demonstrators shouted, 'Fascists, you are the terrorists,' 'Police out, Basques in the country.' There was a final warning. The demonstrators retreated to a pedestrian street. The commissariat had promised to leave the way open to the sub-prefecture [the march's destination].

"The protesters returned to the march's starting point, singing the fighting song, 'Come, come Basques.' They could not reach the sub-prefecture. In the meantime, the forces of order changed their mind. The demonstration was declared illegal, the authorized march route was banned." ★



Embargo, the campaign's British section, writing in the September/October issue of *International Labour Reports*, explained the stakes of the campaign:

"The Royal-Dutch Shell Group is one of the world's biggest companies.... Shell is the market leader in South Africa's strategically vital oil sector, with \$400 million in assets and major investments in coal mining, metals, chemicals and gas.... Shell admits to providing 20% of the fuel needs of the

# Defend Moses Mayekiso!



**THE STATE** of emergency in South Africa has hit all components of the people's movement. For the first time, the trade-union movement as a whole has become a target of this repression. The assault is no longer a selective one against certain unions, but an open and deliberate attempt to curb all trade-union activity, to disrupt the functioning of the national and intermediate leaderships and to silence the workers' movement.

The means used in recent months to weaken the independent union movement have included repression against the striking Black railway workers, terrorist attacks against COSATU's headquarters and use of gangs of "vigilantes" against trade-union militants. In this context, the case of Moses Mayekiso has assumed exemplary importance.

PAUL SMITH

**A** REGIME that gaols Nelson Mandela for life, murders Steve Biko, tortures children and promotes racism as its official ideology has no moral credit with the majority of its people. A measure of its bankruptcy is the stature of its opponents. As the trade unions have moved into the front line of the battle with apartheid in South Africa many trade unionists have become victims of state terror. The spotlight naturally falls on these fighters, now in peril. What is their background, their circumstances? How may we support them?

Moses Mayekiso (known as "Moss" to his closest friends) is a living embodiment of the courage, political culture and determination shown by many in the South African trade-union movement. His story teaches how thousands of trade unionists live under apartheid's gun.

Moses Mayekiso, now general secretary of the metalworkers' union NUMSA, COSATU's second largest affiliate, was born in the Transkei in 1949. The early part of his working life was spent as a migrant miner. He was no stranger to the death and sudden injury that stalks the mines. He knew the single-sex hostels, the miserable wages, the daily racial discrimination. He left the mines to work in factories, ending up in Toyota, where he organized for MAWU (the Metal and Allied Workers' Union).

## A pioneer of democratic trade unionism

He became a senior shop-steward, was victimized and dismissed. The Transvaal branch of the union took on Moses Mayekiso as branch organizer, and then in 1980 as full-time branch secretary. He was reluctant to take the post. His feelings are with, and for, the ranks. In many ways, that is the theme of his life. He does not espouse a crude "rank-and-fileism"; on the contrary, his point is that the workers, the great mass of ordinary workers, should control and direct their own organizations as an apprenticeship for taking control over all aspects of their own lives.

That profoundly held impulse fired Mayekiso to pioneer much of the exemplary democratic structure of the metalworkers' union itself. It has also meant that he has seen no reason to move from his single-roomed shack in Alexandra township that he shares with his wife, his brother and seven children, which has no electricity and a communal toilet.

Mayekiso was the MAWU representative in the unity talks leading to the formation of COSATU in December 1985. The struggle for unity of the movement against apartheid; the lead-

ing place to be taken by the workers; the defence of the Freedom Charter as the starting point of that unity — these are the political themes of Mayekiso's efforts. He has called for the development of the Charter to consolidate that unity in the direction of programmes for youth, for women and, of course, for the workers' movement.

### Solitary confinement and interrogation

It was therefore entirely natural that Mayekiso "the union leader" became Mayekiso "the chair of the Alexandra Action Committee". At the height of the struggle in that region — and after the Transvaal stayaways of 1984, where more than a million students and workers took strike action — Moses was arrested and detained in solitary confinement for over a month. He was charged under the Internal Security Act. Then, after a rash of strikes and demonstrations, the charges were dropped.

In 1985, he was elected general secretary of MAWU. He personified the bridge between the unions and the great wave of resistance to apartheid gathering momentum in the communities.

On February 6, the "six day war" broke out in Alexandra after a police attack on a funeral procession. Mayekiso's home was attacked; but he was not there. In April 1986, he was detained again. Once more, he suffered solitary confinement and the well-known "interrogation techniques" of the South African police. Another strike-wave forced Mayekiso's release in May 1986, and he went to Sweden to win support for his union. While there, the second state of emergency was declared in South Africa on June 12.

Despite the obvious risks, Mayekiso went home, and was arrested on arrival at Jan Smuts airport. To this date, he has been detained in Johannesburg prison. He was held up to the end of 1986 without charge and then indicted for treason. This accusation alternates with others of subversion and sedition, should the first charge not stick. Visits are allowed infrequently, and until recently his conditions were bad.

Farcical but deadly charges were levelled against Mayekiso. The state asserts the "accused at all relevant times owes allegiance to the state." With this presumption, they accuse him of "seizing control of certain residential areas of Alexandra and/or rendering such areas ungovernable by the state by, *inter alia*, (1) establishing organs of peoples power; (2) forming the Alexandra Action Committee; (3) organizing residents into yard, street and area committees; (4) forming people's courts; and (5) launching a campaign against the police, the Defence Force,

the Town Council of Alexandra and against collaborators with the system."

In addition, Mayekiso is accused of "launching a recent boycott" and "attempts to force the state to accede to their demands" and, even more incredibly "changing street names to "MK [an abbreviation for the armed wing of the ANC], Biko, Soviet, Mandela, ANC, Slovo, Bazooka, Oliver." Mayekiso stands trial facing these charges along with Paul Tshabala, Richard Mdakane, Obed Bapela and his own brother, Mzwanele Mayekiso.

Some 25,000 people have been detained at one time or another since the state of emergency began. To begin



with, the proportion of trade unionists was not high. Today the unions are in the front-line of the struggle and under increasing attack. At its July congress, COSATU called for a "hands off" campaign as terrorist activity, as well as official harassment, mounted.

### More anti-union laws threatened

Further anti-union legislation is now threatened. Every major dispute quickly attracts state repression. Nevertheless, the unions are still relatively unshackled and have increased their political maturity in ways that might have used the example of Mayekiso's life as a signpost.

The July congress of COSATU committed the movement to form a union for the unemployed, to reach out to the "doubly oppressed" women workers, to

Namibia and to anti-imperialist labour movements in the rest of Africa. The trade unions continue to guard fiercely their organizational independence at the same time as giving a political lead in the struggle to all of the oppressed.

Mayekiso's union was always deeply committed to that principle. Among those unions whose members were detained in the earlier days of the second state of emergency, MAWU members figured disproportionately. Today, COSATU as a whole is set on a series of disciplined alliances with, for example, the youth organization of the United Democratic Front, SAYCO, formed this year, and the newly formed national women's organizations.

Mayekiso and his fellow defendants appeared at Johannesburg Supreme Court on the morning of Monday, September 14. It is suspected that he has gastric ulcers, a hernia and an earache. No non-prison doctor is allowed to examine him. (It was prison doctors who passed Biko as fit before his fatal police van drive.) But Mayekiso is now in a cell with others from Alexandra — eight of whom are charged with setting up a people's court — and all who have seen him say he is in good spirits.

### International solidarity is now crucial

The case was remanded to October 19. The reason given to the defence was that there was no judge available for the trial before that date, and the hearings were expected to last five or six months. Even, so, it was hinted that somebody in the public prosecution team might be unwell at that time. South Africa's summer holidays are over December and January. Perhaps the state thinks that the furore over Mayekiso and his fellow defendants will die away by then.

Mayekiso has always been concerned to build maximum unity with all groups involved in the struggle. Consequently, his life has been the property of the whole anti-apartheid movement, nationally and internationally. It is now that movement which has to act to save him and his fellow defendants, who face the death penalty, and all the other union leaders and members who are currently rotting in South African gaols.

NUMSA, which elected Mayekiso as their general secretary in his absence, has stated: "(We) call for the international trade-union community to build a campaign for his release. In this regard, the union welcomes all forms of independent, responsible support initiatives in the international arena and hopes for the maximum possible co-operation between groups in seeking to achieve this end." ★

# Moves to rehabilitate the Moscow trials defendants

**K**ONDRATIEV and Shayanov were important intellectual figures in post-October Russia. Both were non-communists and non-Marxists, and the quite legal work that they did testified to the high level of intellectual freedom that prevailed in the USSR before the consolidation of the Stalinist dictatorship.

Kondratiev has on some occasions been wrongly portrayed as the inventor of the theory of long cyclical waves.<sup>1</sup> He did in fact formulate the sophisticated academic version of this theory. He founded one of the first institutes for systematic study of international cycles, which had a considerable prestige. His theory continues to enjoy an authority in academic circles, although it was subjected to severe criticism by the Soviet Marxists, beginning with Leon Trotsky.

Aleksandr Shayanov was one of the main theoreticians of the "non-market peasant agriculture" that was inspired in Russia by the populists. Much less well-known internationally than Kondratiev, he made his mark above all as the author of a famous article on "The theory of non-capitalist economic systems," published in German in 1924; and a curious "peasant utopia" (*My brother Alexei's voyage to the land of peasant utopia*). He was a prominent activist in the Soviet cooperative movement after the October revolution.

The Stalin faction's real grievance against the defendants in the 1930 trial was the support they gave to Bukharin and Rykov against the policy of forced collectivization of agriculture and breakneck industrialization on which Stalin embarked in 1928-29. It should be stressed that Kondratiev and Shayanov, who were definitely not members of the CPSU, kept their distance from the Right Opposition, limiting themselves to offering facts, statistics, analyses and forecasts that helped Bukharin to underpin his arguments.

Many observers saw the legal rehabilitation of Kondratiev as a confirmation that Bukharin himself will soon be officially rehabilitated. Bukharin's widow and his son, Yuri Larin, started the official procedure for rehabilitation back in the Khrushchev era. After a long and tortuous procedure, the party Control Commission rejected this appeal in the summer of 1977.

**ON JULY 16, 1987, the Supreme Court of the USSR legally rehabilitated the great Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev and his co-defendants in the 1930 trial at which they were sentenced to long years in prison. With his macabre sense of humor, Stalin called this the case of the "industry party." In reality, it was mainly a trial of agronomists working in the Rural Economics Institute in Moscow, as well as of some people working at the International Institute of Conjunctural Studies. The first institution was headed by Aleksandr Shayanov, the second by Kondratiev.**

## ERNEST MANDEL

Today, positive references to Bukharin as a person, and even to his political orientation, are multiplying in the Soviet press, as well as, by the way, in some Chinese publications. In its issue of July 22 this year, *Literaturnaya gazeta* published the text of a one-act play that presented two characters, one defending forced collectivization, the other upholding Bukharin's gradualist theses. For the first time, Bukharin was not only portrayed as a kind and sympathetic person, although an opponent of Lenin, but as someone defending a correct line. The author of the play was Fyodor Burlatsky, one of Gorbachev's main intellectual and media representatives.

### Judicial authorities in awkward position

In view of the rehabilitation of Kondratiev, Shayanov and their associates, a refusal to wipe out the penal charges against Bukharin would put the judicial authorities in the USSR in an awkward position. After all, Kondratiev was a minister in the Kerensky government. Bukharin was a leader of the October revolution, a member of the Bolshevik Politburo, called by Lenin in his Last

Testament "the favorite of the whole party." Is it possible to rehabilitate Kondratiev and not Bukharin?

What makes a rehabilitation of Bukharin quite likely is that the wiping out of the charges against Kondratiev and his companions in misfortune was by no means an isolated incident.<sup>2</sup> In 1985, one of the main defendants in the third Moscow Trial, former People's Commissar of Finance and former Soviet ambassador to Berlin, Nikolai Krestinsky, was also rehabilitated, along with five of his co-defendants.<sup>3</sup> It is true that, unlike the rehabilitation of Marshal Tukhachevsky and the other leaders of the Red Army who were shot in 1937, Krestinsky's rehabilitation was carried out very much on the quiet. While the military chiefs rushed to include pictures of their comrades murdered by Stalin in the memoirs they were publishing and in history textbooks, Krestinsky's name is still barely mentioned in the USSR.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, given the feeling for consistency that characterizes the writers of the "official" history of the CPSU, Bukharin's rehabilitation could very well loom at the end of the process that started with Krestinsky's, even if the timing remains unclear.

After Bukharin, Trotsky? Alexandre Adler announced that a bit precipitously in the Paris daily *Libération* of September 10, 1987. For the moment, the only definite signs are the less hostile

1. The real "inventors" of the theory of long waves in the capitalist economy were two pre-1914 Marxist theoreticians, the Russian Parvus-Helphand and the Dutchman Fedder/Van Gelderen.

2. At the same time, the Moscow Agrarian Academy was liquidated, and its main members (Shayanov's teachers) were arrested. Kondratiev and Shayanov were executed in 1937.

3. At the beginning of the third Moscow trial, Krestinsky distinguished himself as the only defendant to plead not guilty and reject en bloc all the slanderous accusations lodged against him by the prosecutor, Vyshinsky. He went so far as to say that the confession he had made during the pre-trial investigation had been extracted from him by force. (*Prozessbericht*, the German version of the stenographic record of the trial, pp.56-59.) At a later session of the trial, however, he repeated his confession as a result of horrible torture inflicted after his retraction, according to reliable reports.

4. See notably the memoirs of the chief of the Soviet army General Staff, Marshal A. Vasilevski, *La Cause de toute une Vie* (Cause of a Lifetime), Moscow, Editions du progrès, 1984. The Russian-language edition was published in 1975. It includes, after p.80, a group photo entitled, "The first marshals of the Soviet Union," showing M. Tukhachevsky, S. Voroshilov, A. Yegorov, S. Budyenny and V. Blücher in 1935. Stalin had three of these marshals shot in 1937.

public references that are beginning to show up in the press and in plays and literary accounts. Two of the closest political friends of the founder of the Red Army — the Old Bolshevik and civil war hero Muralov and Ivan Smilga, who were sentenced in the second Moscow Trial — have, moreover, also been rehabilitated by the Supreme Court.

It does not follow from this, however, that the wiping out of the criminal charges against Leon Trotsky can already be taken for granted.<sup>5</sup> There is no lack of contrary signs. At the Moscow Book Fair that opened in the latter half of September 1987, Orwell's book, *Animal Farm*, a famous satirical allegory centered around the Stalin-Trotsky conflict, was seized and banned. The same thing happened to Isaac Deutscher's biography of Stalin, despite the protests of representatives its English publishers who were present. (*The Times*, September 12, 1983).

### Trotsky acknowledged as "excellent party activist"

Moreover, on September 10, Victor Shebrikov delivered a speech on the 110th anniversary of the birth of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, which contained a very hostile reference to Trotsky. (*The Independent*, September 12, 1987.) Afanasiev, the editor of *Pravda*, questioned the opportuneness of rehabilitating Trotsky. He argued that the revolutionary leader's "negative" features predominated over his "positive" ones, although he did not deny the latter.

The press is more and more taking up this controversial question. *Ogonyok* noted the generally positive assessment of Trotsky found in Lenin's Testament, and said that he was "an excellent activist of our party, forced [by Stalin] to set out on a path leading to isolation." The dailies *Trud* and *Sovietskaya Rossia* at the end of September devoted whole pages to a critical examination of Trotsky's role, denying that the time had come for rehabilitating him or that such a rehabilitation was underway. The TASS agency disseminated extensive summaries of these articles.

The least that can be said is that the reason for all this is unclear. Are the CPSU leaders deliberately blowing hot and cold? Are they divided on this question? Whatever answer you give to this question, the usefulness of, and the need for, pressure from the international workers' movement for rehabilitating all the defendants in the purge trials stands out quite clearly.

In order to understand the implications of wiping out the criminal charges against the defendants in the purge



trials — against *all* the defendants and not just the main Bolshevik leaders who were murdered after these judicial travesties — it is necessary to distinguish three aspects of the Stalinist repression against the Old Bolsheviks:

- Gross falsification of history. This involves completely covering up their role in the Russian revolution and even in the Russian workers' movement before the revolution, as well as in building and leading the Soviet state and the CPSU from 1917 to 1928, or else mentioning them only under slanderous designations, such as imperialist spies, Gestapo agents, traitors, counter-revolutionaries, murderers, terrorists, saboteurs and so on.

### Subtle falsification of history

- More subtle falsification of history. This consists of distorting certain aspects of their work and the ideas they defended, covering up part of their real work and attributing to them conceptions that they never held. Such was the standard operating procedure of the Stalin faction in its fight against the various oppositions between 1923 and 1928.<sup>6</sup> Over the years from 1929 to 1934, this gradually slid into the base slanders of the first type.

- Formal sentencing for crimes that they never committed and execution subsequent to these verdicts. (Radek, Rakovsky and some others were excep-

tions. They were sentenced to long prison terms, and died either as a result of their privations or at the hands of their jailers — the truth may never be known.) These sentences involved the deprivation of all civil rights and meant that the writings of all these communist leaders and cadres remain banned to this day in the USSR.

In order to get off the hook at the least cost, the bureaucracy may only rectify a part of the consequences of these crimes of Stalin, for example on the seventieth anniversary of the October revolution. It may eliminate the grossest and most slanderous falsifications of history, as has already been done in the new edition of the Soviet *Bolshaya Entsyklopediya*, without restoring the full historical truth about the victims of the trials or permitting re-publication and free circulation of their writings. It might even wipe out all the gross falsifications and a lot of the more subtle ones, and tolerate re-publication of some writings of the Old Bolsheviks, but not all. Still other variants are possible.

### Need for a vigorous campaign

Once you see this range of choice, you can understand the decisive importance of total, non-discriminatory and public rehabilitation of all the defendants in the Moscow trials, and therefore the need for a vigorous campaign for this. Such rehabilitation necessarily involves the state acknowledging before the Soviet masses that Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov, Rakovsky, Pyatakov, Radek, Smirnov and other leaders of the party in Lenin's time and immediately after his death were not only not traitors, counter-revolutionaries, imperialist agents, fascists, assassins or terrorists. It would also mean recognizing that they were the main leaders of the state and party, members of the Politburo — in fact the only ones mentioned along with Stalin in Lenin's Testament — that they were revolutionists and dedi-

5. Trotsky was found guilty personally in the verdict of the first Moscow trial (August 19-24 1936). This verdict ended with the following words: "Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, and his son, Sedov, Lev Davidovich, who are now living abroad, have been found guilty [*überführt* in German] — on the basis of the statements of the defendants Smirnov, N.; Goltzman, E.S.; Dreitsler, V.; Olberg, Fritz David (I.I. Kruglyanski and Berman-Jurin), as well as by the evidence submitted to this trial — of directly preparing, as well as personally leading, the organization of terrorist acts in the USSR against leaders of the CPSU (B) and the Soviet state. If they are found on the territory of the USSR, they are to be immediately arrested and handed over to the Tribunal of the Military College of the Supreme Court." (*Prozessbericht*, Moscow, 1936, p.185 of the German version of the stenographic record, my translation.)

6. Trotsky pointed out a great many more subtle falsifications of history in his book *The Stalin school of falsification*.

cated and honest communists, and that therefore their writings deserve to be reprinted.

If they are to be criticized, this has to be done in an objective way, based on what their writings actually contain and not on the basis of "intentions" attributed to them or "a double meaning" that is generally falsely imputed. These writings cannot remain under wraps. Even a partial and selective re-printing is inadmissible. No debate, no reference to what happened in the USSR from 1917 to the murder of the Old Bolsheviks or even up to today will be possible any longer without finally taking account of these writings.

Of course, the question of legal rehabilitation of the defendants in the Moscow trials, including restoration of civil and political rights for them, their companions and their descendants, must not be mixed up with the question of political endorsement of all, or most, of the opinions they held in opposition to the "general line" of the majority in the Central Committee in the CPSU, that is the Stalin faction.

In the first place, such political endorsement would run up against the obvious problem that these defendants advocated very different ideas. Contrary to the myth invented by the repressive services and propagated by the Stalin-Molotov group in the USSR and in the Communist International, there was

never a "bloc of Trotskyists and rightists" in the CPSU, neither before or after the expulsion of the oppositionists.

### Left Opposition supported by Krupskaya

Likewise, Zinoviev and Kamenev were never Trotskyists. At the most, they were associated publicly and openly — not secretly through some unimaginable "plot" — with the Left Opposition in the United Opposition of 1926-27, which, moreover, was also supported by Lenin's widow, Krupskaya.

The defendants in the Moscow trials would have to be classified politically in at least five different categories: the "Trotskyists" properly speaking (even this term lends itself to misunderstanding — it would be better to call them supporters of the ideas of the Left Opposition); the Zinovievites; the partisans of the so-called Bukharin right opposition; those who were fully-fledged Stalinists in the years 1923-29, but broke with Stalin on some political points at the beginning of the 1930s<sup>7</sup>; and some without very clear political convictions.

It is, therefore, impossible to say that all their political opinions were correct, since they were mutually exclusive.

Secondly, the objective of a rehabilitation of Stalin's victims cannot be acceptance or rejection of their political views. That would mean adopting Stalin's terms, accepting the "ideological" basis of the trials and the terrorist repression. The right to make political mistakes has to be reaffirmed. Without that, no democracy or even honest debate is possible.

If voicing an idea that may prove incorrect is more or less automatically condemned as criminal behavior and leads to repression, deportation or death, no one will any longer dare to express ideas different from those of the general secretary. And since history has abundantly demonstrated that no Central Committee and no general secretary are infallible, such quiescence engenders an incapacity to correct errors, even catastrophic ones, for long periods.

We remain convinced that essentially Trotsky and the Left Opposition had a correct view of the issues in the great controversies that shook the CPSU between 1923 and 1933. But we will never ask that a resolution of the CPSU Central Committee, and still less a verdict of the Supreme Court of the USSR,

7. In his "secret report" to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev mentioned by name only the members of the Stalin faction who fell victim to the purges.

## The Moscow Trials

■ **The first trial.** Called the "Trial of the 16," it opened on August 19, 1936. The main defendants were representatives of the Bolshevik old guard, such as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Evdokimov and Bakaiev; well-known personalities such as Pickel and Reingold; Left Opposition activists such as Smirnov and Mrachovsky; and an airforce officer, Dreitser. Ter Vaganian, a writer and journalist; and Goltsmann, a high government official, were also included in the lot.

They were accused of being involved in a "center" charged with preparing and carrying out terrorist attacks against leaders of the party and the country. The prosecutor, Vyshinsky, launched a call to "shoot these mad dogs," these "clowns, these pygmies," these "adventurers."

Although absent, Trotsky was the main defendant, "the soul and organizer of the terrorist bloc," according to the "confession" of one of the accused. On August 25, the sixteen defendants were executed.

■ **The second trial** was held from January 23 to January 30, 1937, before the same tribunal. This time there were 18 defendants, chosen by the method of the amalgam — Piatakov, Radek, Serebriakov, Sokolnikov, Drobnis, Muralov and so on.

The general scheme of the trial hardly differed from the first. The defendants were accused of having rebuilt the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite center." The most absurd charges were heaped on them, going from "mass poi-

soning" to economic sabotage. Only those who had "confessed" were brought before the court. Vyshinsky of course tried to prove that it was Trotsky who was pulling the strings. Fifteen were sentenced to death. But Piatakov, Radek and Sokolnikov got prison sentences.

■ **The third trial** was held from March 2 to 13, 1938. There were 21 defendants, including Bukharin; Rykov; Rakovsky; Krestinsky; Yagoda, the former chief of police; people's commissars, such as Grinko and Chernov; former Central Committee members; officials and three doctors, plus a handful of lowlives and informers thrown in for good measure. They were accused of having joined in a "bloc of rightists and Trotskyites" and of having made a deal with enemy powers through the intermediary of Trotsky aimed at overthrowing Soviet power and dismembering the USSR. Nineteen were executed.

■ **The execution of the generals.** On June 11, 1937, a communiqué announced the arrest and trial on the same day of a group of generals including Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Ubovich, Feldman and other Red Army officers, some of whom had already been under arrest since 1936. It has not been established that a real trial took place. The executions of the generals, which were followed by those of tens of thousands of lower-ranking officers, decapitated the Red Army on the eve of the second world war. ★

solemnly declare so. That verdict belongs to history. It belongs to revolutionary workers and intellectuals today and tomorrow. No "leading body" can substitute for history. But the authoritative bodies can, and must, take a position on whether or not the accusations of criminal acts against the Moscow trials defendants were well founded or slanderous. They must accept the evidence. These accusations were totally without foundation.

### Rehabilitations imply judgement on Stalinism

The question of rehabilitating the victims of the Moscow trials is the object of an open and fierce political battle in the USSR itself. Only what has happened in the apparatus remains under the seal of secrecy, despite a *glasnost* that, while real, remains quite insufficient. The problem for the Soviet authorities is that a legal rehabilitation of the Moscow trials defendants implies at the same time a judgement on Stalin, Stalinism and the main turns in the "general line" between 1923 and 1938, or even 1953; on the scope of the "errors" of the Stalin era and their after-effects. It requires a materialist and not simply psychological, ideological or purely political explanation of these phenomena. Moreover, it involves a judgement on the limitations of "de-Stalinization" under Khrushchev, that is, a critical re-examination of the entire history of the USSR, the CPSU and the "international Communist movement" over more than a half century. No less evident are the implications such an examination would have about the origins and nature of the Gorbachev reforms.

The fact that factions in the apparatus are not cheerfully accepting such a re-examination is hardly surprising. It is true that the number of those personally implicated in the crimes of the great purges has become small, mainly for biological reasons. For this reason, there is less fear of "reprisals" and of the consequences, including penal prosecutions, of Stalin's henchmen than there was at the time of the Twentieth Congress. But it is still true that a whole layer of the *nomenklatura*, those over 60 years of age, have been, if not accomplices, at least passive and tolerant witnesses of these crimes. In particular they were witnesses to the frantic efforts to curb de-Stalinization between 1953 and 1962 and correct it after 1965.

The maneuvers of this faction of the *nomenklatura*, which undoubtedly also includes younger elements drawn to it by material interests and political judgements, have gone very far, as attested to by the following report:

"The Soviet judicial archives from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s are being destroyed at a rate of 5,000 files a month, on the pretext that there is 'no room' to keep them,' the dissident bulletin *Glasnost*' wrote in its latest issue.

"According to this bulletin published by former political prisoners, including Mr. Sergei Grigoryants, documents concerning millions of Soviet victims of the terror have been stored in the archives of the Military Tribunal and Supreme Court of the USSR. 'Such files were "cleaned out" of the archives of the USSR prosecutor's office and Ministry of Defence in the 1960s and 1970s. As for those of the KGB, practically no one knows where they are kept.'

"For several years, according to *Glasnost*' two presiding judges of the Supreme Court, Mr. Gorkin and Mr. Smirnov, managed to 'rescue the archives from destruction.' But 'when the minister of justice, Vladimir Terebilov, became presiding judge of the Supreme Court, with Sergei Gusev as his chief deputy, the "weeding out" of the archives suddenly got underway.' This operation has been continued since these two officials took office in April 1984.

"At first, the archives were burned in the fireplace of the Supreme Court palace. But, *Glasnost*' pointed out, 'that makes a lot of smoke in the city. Now they are burning them outside Moscow'." (*Le Monde*, August 23-24, 1987.)

### Downplaying Stalin's crimes

Alongside the efforts made to make it formally difficult, if not impossible, to rehabilitate all the victims of the purges, there have been strenuous attempts to partially "rehabilitate" Stalin and Stalinism, to systematically downplay the after-effects of Stalin's crimes in the areas of human rights, in the Communist movement, and in the economic, military, ideological and cultural fields, and play up the "positive side" of the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> The number two figure in the bureaucratic hierarchy, Ligachev, is an old hand at that. He comes back to this theme indefatigably in almost all his speeches (especially his August 26, 1987, speech reported in *Pravda* on August 27).

Gorbachev speaks very carefully on this subject. But he has also felt it necessary to make statements of this sort on several occasions, in particular in his famous interview in the French Communist Party paper, *l'Humanité*, in February 1986, in which he said: "Stalinism is a notion invented by the enemies of communism and used widely



to blacken the image of the Soviet Union and socialism as a whole." Does that not amount to repeating the substance of the slanders against all the oppositionist tendencies in the CPSU in Stalin's time, that is, the ideological starting point of the Moscow trials slanders?

The debate that is proceeding stealthily in the top spheres of the apparatus is unfolding more frankly in the public arena. For example, in the August 20 issue of *Moscow News* — which is generally considered the organ of the advanced wing of the Gorbachevite intellectuals, those who are in the forefront of *glasnost*' — there is an article by the economist Boris Bolotin that justified the forced collectivization of agriculture and called for reprinting Stalin's theoretical works, in particular *The economic problems of socialism in the USSR*.

In its August 19 issue, *Literaturnaya gazeta* published a series of letters about Anatoly Rybakov's famous novel, *Arbat's Children*, which sharply condemns the Stalinist terror. Most of the letters supported the novelist. But the paper also published a series of letters that accused the book of being "harmful," and even called for sanctions against Rybakov.

This debate has already led to dramatic public confrontations. In its issue of July 13, 1987, the Austrian journal *Profil* reports on two public meetings recently held in Moscow. The first was announced discreetly by a hand-written poster stuck up on the gate of the History and Archives Institute. It attracted several thousand people at the end of

8. These efforts were not only continued under Brezhnev but have even been seen quite recently. When Gorbachev felt obliged to cite Stalin's name in his speech commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the USSR's victory over Nazi Germany, he was interrupted by frenetic applause from the section where the apparatchiks were sitting. Twice he tried to stop this outpouring, twice he failed.



March 1987. The lecture, entitled "Stalin, politician and man," was delivered by Professor Yuri Borisov. It was in general an apology for the dictator, although Borisov acknowledged that there had been errors and abuses.

The great majority of the crowd reacted indignantly. Questions and protests crackled. "How many victims were there?" "How many have been rehabilitated?" Many speakers mentioned explicitly that their fathers had perished in the camps and that their mothers had been sent into internal exile."<sup>9</sup>

In June 1987, the Communist youth organization, the Komsomol, organized a public discussion with Yuri Afanasiev, director of the History and Archives Institute and the main promoter of a sharp criticism of Stalin. The hall was packed. Hundreds of people could not get in. Written questions were passed to the speaker. One of them, the *Profil* reporter noted, was, "Are you in favor of publishing Trotsky's works?"

"Afanasiev replied: 'Yes, I am, so that our students can read and study all the literature of Soviet history, including Trotsky's works.' Behind me an old gentleman exclaimed indignantly, 'That's the last straw!' Immediately, some people turned toward him and said, 'Have you read his works? Do you know what he wrote?' 'Yes, I know what he wrote,' the man shot back defensively.

"This response prompted others to chime in: 'Well, it's obvious where you're coming from. You have read Trotsky, and you are sitting comfortably here. Do you know how many people have been sent to Siberia for nothing more than that?'

"More and more people joined in the discussion, a real little storm broke out before people addressed questions again to the platform. Memories poured out with an unexpected violence, feelings that must have been suppressed for decades. Looks of an explosive anger

that frightens the reformers came over faces.

"Another episode at the same meeting indicated how deeply the need is felt for a final settling of accounts. A note from the audience asked that people stop talking about the 'cult of the personality,' errors and deviations. Stalin was guilty of crimes against humanity. A monument should be erected to his victims, and he should be condemned as a criminal.<sup>10</sup>

"Afanasiev read the note aloud in a pensive way. He supported the proposal for erecting a monument; he did not respond to the other proposal. The audience burst into long and rhythmic applause. I turned around and saw a sea of serious and determined faces, seeming to say, 'We have waited long enough. Now it's our turn!' Despite all my skepticism, at that moment, I felt the determination of these people not to let themselves be pushed back again, as happened in Brezhnev's time."

We cannot leave these courageous men and women in the USSR to fight an isolated battle. It is our duty, the duty of the entire international workers' movement, to support them with all our strength in their historic struggle for truth and justice. This is why the campaign for full legal rehabilitation of all the Moscow trials defendants is indispensable today.

### An elementary duty of solidarity

I say, "the entire international workers' movement," because this is not only an elementary duty of solidarity with all those who are fighting for this cause in the USSR itself. It has to be remembered that the defendants in the trials were nearly all international activists. Zinoviev and Bukharin chaired the Communist International (CI) in succession. Rakovsky and Trotsky were activists of the Second International before becoming leaders of the Third. Rakovsky was a leader in the Socialist parties of Bulgaria and Rumania.

Trotsky was author of the Zimmerwald Manifesto, of the call for the founding conference of the CI and of the manifestos of its first four congresses. Radek for years was secretary of the CI, after having been one of the leaders of the Polish and German social democratic parties. Piatakow was CI's representative to the German CP during the revolutionary weeks of 1923. And many others were full-time officials of the CI.

A great part of the international workers' movement failed in its task at the time of the Moscow trials. (An honorable exception was Friedrich Ad-

ler, who as secretary of the Socialist International, acted in 1936, 1937 and 1938 to defend the Old Bolsheviks against their murderers.) This sin of omission must not be repeated again today.

### A critical re-examination of the CPSU's history

When he was named rector of the History and Archives Institute in Moscow in January 1987, Afanasiev launched an appeal for a critical re-examination of the CPSU history manuals. Extensive excerpts from his inaugural speech were published in the weekly *Moscow News* on January 11, 1987. He said, for instance, "Let's just take the way that Lenin's last letters and articles are presented in some of our manuals.

"There is a long commentary on his last letters and articles, while only a page or two are devoted to what Lenin actually said. The rest abounds in generalities on the epoch of the transition of humanity from capitalism to socialism, that is, things that Lenin never spoke of, except on rare occasions. Lenin's assessments in his last letters to the CC leaders are still more unfortunate!

"Detached from his scheme, they are transferred into the chapter about the Twelfth Congress of the CP (Bolshevik) of Russia. They are quoted in a one-sided way. All the positive assessments of future oppositionists have been taken out, and only the negative characteristics remain. The result is that the complex and intensive struggle of concrete ideas and people, the living drama of that age, are replaced either by detective-story plots or sterile schematism."

This stand provoked a virulent reaction from historians who were not only defending their writings and their livelihoods but also their patrons, that is, the interests of a whole wing of the bureaucracy. They were obliged to defend Stalin, and consequently Stalin-

9. Borisov, however, was seriously shaken when he gave the same lecture on April 13 before the writers at the Central House of Culture. On this occasion, speakers in the hall confronted him with precise and terrible facts. One historian working in the archives cited the file on the interrogation of the great theater director Meyerhold, one of the victims of the purges. Meyerhold was tortured, as was recognized by GPU Lieutenant-General Rodos who interrogated him. His right hand was broken. He was forced to drink his own urine. (Report in the Berlin left daily *TAZ*, July 27, 1987.)

10. With his exceptional political intuition, Trotsky ended his book *The crimes of Stalin* with these prophetic words: "History will not pardon one drop of blood sacrificed to the new Moloch of injustice and privilege. Ethical feeling finds a supreme satisfaction in the unshakeable certainty that the verdict of history will fit the enormity of the crime. The revolution will open up all the secret cabinets, it will review the trials, acquit all those who have been slandered, it will erect monuments to the honor of the victims of injustice and will heap eternal obloquy on the names of their executioners."

ism, by repeating the substance of the slanders against the oppositionists, beginning with Trotsky.

*Moscow News* published some excerpts from the flood of letters that they got on this question. Claiming to represent the "unanimous" (sic) opinion of all his fellow professors in the department of the Institute of History where he works, as well as of the members of the Scholarship and Methodological Council of the Moscow region of the Znanie society, Anatoly Borisov wrote:

"The author [Yuri Afanasiev] has taken up questions on which he is hardly competent. Regardless of his intention, he is playing the game of the bourgeois historians....

"The attempts to draw us into discussions of the past threaten to distract us from the tasks of restructuring posed by the party for the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU and to hold back everything that must be decided on and done today." (*Moscow News*, May 24, 1987.)

Still clearer is the letter signed by four chiefs of the CPSU history department, including the chief of the CPSU Central Committee's Academy of Social Sciences, L. Shirikov:

"Y. Afanasiev refers only to Lenin's letters 'To the Congress' [Lenin's Testament], saying nothing about the sharp and continuing struggle that Lenin and the party waged before and after October against Trotsky and the Trotskyists on the question of the driving forces and perspectives of the revolution in Russia, of the victory of socialism in our country....

### "Trotsky tried to overthrow Soviet government by force"

"After the victory of fascism in Germany in 1933...Trotsky persisted in his course of trying to overthrow the Soviet government by force and of using for his 'main objectives' the possibility of an 'inevitable' defeat of the Soviet Union in a future war against fascism....

"The line of Trotskyism amounted to restoring capitalism in the USSR." (*Moscow News*, May 10, 1987.)

This is not an isolated case. A specialist in the "struggle against Trotskyism," Nikolai Vasetski, wrote a pamphlet called *Contemporary Trotskyism against peace and detente*, which was published in several languages in 1986 and very largely disseminated by the USSR's embassies, including, in a Spanish version, in Cuba. In it one can read for example: "The Trotskyists pinned their hopes on war for being able to settle accounts with the Soviet leadership....They hoped that the USSR would suffer defeat if there was a war.

And to that end, they were not sparing of praise for fascist Germany. That is where they found their real ally in the fight against the USSR.

"In the directives he sent to his collaborators, Trotsky called on them to establish direct contacts with the governments of fascist Germany and militarized Japan."<sup>11</sup> All this is "proved" by a letter Radek quoted in the second Moscow trial, which is nothing but a crude forgery.

In his answer published in the same issue of *Moscow News*, Afanasiev sidesteps the question of Trotsky's real positions and the falsification of them, of the slanders that were the basis for the Moscow trials and the massive and monstrous purges, that is, for the massacre of the Old Bolsheviks and hundreds of thousands of communists.

All of Gorbachev's contradictions and dilemmas were revealed in this evasion. But at the same time, Afanasiev strongly countered the argument "let's stick to the tasks of the future and not discuss the problems of the past." The title of his answer itself struck back forcefully: "Let us talk about the past, but it is the future of socialism that is in question."

Afanasiev wrote that there is no possibility of socialist democracy when "the struggle of opinions, the search for an authentic revolutionary road and the differences between party leaders are described as plots by an invisible enemy. After the event, the groupings established were labeled 'anti-party' and attributed counter-revolutionary motives. Political differences were replaced with fantastic charges drawn from the penal code."

The new holder of the CPSU history chair in the Academy of Humanities, Nikolai Maslov, discussed more concretely what should be the content of the CPSU history manual for secondary and higher education for which the Ministry of Higher Education in the USSR has just opened a competition. In this connection, he quoted Lenin's words, "Our strength lies in the truth." As an example, he held up an anthology of Leninism published in 1925, which contained articles by Martov, Trotsky, Bukharin, Shliapnikov and other revolutionists with whom Lenin had polemical during his life.

In passing, it might be said that Maslov himself played fast and loose with historical truth, because in the list he gave of the works on the history of the Communist Party of Russia (B) published after the October revolution, he did not mention Zinoviev's history.

The stand taken by another leading "Gorbachevite," the writer Aleksandr Nezhnyi was more peremptory. Under the title, "Cure by truth, Notes on reshaping consciousness," he wrote for

example:

"Our moral education loses almost all its qualities if it is deprived of the vitamins of truth. The masters of the closed mouth, the magicians of demagoguery, the false guardians of the people's morality existed and they still do. It is in large measure thanks to their efforts that our best workers have been banished and quietly defamed, in select committees, without publicity....They have invented a multitude of open and secret instructions, some of which almost automatically imposed a 'veto' on any information about the real state of the environment, or gave the workers in the state and party archives the right not only to check the notes made by researchers but also to suppress those that, according to them naturally, were harmful to the historian or the writer." (*Moscow News*, June 21, 1987.)

### Perestroika of the memory

All of this argument has been summed up in lapidary and strikingly sensible formulas. Stalin "inflicted greater defeats on the revolutionary movement in Russia than any of our adversaries," the Gorbachevian writer Mikhail Shatov proclaimed in the magazine *Ogonyok*. "You cannot have *perestroika* without a *perestroika* of the memory," the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko echoed. And *Literaturnaya gazeta* set the tone in its October 22, 1986, issue: "If we turn to the past, it is to get answers to the questions that are tormenting us."

In fact the two central questions posed by Gorbachev's reform current are how did we end up here in this quasi-stagnation after so many exertions and so many sacrifices by the toiling masses? And, how can we get out of this, without falling back into a rut and into crisis in a few years time?

The answer to these two questions is inextricably bound up with the entire history of the CPSU and the country. It leads back to the problems of Stalinism and the debates of the 1920s, notably to the question of the fate and contradictions of the NEP and the worldwide evolution of capitalism. It leads back inevitably also to the problems of "socialism in one country," to the problems of "Trotskyism." This involves both questions of content — what to discuss — and of form — how to discuss it. All this raises the question of socialist democracy and workers' power. That is what is frightening the whole bureaucracy and making Gorbachev hesitate. ★

11. Nikolai Vasetski, *Hedendaags trotskisme tegen vrede en ontspanning*, Uitgeverij Persagentschap Novosti, Moscow, 1986, p.15.

# Economic reform and democratization

BY FAR the most original aspect of the *perestroika* (restructuring) that is occurring under Gorbachev's leadership is the explicit linking of economic reform and democratization.

Gorbachev told the January 1987 plenary session of the Communist Party Central Committee that, "democracy is not simply a slogan; it is the very essence of the *perestroika*."<sup>1</sup> Except perhaps for the Prague Spring of 1968 (and even here this was very much the work of forces from below), no other attempt at economic reform in the Soviet bloc has envisaged real change in the political system, characterized by the monopoly of power in the hands of the party-state bureaucracy.

The opposite is actually closer to the truth: those reforms were conceived largely with a view to averting pressures for political change.<sup>2</sup>

DAVID SEPPO

THE PRIME motive behind the *perestroika* is, of course, the need to improve economic performance. The Soviet leadership has recognized that the existing system of economic planning and management — the hyper-centralized "command system", originally established under Stalin at the end of the 1920s — is the basic cause of the economy's increasingly poor performance.

This system, despite its terrible wastefulness of human and material resources, did succeed in rapidly industrializing the backward, overwhelmingly peasant society that the revolution had inherited from Tsarism. But it has long since become an obstacle to future progress.

In the "command system", the vision, if not necessarily the actual practice, is that of a single immense enterprise in which the main lines of dependence, bargaining and circulation of information are vertical. Material resources are allocated by the centre, which also fixes obligatory production targets for the enterprises.

This is a system that encourages waste, gives priority to quantity over quality, holds back technological inno-

vation and fails to motivate adequately the labour force.<sup>3</sup>

Under the reform, whose final outlines are still far from clear, but which is to be definitively in place by the start of the thirteenth five-year plan in 1991, the accent is to be on "economic" rather than "administrative" means of management. That is, on horizontal rather than vertical coordination, with broad autonomy for the enterprises and a central role for the market mechanism.

## Decreased role for centralized planning

The goal is to end day-to-day detailed central tutelage over the economy. The idea, we are told, is not to abandon planning, but to make genuine long-term planning at last possible through the central manipulation of economic levers, such as interest rates, taxation, centrally fixed norms, subsidies, controls over foreign trade and a limited number of key prices. Accordingly, the role and scope of centrally allocated resources and of centrally fixed targets is to be greatly reduced.<sup>4</sup>

What is the relationship between this

economic reform and democratization? The January 1987 issue of the Soviet journal *EKO* (Economy and the Organization of Production), published in the academic centre of Novosibirsk, carried an article entitled "The facade and kitchen of the 'great' reform", under the rubric "Pages from History". Its author, economist G. Popov, analyzes the process, as well as the causes for the failure, of the emancipation of the serfs by Tsar Alexander II in 1861.

He begins with a quote from Lenin: "1861 gave birth to 1905", that is, the failed reform was a central cause of the revolution. In explaining the failure, Popov cites the nineteenth-century revolutionary, Nikolai Chernyshevskiy: out of economic and military necessity, "the state was forced to undertake a programme which was foreign to it, a programme based upon the principles that contradicted the very nature of that state."<sup>5</sup>

## "Need to mobilize a movement of the masses"

He concludes by citing Lenin's own conclusions: "The main lesson and the main experience to be drawn from the reform, according to Lenin, was the need to mobilize a movement of the masses. It was necessary to seek out that social force that was most interested in the most progressive variant of the transformations...to arouse it and to base the reform on its support... 'Reforms carried out by feudal landowners cannot help but be feudal in nature'."<sup>6</sup>

This article was clearly intended as food for thought about the contemporary reform process. What is noteworthy (and explains the indirect, implicit nature of the commentary) is the revolutionary character of the author's conclusions.

Strikingly similar conclusions, based upon Hungary's 20 years of experimentation with the "market reform", have recently been published by another Soviet bloc economist, Janos Kornai, who argues that the move away from

1. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987. On the January plenum and the reforms, see also "Gorbachev's dilemmas" by Ernest Mandel in *IV* 114, February 23, 1987.

2. W. Brus, "Socialism — feasible and viable?" *New Left Review* 153, September/October 1985, p.59.

3. Thus, for example, Soviet labour productivity, as a measure of overall economic efficiency, is estimated at only 40% that of the US. M.-A. Crosnier, "Le New Deal de Gorbachev", *Le Courrier des Pays de l'Est* 11, March 1985, p.34.

4. For a detailed description of the "command system" and its shortcomings, see A. Nove, *The Soviet economic system*, Allen and Unwin (London), 1983. For a more analytical approach, see J. Kornai, *The economics of shortage*, North-Holland (Amsterdam), 1980.

5. See the resolution of the June 1987 Central Committee Plenum, TASS, June 26, 1987.

6. G. Popov, "Fasad i kukhnya 'Velikoi' reformy", *EKO* 1, 1987, p.172.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.174-5.

the "command economy" to the "regulated market" has been realized only to a limited extent. In the state sector of the economy, by far the dominant one, "vertical dependence on a superior bureaucracy dominates horizontal dependence on the market."<sup>7</sup>

And while even the partial change that has taken place has resulted in greater responsiveness to demand and more attention to quality and technological progress, the main improvements in the economy's performance are the result of liberalized policy in the cooperative and private sectors. (But in this area, it is important to note the role played by a significantly extended work day: "In a large number of families, members are working to the point of physical and psychological exhaustion.")<sup>8</sup>

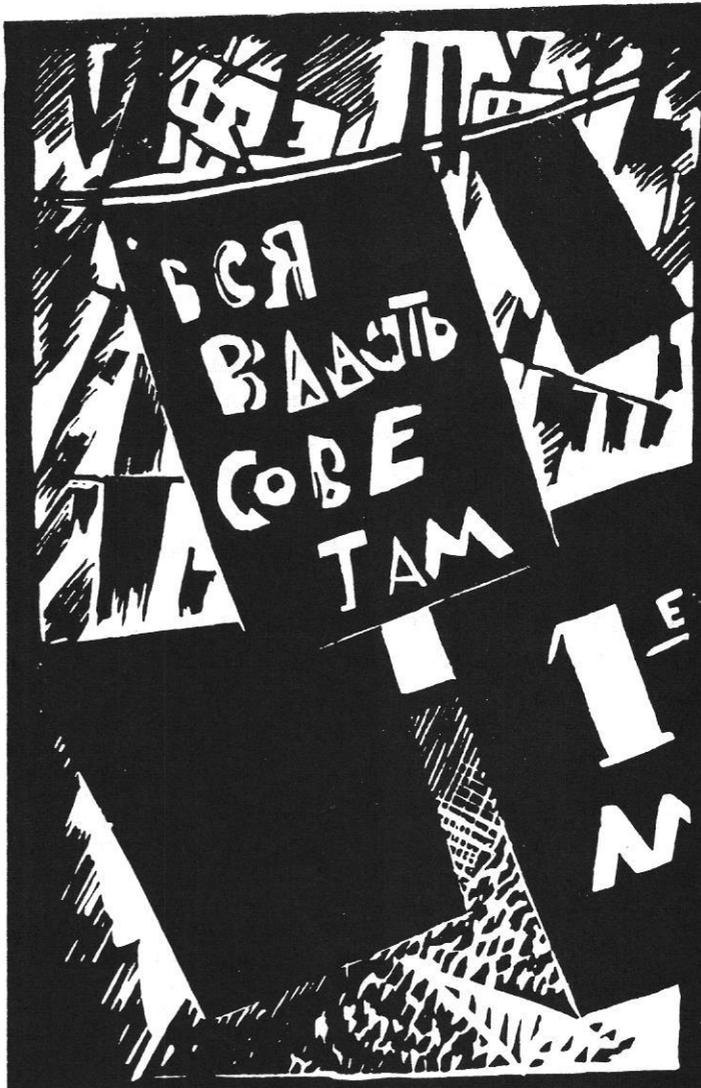
Kornai, like Popov, offers a political ("class") explanation for the failure to introduce consistent structural reform:

"Power creates an irresistible temptation to use it. A bureaucrat must be interventionist because that is his role in society; it is dictated by his situation. What is now happening in Hungary with respect to detailed micro-economic regulation is not an accident. It is rather the predictable, self-evident result of the mere existence of a huge and powerful bureaucracy. An inherent tendency toward re-centralization predominates.

"The pioneer reformers wanted to reassure all the members of the bureaucracy that there would be ample scope for their activity. Their intention is understandable. The reform is a movement from 'above', a voluntary change of behaviour on the part of the controllers and not an uprising from 'below' on the part of those who are controlled. There is, therefore, a stubborn internal contradiction in the whole reform process: how to get the active participation of the very people who will lose a part of their power if the process is successful? The reassurance worked too well in the Hungarian case: the bureaucracy was not shattered. The number of people employed in the apparatus of economic administration has changed hardly at all."<sup>9</sup>

Resistance to the reform within the different administrations has become a

major theme of the Soviet press. The reports are frank and do not hesitate to name names. For example, in December 1986, *Izvestiya* ran a series on the engineering industry, which was supposed to be in the process of major reform. In reality, little had changed:



Vladimir Kozlinsky, 1919: All power to the Soviets!

"The *perestroika* in the ministry so far has been of a half-hearted character and has not, therefore, yielded any noticeable end results whatsoever. In the style of the Ministry of Heavy Machine Construction, as before, direct methods of management predominate that go against the course adopted toward the strengthening of economic levers of management....

"These problems...are characteristic not only of heavy and transportation machine construction. Many branch industries are swamped in current work; petty tutelage over enterprises substitutes itself for the solution of strategic tasks."<sup>10</sup>

Resistance is also common at the enterprise level itself. "Some time ago," wrote *Izvestiya* on May 5, 1987, "restrictions were lifted on combining

jobs and operating with a reduced staff. The entire amount of wages thus saved is to be distributed among the members of the collective. Many other elements of wage levelling have also been abolished. But very few enterprise managers have availed themselves of the new opportunities. In fact, some have suggested to the USSR State Committee on Labour and Social Issues that it restrict such payments."

There is, of course, a certain amount of illogic and/or bad faith in these reports of bureaucratic opposition to reform. For as long as the overall structure of the economy remains basically unchanged, the net effect of these partial reforms (which Gorbachev himself qualified as "insignificant and not radical" in his speech to the June 1987 Central Committee plenum) is often merely to make life more difficult for administrators in fulfilling their assigned tasks.<sup>11</sup> These attacks reflect the contradictory nature of the reform process, which is far from clearly worked out.

At the same time, however, the harsh criticism of "bureaucratism" and "the bureaucracy" is aimed at softening up real and potential political opposition. For there are indeed basic interests, common to broad strata of the "administrative class", that are threatened by the reform. And although its members are not organized politically to defend these interests, they nevertheless

constitute the critical source of opposition to the *perestroika* and, in a crisis at the higher levels, they would have little trouble finding vigorous defenders amongst a certain part of the politburo.<sup>12</sup>

The most fundamental interest is job security: in the bureaucratic system, privilege flows not from property but from administrative office. The vast

7. J. Kornai, "The Hungarian reform process: vision, hopes and reality", *Journal of Economic Literature* Vol. 24, December 1986, p.1694.

8. *Ibid.*, p.1707.

9. *Ibid.*, pp.1727, 1729-30.

10. "Pis'ma iz ministerstva" (Letters from the Ministry), *Izvestiya*, December 20, 1986; see also December 16-18, 1986.

11. *New York Times*, June 27, 1987.

12. See D. Mandel, "Sur la nature de l'autoritarisme soviétique", *Critiques socialistes* (Ottawa), Fall 1986, pp.93-4.

personnel changes that have so far marked Gorbachev's tenure and the renewed accent on performance have already put into question what in practice had become a right under Brezhnev. (The establishment of this "right" goes far to explain the unprecedented spread of official corruption under the latter's rule).<sup>13</sup>

## Economic role of party apparatus

But the economic reform, if carried through at all consistently, would also bring severe cuts in the size of administrative staff. These would affect, first of all, the very numerous middle levels of the economic bureaucracy — the dozens of industrial branch ministries and state committees. These people would not only have to retrain, suffering in the process loss of power, prestige and income, but many — if not most — would have to leave the capital. This would perhaps be the cruellest blow of all in a country where the material and cultural abyss between the capital (and to a lesser extent Leningrad and the larger republican capitals) and the provinces is so profound.

Politically much more significant, however, is the prospective loss by the party apparatus — again, particularly its middle levels: republican, regional and city committee secretaries and their staffs — of what has been its main function for nearly 60 years as territorial economic coordinator, supervisor, pusher and fixer.<sup>14</sup>

This economic role is an absolutely critical one in the highly centralized "command economy", with its chronic imbalances and shortages, and it has

no doubt played a central role in the party apparatus' continued predominance within the state over the decades.

During the past months, the party apparatus has been repeatedly told that it must give up its economic managerial, "dispatcher", role. "The party organ must act as an organ of political leadership...and not as an organ of economic management," admonished Gorbachev in a meeting with Estonian apparatchiki.<sup>15</sup> At the January plenum he was even more explicit:

"It is a matter of improving the methods of party leadership so as to exclude any supplanting of, or petty tutelage over, the economic organs.... But some party leaders have trouble with the *perestroika* — they are unable to give up the dispatcher functions that do not belong to the party, the desire to decide all questions for everyone, to hold everything, so to speak, in one's fist."<sup>16</sup>

Another interest at stake is the nomenclatural mechanism of cadre selection. Under the reform, party apparatchiki and higher economic administrators stand to lose at least a good part of their power to appoint managers. This is a necessary measure if managers are to be more interested in efficiency than in pleasing superiors. (At the same time, it is not at all clear that even most enterprise managers would welcome this, as they are used to the old system, which despite its pressures, may often seem more secure to them.)<sup>17</sup>

## Proposal for election of party officials

The power of appointment has been a crucial instrument for the construction of power bases and the accompanying accumulation of privilege and it will not be conceded easily. The resolution adopted by the January plenum, convened specifically to discuss and reform cadre policy, did not take up, except in the most general way, Gorbachev's proposals for the election of party officials, which included a secret ballot and multiple candidates.<sup>18</sup> For the time being at least, this can be taken as tantamount to their rejection. (Similar proposals played a central role in Khrushchev's downfall.)<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev did not hide the fact that the preparation of the plenum, postponed three times, had been very difficult.<sup>20</sup>

The (at least partial) replacement of appointment from above with election from below, along with the accompanying freedom to publicly criticize officials without fear of retribution, mean an end to the unfettered exercise of power. And this, in turn, inevitably entails an attack on bureaucratic privi-



lege. This is so because these privileges in Soviet-type systems are never legitimate (Soviet Marxism, the official ideology, despite its bastardization, still retains its basically democratic and egalitarian character), but take the form of an abuse of power. This theme, too, has become prominent in the press.

In February, *Moskovskaya pravda* published a probing report on the capital's special foreign language schools. These, it was stated, cater almost exclusively to the bureaucratic elite.<sup>21</sup> This exposé of "these breeding grounds of the gentry", as one reader put it, could not help but raise the more general issue of bureaucratic privilege. Among the dozens of letters the paper received, a common theme stood out:

"A system has taken shape of by no means inoffensive health, recreational, trade and service institutions that are...the domain of the chosen few — a system that is very convenient for the

13. See Z. Medvedev, *Andropov au pouvoir*, Flammarion (Paris), especially chapters 9 and 14.

14. For an analysis of this role see J. Hough, *The Soviet prefects*, Harvard University Press (Cambridge), 1969; and A. Yanov, *Détente after Brezhnev*, IIS-University of California (Berkeley), 1977, ch.2.

15. *Pravda*, February 23, 1987.

16. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987.

17. 120 directors and chief specialists of major enterprises were asked to propose changes to the system of reporting. All were very critical of the existing system, but when it came down to proposing a replacement, they restored virtually all the current reporting procedures. "Real'nost' nedezhd" (The reality of hopes), *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.

18. *Pravda*, January 29, 1987.

19. See Z. Medvedev and A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev: the years in power*, Oxford University Press (London), 1977, ch.13.

20. *Izvestiya*, February 26, 1987.

21. *Moskovskaya pravda*, February 18, 1987.

22. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1987.



high-ranking officials themselves, and especially for their entourage."<sup>22</sup>

Although this is clearly not at present the intention of the leadership, what is potentially at issue — and this is surely keenly felt by a good part of the bureaucracy — is the latter's very existence as a "class". This is certainly the aim of the most radical partisans of the *perestroika*. In an interview that merits quotation at length for its implicit "Trotskyism", A. Butenko, professor of economics at Moscow University, told *Moskovskaya pravda*:

"In the course of our past development, a retarding mechanism was formed. Its roots lie in serious defects of our institutions of socialist democracy and are directly linked to phenomena of the 1930s and 1940s that occurred in the conditions of Stalin's personality cult.

"Restructuring so far has proceeded slowly because the very same forces that blocked the implementation of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU [i.e. de-Stalinization]...do not want changes and are now too impeding them....What is involved here is something that Marx, Engels and Lenin warned about but that was dropped in subsequent oversimplified interpretations of the construction of socialism.

### A terrible scare for the bureaucracy

"For the working class that has come to power, bureaucratism constitutes an enormous danger....Like Marx and Engels, Lenin also believed that as long as the division between the functions of management and execution existed, and there were managers and managed, there would be a danger of bureaucratism.

"But these Leninist ideas were condemned to oblivion by Stalin....Power was concentrated entirely in the hands of the administrative-bureaucratic apparatus he had created....The trials and repression of the 1930s were the completion of the formation of the Stalinist regime, which destroyed those who defended the system of management...based upon Leninist ideas and traditions. The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU gave the bureaucracy a terrible scare, but afterwards active forces closed ranks and succeeded in stopping the process of purging our society of bureaucratism."<sup>23</sup>

At a round-table discussion on the economic reform, writer G. Lisishkin was even blunter:



"What does our society need most of all today? I think we have to change the division of labour that has crystallized, where one part of the population is narrowly specialized in the production of national wealth and the other — in disposing of it. What is this 'other part'? The exceedingly large administrative apparatus at all levels of management and in all spheres, including not only the economy but in ideology, culture, science, leisure, health, etc....All this hangs around the neck of those who produce the wealth. For clarity's sake, in speaking of the unproductive sphere, I have in mind, of course, not the teacher, but those who hinder the teacher in teaching; not the doctor, but the superfluous bureaucrat of the Ministry of Health; not the artist or actor, but the numerous ones "above them".<sup>24</sup>

### Working class is only alternative force for change

"The question poses itself in the following manner," Gorbachev told the Trade Union Congress in February 1987, "either democratization or social inertia and conservatism. There is no third way."<sup>25</sup>

In thus intimately tying economic reform to democratization, Gorbachev indeed appears to have concluded that if his regime continues to lean upon the bureaucracy as its principal basis of power, the reform is doomed. But the only alternative basis that is at once interested in, and capable of, opposing the conservatism of the apparatus is

the working class.

This transformation of the social basis of the state is the only genuine meaning of democratization. If it were to occur, it would amount to a revolution.

The terms "revolution" and "revolutionary changes" have indeed been used by Gorbachev and other official spokespersons to characterize the *perestroika*. A theoretical article in *Pravda* on March 13, 1987 entitled "The revolutionary essence of the renewal" analyzed the "retarding mechanism that has come to exist" in Soviet society, and particularly since the October 1964 Central Committee plenum (that consecrated Khrushchev's fall and the appointment of Brezhnev, who used the forum to announce the policy of "respect for cadres").

Its author, G. Smirnov, seeks to lay bare the "substance of the contradictions that have come to a head and of the antitheses that are in contention...[in order to] grasp the revolutionary essence

of what is transpiring." It turns out that the causes of the braking were "subjective", that is, political: the conservative and anti-democratic policies of the post-1964 leadership, policies based "on weakness of will and incompetence, and in part on individual and group egoism. Departmental and localist tendencies, supported by bureaucratic and technocratic elements who were guided by their immediate interests, did great harm. Existing practices and existing forms and methods were to their liking."

### Squaring the circle

So far so good. But then Smirnov attempts to square the circle: "Today's society does not have antagonistic classes whose elimination, and the destruction of whose ideology, would constitute an essential element of revolution....The subtlety of this problem lies in the fact that we are not talking about a social and political revolution, in which the foundations of the old system's economic relations are destroyed and a fundamentally new political regime is established, expressing the interests of the victorious class....

"We are not talking about dismantling state power, but about further strengthening the socialist state of all the people...developing popular social-

23. "Rozgovory o perestroike" (Conversations about restructuring), *Moskovskaya pravda*, May 7, 1987.

24. "Ekonomika na perepyt'e" (The economy at a crossroads), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 3, 1987, p. 10.

25. *Izvestiya*, February 26, 1987.

ist self-government."

Admittedly, the Soviet system is a highly contradictory one, and the bureaucracy, as Trotsky and other Marxists have argued, is not a class in the historical sense of the term. But if one were to accept Smirnov's conclusions, why speak of revolution rather than reform?

Smirnov, publishing the authoritative central journal of the party, was expressing the current official position. For the same ambiguity is often characteristic of Gorbachev's own pronouncements on this theme. After going on for hours at the January plenum about the absolute necessity of democracy, he reassured the assembly (a gathering of the leading figures of the bureaucracy) that "it is not a question, of course, of any break whatsoever in our political system."<sup>26</sup>

### Democratic reform is so far ambiguous and limited

One can ask: was he speaking of the political system as it is officially portrayed or of the system as it really functions? For surely one cannot breathe life into the former without destroying the latter.

Considering his past and the circumstances of his rise to power, it would require something of a leap of faith to accept Gorbachev as a revolutionary. Further we shall see that the democratization over which he is presiding, so far at least, is ambiguous and limited, aimed at weakening bureaucratic resistance by mobilizing controlled, popular pressure for reform and at reducing the dependence of managers on their bureaucratic superiors by allowing a certain amount of control from below.

But not only will such a partial democratization leave largely intact, if weakened, the power of the bureaucracy, it is also unlikely to create the necessary political commitment in the working class toward the economic reform.

This is the other side of the link between economic reform and democratization, and we therefore must now turn to this class, which constitutes today over 60 per cent of the Soviet population.<sup>27</sup> ★

26. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987.

27. By "working class", I mean those women and men engaged in predominantly physical labour in manufacturing, transport and construction. It is obvious that broad elements of the intelligentsia (those occupying posts — or aspiring to them — that require a post-secondary education) and employees in the service sector share many basic interests with these workers.

It is also clear that the various strata that go to make up the "working class", as defined here, are not all cut of the same cloth. Nevertheless, shared basic objective conditions, as well as the common historical experience of Soviet-type systems (most recently Poland in 1980-81), tend to support the validity of this definition.

# What's in it for the workers?

**IN THE "totalitarian" vision of Soviet society — a vision that is perhaps undergoing change but is still predominant in the West — the workers are atomized and totally dominated by the absolute state.**

**Their social situation is seen as not very different from that of workers in the capitalist countries, except that they lack the political and union rights of Western workers that would allow them to defend themselves against exploitation. The reality, however, is much more complex.**

DAVID SEPPO

**P**OLITICAL AND UNION rights are indeed lacking in the Soviet Union (though one should be wary of exaggerating their practical significance for workers in the capitalist states). But Soviet workers are far from atomized, at least on the workshop level, where they possess certain rights and means that allow them to defend their most immediate material interests.<sup>1</sup> This is possible mainly thanks to certain key traits of the "command economy".

There is, first of all, full employment — or rather, the scarcity of labour (despite local pockets of surplus).<sup>2</sup> Article 40 of the 1977 constitution affirms the right of citizens to work.<sup>3</sup> However, the real force of this provision is difficult to assess directly because the "command economy" tends to maintain a chronic labour shortage. The sum of enterprise labour-force plans has regularly exceeded the aggregate labour-force plan for the entire economy (both before and after corrections).

For the Soviet manager, this extra la-

bour is without cost. Rather, the opposite is true. It offers many advantages: management's incentive funds grow in proportion to the size of the wage fund, and the extra workers make it easier to meet plan targets in face of the irregular working of the material supply system, the resulting arrhythmic pace of work, and the periodic commandeering of the enterprise's workers by outside authorities to help out elsewhere in the economy (in agriculture, construction, vegetable and fruit depots and so on — the so-called "sponsor's jobs" (*shefskie raboty*)).<sup>4</sup>

For related reasons, workers (but not office and technical personnel) enjoy de facto job security. Although from a strictly legal point of view they can be laid off for reasons of redundancy, in practice this almost never happens.<sup>5</sup> (This has not been the case for political offences, but local conflicts between workers and management are not generally viewed as political by the regime.) Over the years, workers have thus come to see job security as a right.<sup>6</sup>

### Workers vote with their feet

This situation creates a balance of power within the enterprise favourable to the workers: management needs them, while they can easily find another job, perhaps with conditions more to their liking. Thus, despite the absence of trade unions that would defend them, the workers can vote with their feet (change jobs), and they do so at a very high rate. Moreover, the informal use of strikes and other collective means of pressure on the workshop

1. Much of what follows is based upon personal conversations and observations during trips to the Soviet Union. For an insightful analysis of the workers' situation inside the East European factory, see C. Sabel and D. Stark, "Planning, politics and shop-floor power: hidden forms of bargaining in Soviet-imposed state-socialist societies", *Politics and Society*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1984, pp.339-475. See also D. Mandel, "La crise du 'socialisme réellement existant'", *Etudes internationales* (Quebec), Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1982, pp.293-5.

2. For discussions of rural unemployment in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, see *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, April 25-29, 1987; and *Sel'skaya Zhizn'*, April 24, 1987.

3. Constitution of the USSR, Moscow, 1977.

4. For an interesting discussion of these issues, see P. Hanson, "The serendipitous Soviet achievement of full employment: labour shortage and labour hoarding in the Soviet economy", in D. Lane (ed.), *Labour and employment in the USSR*, NYU Press (New York), 1986, pp.83-111; and also V.M. Rutgaizen and Yu.E. Shevnyakov, "Raspredelenie po trudu" (Distribution according to labour), *EKO* 3, 1987, pp.14-17.

5. See N. Lampert, "Job security and the law in the USSR", in D. Lane, *ibid*.

6. A. Nove, *The Soviet economic system*, Allen and Unwin (London), 1983, p.296. In Hungary, it is only last year that the authorities began to close down some inefficient plants. Even though the displaced workers were offered jobs elsewhere and the political authorities met with them to explain the situation, the workers' dissatisfaction was great. (*New York Times*, December 2, 1986.)

level is quite frequent, especially in heavy industry.

A second characteristic of the "command system" is the basis of common interest — or, more precisely, collusion — that it creates between workers and enterprise management in the face of pressures from the central authorities.

The Soviet enterprise is very different from the capitalist one, where management seeks to maximize profit by intensifying the exploitation of the labour force — keeping wages low and speeding up work. This is a management interest that workers under capitalism are able to verify every day of their working lives. Soviet workers, on the other hand, tend to have a much more ambivalent attitude toward management.

### Divisions between white- and blue-collar workers

While they do see management (and, to a lesser extent, technical personnel) as a group apart, this division is only partly based upon perceived conflicts of interest: discrimination in favour of managerial and technical personnel in the allocation of social benefits (subsidized vacations, apartments), and occasional arbitrary treatment of workers (for example, by the assignment to "less profitable" jobs, forced overtime and so on).

But for the Soviet worker, at least as important a difference lies in the nature of their work, which is dirty, physically demanding and performed standing, while the "white shirts", as they are called, sit at their desks in clean offices, sipping their ever-present tea. Workers often express the view that "those people do not work".

So, while in their minds "we" are the workers and "they" the management, because of the collusion that regularly occurs the workers' particular attitude to management seems to depend more on personal, subjective factors than on objective differences of social position. The question is more whether the director is a "good person": does he try to be fair with the workers and treat them as people?

Unlike workers under capitalism, Soviet workers often say that management does not push them terribly hard — it is readily admitted that one could, in fact, work much harder — and that it tries to get them the best wage in the circumstances (these are largely determined by the centre).

The collusion between workers and management in the "command economy" can take various forms. But its most striking manifestation is the *pripiska* — the "writing in" of fictitious work and of fictitious output. This

serves the interests of both parties: the worker, who earns more than merited by his or her actual work; and the director, who fulfills and overfulfills the enterprise's plan targets. It is "only" the economy as a whole that loses. But then, in the bureaucratic system that is solely the concern of the central authorities. Under Brezhnev, the *pripiska* could account for up to 40 per cent of a worker's wage.<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of terror, abolished after Stalin's death, the result of these two traits of the "command economy" — labour shortage and worker-management collusion — is a constant upward pressure on wages, whose growth has borne little relationship to productivity rises, despite the insistence of the central authorities that wages follow increases in productivity.

The situation is similar in relation to wage differentials, which are relatively small within the same industry. This is also in the face of constant denunciations on the part of central authorities of *uravnilovka* (levelling).

A third characteristic of the "command system" is the importance of the social wage — goods and services that are provided with little or no relationship to the labour furnished: heavily subsidized basic food items, rents, utilities, public transport, medical care, education and so on. According to a recent Soviet estimate, for each rouble earned as wages in 1965, 46 kopeks were distributed in the form of free or subsidized goods and services from public consumption funds. In 1970, the figure was 51 kopeks, rising to 56ks in 1975, 58ks in 1980 and 69ks in 1984.<sup>8</sup>

Even if the quality and quantity of these goods and services are often mediocre and their provision racked with corruption, they have nevertheless provided a margin of security for workers, the significance of which should not be underestimated.

In sum, under this system the manager has neither the interest nor the means that the capitalist manager possesses to ensure the "efficient" or "economic" utilization of labour. In other words, to constantly intensify the exploitation of labour. The workers, on the other hand, possess informal means that allow them to defend their most immediate interests.

In explaining the urgent need for structural economic reform that would introduce indirect, economic means of planning and management and give broad autonomy to the enterprises, Gorbachev told the January plenum:

"The restriction of the economic rights of the enterprises and trusts has had serious consequences. It has undermined the material basis of incentives, prevented the attainment of superior results, led to the decline of the econom-

ic and social activity of the population, to the decline of labour discipline....

"There have been serious infractions of the socialist principle of distribution according to work.... A mentality of dependence has developed. In people's consciousness, the psychology of levelling has taken root. The break in the link between the measure of labour and the measure of consumption not only distorts the attitude toward labour but leads also to the distortion of the principle of social justice — and that is already a question of great political importance."<sup>9</sup>

The economic reform, if introduced in a more or less consistent manner, would thus transform the workers' situation. The enterprise directors, subject to the pressure of market forces, would be motivated to produce more efficiently. A principal means to this end would be to economize on labour costs. Enterprise rights in setting wages would be significantly broadened. Wages would be tied much more closely to concrete results and to the performance of the enterprise, and wage differentials would widen accordingly.<sup>10</sup> Price subsidies and other aspects of the social wage would be drastically reduced relative to wage income. The chronic shortage of labour would end.

### "Social justice" and wage differentials

There is also talk of the appearance of unemployment, though for the foreseeable future this would probably be only of an episodic and local nature. More significant would be the loss of job security. Many workers would be forced to retrain and to move. A law soon to be adopted provides for three-months average national wage for workers forced to seek new employment.<sup>11</sup> Until now there has been no provision for the able-bodied unemployed.

In the press and scientific literature, these measures are often discussed under

7. From personal conversations. Rutgaizen and Shevnyakov cite expert estimates of *pripiska* amounting to 15%-20% of reported work in individual transport and construction enterprises. See their article "Raspredelelie..." p.20. However, they do not identify the period studied. In conversations, workers stated that pressures against *pripiska* increased significantly after Brezhnev's death.

8. Ibid, p.5.

9. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987.

10. See, for example, U. Shcherbakov (Director of the Wages Department of the USSR State Commission on Labour), "Kardinal'naya perestroika oplaty truda" (Fundamental reform of payment for labour), *EKO* 1, 1987, pp.37-52.

11. M.-A. Crosnier, "Le New Deal de Gorbachev", *Le Courrier des Pays de l'Est*, March 1985, p.16. Layoffs have already begun to be reported in the press. See "Ekonomika na perepiet'e", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 3, 1987, p.10. TASS reported a first bankruptcy, a Leningrad construction firm, on March 26, 1987.

the rubric of "social justice". Thus, for example, the general changes listed above were advocated in an article by the eminent sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya entitled, "The human factor and social justice", published in the November 1986 issue of *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal of the CPSU. In these discussions, "social justice" tends to be given a particular meaning: if worker A produces better results than worker B, worker A's real income should be higher. This, so it is argued, is generally not the case at present.

In the Soviet setting it is not hard to understand the reasons behind the emphasis on strengthening the link between work and reward and on eliminating wage levelling. But it is nevertheless striking that other concerns usually implied in the term "social justice" are given little more than lip service: the motivation of work through the strengthening of social solidarity based upon real participation in decision-making and the provision of a decent minimum for all, regardless of accidental circumstances (such as physical infirmity, family responsibilities, market conditions and so on) in which the worker may find her or himself.

Thus, economists Rutgaizen and Shevnyakov begin their article "Distribution according to labour": "Until recently the improvement of distributive policy was approached mainly from the viewpoint of solving urgent tasks of public welfare. Now we need to considerably strengthen its role in the intensification of production."<sup>12</sup>

The entire article is devoted exclusively to developing the second sentence. The fact is that almost no serious attention is being paid in the press or scientific literature or in practice to the development of the social measures necessary to soften the economic and social blows that would inevitably be the immediate experience of a very large part of the population.

## Workers deprived of political rights

The point is not so much whether the envisaged reform is "anti-worker" or not (though one can certainly ask if there are not other variants of reform that would better correspond to the workers' aspirations).<sup>13</sup> For the "command economy" is certainly not pro-worker, despite those — in both East and West — who do not hesitate to describe the Soviet workers under the existing system as privileged.

As we have seen, these "privileges" are in reality a defensive adaptation to a system that has deprived workers of their political rights. They are, in a certain sense, substitutes for political power, especially the right of control

over the management of the nationalized economy, as well as for trade-union rights.

Viewed from this angle, the workers' mistrust of a reform that, at least in the short run, would reduce them to the situation of workers under capitalism, but without giving any real guarantee that they will ultimately benefit from it, is understandable. And until now, their experience in the factories under Gorbachev has been on the whole negative: tightening of discipline, intensification of labour, reduction of income and upwardly creeping prices — without significant improvement in the area of consumption.

In an interview in *Izvestiya*, the Director of the Institute of Sociological Research of the USSR Academy of Sci-



ences, V. Ivanov, generalizing the results of surveys conducted in 120 enterprises throughout the country, stated that in contrast to the sweeping changes in the sphere of intellectual creation, little that is good has changed for workers in the sphere of material production. "Right now, the majority experience the restructuring only as growing pressure at work.... The consumer market remains unchanged, and, moreover, last year the [rate of] increase in production of consumer goods was lower than the rate for 1985."<sup>14</sup>

A woman worker in a ferro-concrete goods factory in the town of Kurgan described her conditions in the following terms. At work — a non-existent ventilation system, preferential treatment for administrators in the distribution of benefits, a trade-union committee that lies and has at heart interests other than those of the workers. Outside work — an apartment building whose roof leaks, whose elevator does

not work, that is cold in winter, and public transport so overcrowded that it takes an hour and a half to make the four kilometer trip to work, and even so, one has to fight to squeeze in.

## "Restructuring of everyday life might be forgotten"

"Excuse me", she concluded, "for writing what I think. I am not able to express all at once everything that is in my heart. We have been storing up insults for too long, while remaining silent. Now life has taken a new turn. We see changes for the better. We want to believe that there will be more. Election of administrators, state product acceptance — all this is correct and necessary. But I am afraid that behind the restructuring of production, the restructuring of everyday life might be forgotten.

"To be honest, for me the main thing is my home and my family, my children. I work for their sake. Believe me, the majority of women think the same. And if all around they are saying: 'We are restructuring', and in the homes it remains cold as before, and if you cannot squeeze into the public transport, and cannot buy anything in the stores, then for us it turns out that there are no changes.

"That is what we think about. In a word, we want not only to work, but also to live differently than we have until now."<sup>15</sup>

Gorbachev is aware of this problem. The political aspect of the *perestroika* is aimed, in part, precisely at creating in the workers the political commitment necessary for the success of the reform. For example, Gorbachev explained that the election of enterprise directors by the workers is a necessary measure since "the well-being of the worker will depend upon the abilities of the managers. The workers should, therefore, have real means of influencing the choice of director and controlling his activity."<sup>16</sup>

And more generally: "We need the maximum democratization of the socialist system so that the individual feels himself master and creator.... Only a person who feels himself master in his house can put it in order."<sup>17</sup>

12. Rutgaizen and Shevnyakov, *ibid*, p.3.

13. This very crucial issue, which has received relatively little attention East or West, is beyond the scope of this article. For an interesting — and very rare — defence of democratic but still basically direct central planning, see E. Mandel, "In defence of socialist planning", *New Left Review* 159, September/October 1986, pp.5-37.

14. "Real'nost' nadezhd", *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987. The press has also noted a continued decline in the quality of food products (Who spoiled our appetites?), *Izvestiya*, March 28, 1986.

15. "My khotim zhit' inache (We want to live differently)", *Izvestiya*, April 14, 1987.

16. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987.

Other important political reforms include the strengthening of legal guarantees against abuse of power by officials<sup>18</sup>, and the introduction of a real secret ballot (as opposed to the current practice, which renders it purely symbolic) and a choice among candidates nominated from below in Soviet elections.<sup>19</sup> There has been talk of empowering the Soviets vis-a-vis their executive committees, whom the former will genuinely elect and control.<sup>20</sup>

There has also been a certain amount of encouragement to independent individual and collective initiatives in economic and social life, including the appearance in some of the larger cities of clubs of various sorts that have definitely political aspects, all, of course, formally in favour of the *perestroika*, but some — in particular the *Pamyat'* (Memory) movement — actually of a Great-Russian chauvinist, proto-fascist character.

There is currently discussion of the creation of a national organization of these clubs, which have taken up such varied issues as police brutality, protection of the environment, the economic reform, assistance to the elderly, the nomination of candidates in Soviet elections, labour rights and disarmament.

The regime has also shown a new toleration for popular struggles and even given them some encouragement. Most of these, so far, have involved issues of protection of the environment and historical sites. These seem to have involved mainly intellectuals and student youth.

One of these movements succeeded in stopping a project to divert northern-flowing Siberian rivers into the Caspian Sea. Another, which was marked by spontaneous mass demonstrations, failed to prevent the destruction by Leningrad authorities of the Hotel Angleterre (where the poet Esenin committed suicide in the 1920s). Both were written up in the central press as struggles against bureaucratic narrowness and authoritarianism.<sup>21</sup>

The most significant political protest so far has been that of the Crimean Tatars, deported by Stalin after the war, whose struggle for the right to return at last seems to be approaching a critical point.<sup>22</sup>

Most spectacular, however, has been the unfettering of journalism and scientific and artistic work. This is the one area of Soviet life where changes have been radical and immediately visible to the ordinary citizen. Almost no aspect of Soviet society and history have remained untouched, including, for example, bureaucratic privilege, abuse of power, Great-Russian chauvinism, ethnic discrimination, drug abuse, prostitution, Afghanistan, corruption in the military, deterioration of the health

system and falsification of medical data, Stalin, Trotsky and the Purges. (One crucial problem that has so far received relatively little attention is the situation of women.) While the significance of these political changes should not be under-rated, especially in the Soviet context, socialist democracy still remains very much a promise, and measures to implement it are often vague and ambiguous.

### Electoral changes are "timid"

For example, a collective letter from a group of citizens of Smolensk offered the following blunt evaluation of the experiments and proposed changes in elections to local Soviets: these "changes are so timid, that they cannot hope to solve the problem of development of democracy and smashing the retarding mechanism".<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the draft Law of the State Enterprise is very obscure on the actual powers of decision of the worker collective and their elected councils. Even the clearly stated right to elect managers is subject to "confirmation by the superior body".<sup>24</sup> So far, the experience with such elections has more often than not been the "parachuting" of candidates from above.<sup>25</sup> (Of course, even under the existing laws, the workers have broad powers in the enterprise, but in practice very few workers know about them, much less have seen them exercised.)

Nor did the Congress of Trade Unions in February 1987, despite the more frank and critical tenor of the speeches, create the impression that the trade unions were about to transform themselves into organizations for the defence of the workers' interests against management. The Komsomol (Young Communist League) Congress, held ear-

lier this year, showed itself no more eager than the January Central Committee plenum to enter the path of internal democratization.

More importantly, the political aspects of the *perestroika*, already introduced in the capital and about which one reads in the central press, are experienced very unevenly throughout the rest of the country. Outside of Moscow, implementation of political reform measures depends very much upon the interests and interpretations of the local authorities. In many areas, the character of the mass media has only minimally changed, and the local press has been known to reprint articles from the central papers in altered form. As a result, for a large part of the population, even the political side of the *perestroika* is still often just so many words.

It remains to be seen, therefore, if the democratization that Gorbachev is willing or capable of introducing will go far enough to win over a working class whose scepticism is based upon long decades of bureaucratic despotism. According to Ivanov of the Institute of Sociological Research, the "inertia and passivity" of workers is one of the major factors holding back restructuring.

In a survey of workers at the Moscow Sanitary Equipment factory, a third of the respondents stated that they "would wait it out until the restructuring became more clearly defined before deciding whether to adhere to it or not". Given the tremendous media and other official pressure in favour of the *perestroika*, it is safe to assume that these workers who expressed reservations were only the bravest of a larger group who feel the same way. In another survey of Kazakhstan enterprises, 40 per cent of the respondents favoured maintaining the old wage system.<sup>26</sup>

For the near future, at least, the mass of workers will, on the whole, likely remain suspicious of — and even opposed to — the economic reform, even if this opposition is of a veiled and passive nature. ★



17. Ibid.

18. See, for example, "Proshu zashchity u suda" (I ask the court for protection), *Izvestiya*, April 9, 1987; and "Sila zakona" (The force of the law), *Moskovskaya pravda*, May 17, 1987.

19. "Kak nam vybirat'?" (How are we to choose?), *Izvestiya*, January 30, 1987. "Vyborny po mnogomandatnym okrugam" (Elections in districts with several representatives), *Pravda*, March 29, 1987.

20. "Demokratiya i perestroika" (Democracy and the *perestroika*), *Pravda*, October 31, 1986.

21. See "Komy urok?" (A lesson for whom?), *Izvestiya*, March 27, 1987; "Urok ne vprok" (The lesson is in vain), *ibid.*, April 9 and 25, 1987; and S. Zalygin, "Povorot — uroki odnoi diskussii" (The turning — lessons of a certain discussion), *Novyi mir* 1, 1987, pp.118.

22. *Vesti i SSSR*, Munich, No. 14, 1987, pp.3-6.

23. "Vybirat' no kak?" (To elect, but how?), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 10, 1987, p.1.

24. *Pravda*, April 4, 1987.

25. *Izvestiya*, February 8, 1987.

26. "Real'nost' nadezhd", *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.

# Political crisis at the top

**GORBACHEV's reform lacks a solid social base either in the bureaucracy or among the workers. The only social stratum in which there is a significant enthusiasm for it is the intelligentsia. It has benefited in its professional activity the most from the liberalization so far. Moreover, its relative material situation, which had declined since Stalin's death relative to that of the workers, is improving, albeit too slowly for many.<sup>1</sup>**

DAVID SEPPO

**B**UT IT WOULD be an error to overestimate the independent political weight of this group. The intelligentsia alone is certainly no match for the bureaucracy. Moreover, a significant element of the intelligentsia has lived quite comfortably under the old system. Many others, despite their critical attitudes, fear too abrupt a change, which might, God forbid, draw the masses onto the political stage.

The historian, Stanislav Tyutyukin, told *Izvestiya* that: "in historical science — and, most likely in science generally — the "fence-sitters" still predominate over the active champions of restructuring, although, of course, verbally everyone is for it...."

"Some people have done a rather good job of adapting to the old conditions and they are frightened by the openness (the emperor might turn out to be naked), by the prospect of more intensive, demanding work....Others, and there are very, very many of them, are waiting for authoritative explanations and directives, as they are not used to independent thought and action. A third group feels that, for the time being, it is better "not to stick one's

neck out' — they could turn out to be fools.

"There are also those dissatisfied with the, as of yet, comparatively modest material incentives for the new conditions of work, and who are offended (and, in certain cases, rightly so) by the outcome of the recertification conducted last year of scientific personnel."

Tyutyukin added that in history the restructuring has involved a great deal of demagoguery and some settling of personal accounts, and the effects have not always been beneficial.<sup>2</sup> Conversations with artists indicate that the situation is not very different in the area of artistic creation.

## Opposition to *perestroika* is very strong

The medium-term perspective for the Soviet Union is, in all probability, one of political crisis, what Lenin called a "crisis of the top", that is, within the bureaucratic regime itself. For the opposition here to the *perestroika* is very strong, even if at present the reformers have the upper hand and all bureaucrats declare themselves for the renewal, while in practice many are merely biding their time and passively sabotaging.

The crisis will ripen at the moment it becomes possible to paint the *perestroika* as a failure. And that moment will come, and this only partly because the economic reform, judging by past Soviet and East European experience, will lack coherence.

Although it is too early to judge, as it now appears the old "command system" will be weakened, but not dismantled, and the new one foisted onto it. Thus, for example, in closing the public discussion in the press of the draft "Law of the State Enterprise", *Pravda* acknowledged that it "only timidly opens the horizons on tomorrow; it obscurely shows the path for the creation of genuinely efficient methods of management. Many of our readers justly noted that different authors of the draft had at times contradictory views: some rush boldly ahead, while others try to hang onto the old and familiar, even though outdated."<sup>3</sup>

The Hungarian experience is relevant here. The current head of the Hungarian State Planning Commission spoke to a Soviet journalist of the nature of the crisis in his country a few years after the reform was first introduced:

"First of all the Czechoslovak events and the ideological campaign that followed caused some to fear accusations of wanting to take Hungary along the path proposed by Ota Sik....Then the jump in world prices caused us great harm. The reform's opponents exploit-



ed the unfavourable situation and lifted up their heads....It is a human question — when people lose power...[especially] those in the branch ministries and the party organs...."

## "Years of stagnation" in Hungary

"The supporters of the reform also made mistakes....They considered that the old organs would begin working in a new way on their own. Those opposed to the reform, or unable to understand it, were left at their posts. So when demagogic attacks began that minimized the reform's successes and blew up the negative processes, the demagogues were not given a strong rebuff....Neither side could win and a sort of equilibrium that resulted in years of stagnation set in."<sup>4</sup>

It is worth remembering, in comparing Hungary and the Soviet Union, that the Soviet bureaucracy is at the centre of the empire and has no one to fall back on. In addition, unlike the Hungarian bureaucracy, which suffered a crushing blow in the 1956 revolution, its Soviet counterpart has known no similar defeats (at least since the purges) and is so much older. Its potential opposition to reform is thus so much greater.

1. Interview with Zaslavskaya, *Argumenty i fakty*, March 2-7, 1987, pp.1-2.

2. "Uvazhenie k sobstvennoi istorii" (Respect for our own history), *Izvestiya*, May 3, 1987.

3. *Izvestiya*, February 8, 1987.

4. L.G. Pavel-Volin, "Chem privilekatelen i ot chego predosteregaet vergerskii opyt" (What is attractive in the Hungarian experience and what does it forewarn us about?), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 19, 1987.

More immediately, however, it is practically impossible to carry out profound structural reform and at the same time attain high production targets. But this is what Gorbachev has promised.<sup>5</sup> His failure to deliver will be crucial ammunition for the opponents of the reform.

The outcome of this crisis, and of the entire reform period, will depend in the last analysis on the working class. If Gorbachev is going to introduce significant, irreversible change in his country, he will have to conclude a genuine, sincere alliance with the workers. That means the establishment of popular control over the economy, thoroughgoing democratization. Only if he does that can he hope to acquire a sufficiently powerful and loyal political base to oppose the forces of stagnation and reaction.

This was the experience of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The working class, initially suspicious and passive, became the most active and loyal defender of the renewal, once the reform was revised to give them real power.<sup>6</sup> The working class actually turned out to be more loyal to the renewal than the regime itself, which quickly caved in to the Soviets after the invasion.

On the other hand, if Gorbachev refuses this alliance, the likelihood is that he will be forced to abandon his reforms or he will be dismissed.

### Waste and anarchy in the factories

But even if that happens, one can still expect a worker mobilization against the retrograde bureaucratic regime that, as always, will try to make the workers bear the costs of its criminal mismanagement. Even if Soviet workers do sometimes speak of the Brezhnev era as their "golden age" (because it was easy to find common language with management), they have never been able to accustom themselves to the waste, the anarchy and glaring irrationality that confronts them each day in the factories and that demoralizes and sickens them. This situation, moreover, will have become all the more intolerable, as it is presently the object of systematic public denunciation by the regime itself, which has promised "revolutionary reforms" to turn matters around.

But is there really a basis to expect a mobilization of a working class whose passivity, especially when compared to the workers of Eastern Europe, dates back to the end of the Civil War? There are a number of factors that should be considered.

One of these is the sociological stabilization of the Soviet working class during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Young

workers today were born in the city, not the village, and are themselves children of workers. They have deep roots in the urban working class culture and social milieu. They are better educated than their elders and have known neither the terror, the war, nor the severe material deprivation that were the lot of preceding generations.

Gorbachev's reform, moreover, aims at eliminating the basis for collusion between workers and management that has had such a corrupting influence on working class consciousness. (In this connection, one should also mention the relative success of the campaign against the consumption of alcohol, another corrupting influence.) There are already some signs of the emergence of a clearer class definition and separation. According to Ivanov of the Sociological Research Institute:

"One cannot close one's eyes to the contradiction beginning to emerge between administrators and those who execute the work. This problem became increasingly clear with each new survey we did. The rigid division between "we" and "they" has serious consequences...."

"It is interesting that many of the administrators that we surveyed in the factories of Moscow's Sevastopol district complain of the workers' sloth and lack of initiative; while the rank-and-file workers speak of the administrators' idle talk, indifference and wait-and-see attitude to the restructuring."<sup>8</sup>

This was also the impression of a Soviet emigre recently returned from a visit to the Soviet Union:

"Another thing that did not exist before, at least so it seems to me: a completely clear division between "them" and "us". Of course, it did exist before, but not in a form so absolutely bitter, reaching the point of impotent hatred."<sup>9</sup>

The mobilization will also be favoured by the space created by the "crisis at the top", which threatens to be more severe than anything since the 1920s. Even the present limited opening has allowed the emergence of a new stratum of democratic activists (partly in the club movement), for the time being mostly socially marginal elements, including some ex-dissidents.

Unlike the dissidents of the Brezhnev era, these people do not only not fear the "masses" but they actively seek to forge ties with them. If the workers rejected the dissidents, it was not because they could not understand, or had no sympathy for, the dissidents' criticisms of bureaucratic rule. Rather, they were put off by the latter's often condescending and disdainful attitude toward the common people and by the fact that they chose the Western media as their interlocutor. This was seen as

"washing our dirty linen in public" and, therefore, unpatriotic.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, in a political crisis of the top, there will exist for the first time a stratum of experienced activists, one with ties to the working class and therefore capable of helping it to organize and to clarify its goals. These goals can only be popular control of the economy, socialist democracy. These have been the spontaneous aims of every worker mobilization in the so-called socialist countries to date.

### "An advanced economy with the broadest democracy"

Gorbachev concluded his speech at the January plenum with the following words:

"We want to make our country into a highly-developed society with the most advanced economy, with the broadest democracy; the most human and moral society, where the working person will feel himself master, where he will be able to enjoy all the material and spiritual advantages, where the future of his children will be assured, where he will have at his disposal all that is necessary for a complete and rich life.... So that even the sceptics will be forced to say: Yes, socialism is a system that serves the well-being of people, their social and economic interests, their spiritual development."<sup>11</sup>

This vision contrasts profoundly with Brezhnevian discourse, which characterized the Soviet Union as "actually existing socialism", to warn people not to expect qualitative changes, since what already existed was the only possible socialism.

But qualitative and permanent changes are conceivable in the Soviet Union only through an independent mobilization of society, and of the working class foremost. ★

5. M-A. Crosnier, "Le New Deal de Gorbatchev", *Le Courrier des Pays de l'Est*, March 1985, p.6.

6. *The Czechoslovak reform movement*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 1971, pp.280-3; and J. Rupnik, "La classe ouvrière en Tchécoslovaquie, Notes et études documentaires 4511/12, pp.180-1.

7. See D. Mandel, "La crise du 'socialisme réellement existant'", *Etudes internationales* (Quebec), Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1982, pp.297-303.

8. "Real'nost' nadezhd", *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.

9. A. Sytcheva in *Russkaya mysl'* 3645, October 1986.

10. See D. Mandel, *ibid.*, p.301; and B. Gidwitz, "Labour unrest in the Soviet Union", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 31, November/December 1982, pp.37-8. Yuri Orlov, the Soviet physicist and human rights activist recently allowed to emigrate, said in an interview in October 1986 that the human rights "dissident" stage was more or less over. "The next stage will be that of activity within the working class, among the ordinary people." He referred to a movement analogous to the nineteenth century populist movement "to the people". (*Russkaya mysl'*, Paris, October 31, 1986 — abridged version in *IV* 116, 23 March, 1987.) See also the interview with A. Severoukhine, *Inprecor* 240, April 13, 1987, pp.5-10.

11. *Pravda*, January 28, 1987.

# 4 NEWS FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

## OBITUARY

### Chen Bilan (1902-1987)

CHEN BILAN, an early leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and a Trotskyist militant, died on September 7 at the age of 85. For over 60 years, she persisted in her belief in communism. Like Peng Shuzhi, her life companion, she fought all adversities and defied the enemies of the oppressed throughout her life.

Soon after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, Chen was converted to socialism. In early 1922, she initiated and led a strike at the Hubei Provincial Teachers College for Women....In the same year she joined the League of Socialist Youth, and six months later the CCP. She later studied in Shanghai and Moscow....

When the May 30th Movement of 1925 broke out, on the decision of the CCP Chen returned to China to join in the revolution. She became secretary of the Shanghai Regional Committee's Department of Women, and was chief editor of *Chinese Women* published by the party centre. In July 1926, she was also acting secretary of the party's central Department of Women, and took up the practical leadership work of the revolution.

After the strangling of the revolution by the Kuomintang, Chen Bilan and many other comrades discussed the reasons for the failure of the revolution. Subsequently, they came to learn of the differences between Trotsky and Stalin on the Chinese revolution, and from their own experience they knew that Trotsky's propositions were correct, and that Stalin's incorrect line and policy in guiding the Chinese revolution was the central subjective factor for its failure.

Chen Bilan, Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi and others submitted their opinion to the party. They requested a general review throughout the party to discuss the reasons for the revolution's failure, opposed the putschist adventurism practised at the time and advocated the reformulation of a correct line and policy. Not only was their proposal rejected, but they were expelled.

From 1929 onwards, Chen participated in the Chinese Trotskyist Movement as one of its founding members, carrying out revolutionary work and underground activities under the white terror of the rule of Jiang Jieshi's Kuomintang. When Peng Shuzhi and others were arrested and imprisoned, she had to bring up the children and earn a living by writing articles and taking up a job. The book *Essays on the women's question* was a compilation of articles by Chen under the pen name of Chen Biyun. In the preface the author is described as "a woman who is genuinely devoted to the women's movement and has a profound understanding of women's problems".

Due to the eruption of war with Japan, imprisoned Trotskyists were released. Chen and Peng remained in Shanghai to lead underground work. Their comrades were arrested by the Japanese occupying forces for leading workers' strikes....After Japan surrendered, the Trotskyists were able to publish two monthly journals, *Youth and Women* (later *New Voice*) edited by Chen, and *For Truth* edited by Peng. Through these publications, political influence was spread and organizational strength was developed.

At the end of 1948, Chen and others knew that they would not be tolerated by the CCP rulers, so they were forced to go abroad. A few years later, all Trotskyists in the country were arrested, and many were detained for a quarter of a century.

Chen, Peng and Liu Jialiang went to Vietnam. When Liu was murdered by the Vietnamese communists, they feared for their lives and fled to Europe....

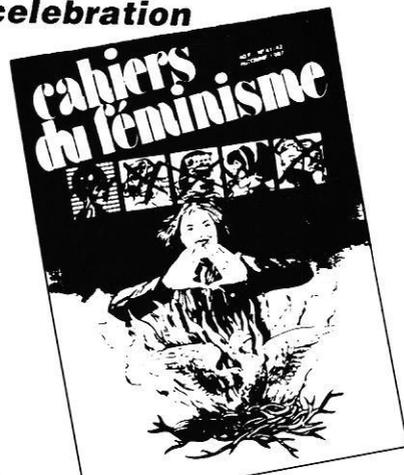
In exile, they participated more closely in the work of the Fourth International. Chen began to write *My Memoirs* in France, recalling her experiences and opinions on decades of struggle (in particular the 1925-27 revolution) [This is available in serialized form in *October Review* March 1981-November/December 1984.] In the mid-1960s, Chen and Peng went to the United States.

The life of Chen Bilan was one of a proletarian revolutionary and militant for women's liberation. Her dedication to the revolutionary cause manifests in her virtues as an upright, kind-hearted, strong and brave person. At the same time, the arduousness of her life reflects the oppression suffered by Chinese working women.

Chen has left us, three years after her partner Peng Shuzhi. Yet her example as a revolutionary militant will inspire later generations, and her deeds will go down in history. ★ *October Review*

## FRANCE

### Cahiers du féminisme celebration



OVER 850 people packed in to the tenth anniversary celebrations organized by the *Cahiers du féminisme*, the women's journal produced by the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International.

The fete, held on October 10 from 6pm to 4am the following morning, was a resounding success. Videos were shown followed by workshops on various aspects of the history and current campaigns of the women's movement.

These debates came together in a round-table discussion involving members of the *Cahiers* editorial board, prominent women's movement activists and trade-unionists. These included the chair of the Maison des femmes in Paris; a representative from the review *Nouvelles questions féministes*; a member of the Family Planning Movement; a member of the JCR, the youth organization in solidarity with the LCR; and leading women trade-union activists from the CGT and CFDT.

The discussion focused on the difficulties of being a feminist today, especially as women workers, how younger women perceived their oppression and the prominent role of women in last winter's student movement. A lively debate began on the various problems confronting women in their fight for liberation today.

At 10.30pm the celebrations took off to the accompaniment of two women's jazz bands, Gaminogames and Certains l'aiment chaud. Refreshments, book-stalls, exhibitions and balloons completed the festive atmosphere.

In addition to the fete, a special bumper issue of the *Cahiers* with a full-colour cover has just been published, including extracts of some of the best articles published since 1977. As the editorial says: "Ten years of the *Cahiers*, ten years of feminist struggles. As has been said before: it is only the beginning, the struggle continues!" ★

# Pierre Juquin to stand for president

**MORE AND MORE**, political life in France is becoming dominated by the prospect of the presidential elections to be held in May 1987. The stakes are very high. As long as the government is divided between a social-democratic president and a rightist cabinet and parliamentary majority, the bosses are blocked from launching the major offensive against the working people that their interests demand.

In this context, the development of the *rénovateurs* (renewal) current led by Pierre Juquin in opposition to the zig-zags of the CP leadership revived hopes for the emergence of a major left alternative. Juquin's announcement on October 12 that he was running for president and sought to unite a broad-based left alternative behind him was therefore a big development on the left.

At its May congress, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) voted to support Juquin if he decided to stand as an independent candidate on a class-struggle basis (see IV 122, June 15, 1987). The following comment on Juquin's announcement was published in the October 15 issue of *Rouge*, the paper of the LCR.

## CHRISTIAN PICQUET

**I**T'S DONE. The possibility of a Pierre Juquin running for the presidency has become a reality. The candidacy of the Communist Party's former spokesperson is the only thing new in this election campaign, which has been developing against the backdrop of cohabitation and is already getting bogged down in scandals, in quarrels that have nothing to do with the concerns of the mass of people.

Juquin's entry into the race marks the culmination of a process that has led several thousand critical Communist Party members to oppose the two apparatuses [the CP and SP] dominating the workers' movement, and to try to rally all those who do not go along with either the capitulations of the social democrats or the sectarianism and impotence of the CP leadership.

In recent months, this process has accelerated, owing largely to a revival of mass mobilizations and to the new demands that were expressed in particular by the great mobilizations last winter [a massive student revolt and a militant railway strike]. It represents a favorable precondition for the emer-

gence of a new revolutionary force.

Pierre Juquin's declaration and his statements to the press show a number of convergences with our own course of action. Without denying his adherence to the communist current, he is seeking to promote a convergence of forces and activists coming from various origins, and to offer a perspective for social change to those hundreds of thousands of workers whose hopes were dashed by the experience of the left in power. He has demonstrated his determination to do everything possible to defeat reaction in the second round of the presidential elections.

### Essential role of the mass movement

At the same time, Juquin stresses the essential role of the mass movement, whose most recent expressions "have helped to open up the roads to unity, to democratic control, and a policy that would reconcile word and deed." His defence of such basic aspirations as equality, rejection of a society based

on excluding people and unemployment, and his support for votes for immigrants have already breathed some fresh air into the electoral battle.

Nonetheless, a debate is now opening up. At stake is defining the content of Juquin's campaign so that it will respond best to the great problems of the day, so that it will develop a real left alternative to the SP and CP, so that it will open the way for the greatest possible number of activists and workers to identify with the campaign and associate themselves with it....

The anti-capitalist campaign we have in mind is not one that would take up the entire revolutionary program or would yield to the temptation to produce an all-inclusive catalogue of demands. But it must reflect the demands placed on the agenda by struggles. It must set in motion a unity dynamic that could make it possible to oust the right from government. It must express a firm determination to avoid a repetition of the disillusionments created by the Union of the Left.

### Points need to be clarified

In this respect, Pierre Juquin's statement, which did not amount to a platform, raised points that should be clarified in order to give his campaign a well-defined identity of its own. It will be necessary to clarify the critique of the orientations of the CP and SP and the assessment of their activity from 1981 to 1986 [when both parties were in the Union of the Left government]....

This necessary clarification is not a problem solely for Pierre Juquin and those organizations ready to support him. It concerns all those who want a united campaign, who see a historic opportunity to revive hope on the left. In this regard, we fully share the pre-occupation Pierre Juquin expressed when he called for the formation of "open, pluralist" support committees that would "provide opportunities for all to express themselves and take account of all opinions"....

Since last May, we have been supporting Alain Krivine's candidacy for president and collecting signatures for him. At the same time, from the beginning, we have sought to assemble the conditions for a unity candidate coming from the Communist *rénovateurs* current, since such a candidacy seemed the most desirable way of gaining the maximum impact for an anti-capitalist campaign.

The LCR will now determine its position on the latest political developments in a form that will permit the broadest possible discussion among the party's members. ★