

International VIEWPOINT

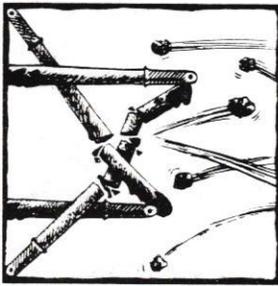
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International VIEWPOINT

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Rebellion continues against Israel's "apartheid"

WITH THE HEROIC Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza about to go into its fourth month, US secretary of state George Shultz began a new tour of the Middle East. The fact that he undertook this journey indicates that he has given up hope that the movement of Palestinian youth will ebb in the near future.

Indeed, the State Department chief had every reason to wait until the uprising ended before going to the region, if only out of fear that his visit might be the occasion for a new flare-up of the rebellion. However, three months after it erupted on December 9, the uprising seems to have developed a formidable staying power.

SALAH JABER

THE UPRISING of the Arab youth in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, looks more and more like prolonged guerrilla warfare against the occupiers. It is a guerrilla war in which the fighters have no weapons but stones. The Palestinian youth have developed a stone-throwing aim worthy of the biblical David.

Nothing works against these young people — neither metal or plastic bullets nor the beatings to which the Zionist armed forces have resorted in succession. Every new victim of the murderous rage of Israeli soldiers and settlers, every addition to the already long list growing implacably day by day, adds new fuel to the undying fires of the rebellion. Every new Palestinian victim draws down more opprobrium on the colonist and racist enterprise that has long insulted the memory of the Jewish victims of Nazi barbarism by falsely associating itself with their name.

It is not this "self-hatred," which the Zionists, in a narrow-minded racist spirit, attribute to anyone of Jewish origin who disapproves of their actions, that can explain why today among those who express the most deeply felt outrage at the repressive cruelty of the Israeli forces we find a number of men and women much better qualified to represent the victims of the Holocaust than a Shamir or a Rabin.

What condemnation of the Zionists could be more powerful, more tragic, than this reaction, among others, which was reported from Jerusalem by *New York Times* corre-

spondent John Kiffner: "In a fashionable boutique Monday, a middle-aged saleswomen put down her sandwich as she read an article in the *Jerusalem Post* about a blood-spattered wall on a vacant lot in the West Bank town of Ramallah where Israel soldiers had taken Palestinians to beat them. 'I can't eat my sandwich anymore,' she burst out. 'This is like what was done in the camps. I can't eat anymore'."¹

Resemblance between Israel and South Africa

Nonetheless, if a parallel is to be drawn between Israel and another situation, it is not with Nazi Germany, although there are inevitably common features in the repressive brutality of systems of national, racial or social oppression. Yassir Arafat's verbal excesses at a recent UN session in which he said that the Israeli soldiers "exceeded the cruelty of the Nazis" change nothing in this respect.² Such exaggeration is no help to the Palestinians inside the country, whose courageous struggle has won more sympathy for their cause in three months than the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has in 20 years.

A real resemblance, which is being confirmed from year to year, is between Israel and South Africa. This is so clear that even the American mass media, which are generally favorable to Israel, point to this analogy.³ The problem today is no longer the presence within an elitist Israeli democracy of a small minority of people condemned to

second-class citizenship because of their religion, as was the case before 1967. Today, a real apartheid system is being imposed on a population that represents more than a third of all those living under Israeli administration.

Along with the various features of apartheid (such as segregation, denial of rights, restrictions on the right of movement, super-exploitation) that Israel has repeated against the Palestinians, there is now another resemblance between the two states: The revolt of the native youth has become an enduring factor in the situation.

This has even prompted a person close to Shimon Peres, the academic Shlomo Avineri, to say recently that if Israel kept the territories occupied in 1967, "the next 15 years will look more like the last weeks." And at this rate, in the year 2,000, "We will look into the mirror and we will see South Africa."⁴

Israel's "Apocalypse Now"

In *Newsweek* of January 25, moreover, the Israeli left-Zionist sociologist Meron Benvenisti made the following analogy: "To understand the time frame of this civil war, one should recall that...the Sharpeville massacre that started the black-white violent confrontation in South Africa occurred in 1960. The future is here." The title of Benvenisti's article could not be more eloquent: "Israel's Apocalypse Now".

The corollary of the prolonged Palestinian revolt is that the Zionist army, like the South African armed forces, is increasingly being turned toward the interior of the area it controls. In addition to its original nature as an army for colonial expansion and counter-revolutionary intervention, the so-called Israeli Defence Force is confirming its acquired character of an internal repressive body. In this respect, it is every bit as bad as the worst special forces of riot police, despite the fact that it is a conscript army. Already omnipresent in Israeli society and politics, Tsahal's role will grow still further. The myth of Israel, the model democratic state, has already been dealt an irremediable blow.

Another aspect of Israel, the real Israel, that the Zionist leaders want to preserve is its character as a "Jewish" state. The enlightened Zionists, represented today by Peres, consider that the long-term survival of the Zionist state requires restoring its democratic reputation, which is important for the Western aid on which Israel is entirely dependent.

The only way to do this, and at the same time preserve the "Jewish" character of the state, is to get rid of those parts of the terri-

1. *International Herald Tribune*, January 26, 1988.

2. *Le Monde*, February 21-22.

3. In this respect, see the article by Glenn Frankel of the *Washington Post* in the *International Herald Tribune* of January 26.

4. Quoted by G. Frankel, *ibid*.

teritories occupied in 1967 with large Arab populations. To the Zionist right, which objects — not without arguments — that the security of Israel would be threatened if there were a substantial retreat from the territories, the Labourites have long given the following assurance: There is no question of letting the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza determine their own fate nor of abandoning control over these territories. What is in question is turning over the task of handling the populations concerned to the Jordanian police and keeping military control of the territories by maintaining a belt of settlements and military bases, especially along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, which separate the West Bank from Jordan proper.

This policy of the Zionist Labourites was worked out by Yigal Allon back in 1967. But it was only after 1971, that is, after King Hussein of Jordan managed to crush the Palestinian resistance in his kingdom, that the conditions were assembled for it to become credible. Continually counterposed to this view of things has been the policy formulated by Moshe Dayan in the same period: "Coexistence between Israel and the Arabs is possible only under the aegis of the Israeli government and Defence Forces, under whose authority the Arabs can also lead a normal life [*sic*]." ⁵

Principle of administrative autonomy

Today, Moshe Dayan's policy is being defended by the Zionist right, in particular by Likud, which is led by Shamir, the present premier of the "National Unity Government." In Likud's view, there can be no future for West Bank and Gaza that goes beyond maintaining Israeli occupation, with the granting of "administrative

autonomy" to their Arab populations.

It is this principle of administrative autonomy, encompassed by an ambiguous suggestion of "transition," that prevailed in the Camp David Accords concluded in 1978, under US auspices, between Egypt and Israel. In the preceding year, Likud had won the Israeli elections, and was at the height of its power. Carter and Sadat could not risk a failure of the process initiated by the Egyptian president's visit to Israel in November 1977. Therefore, they made a concession to Begin on the fate of the West Bank and Gaza.

In 1982, on the occasion of the negotiated withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters from a Beirut besieged by the Israeli army, the Reagan Plan in fact revived the principles of the Allon Plan. "The United States is firmly convinced that the best chance for reaching a lasting and just peace is to establish self-government for the Palestinians on the West Bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza sector, in association with Jordan." ⁶

In order to put this "peace" into operation, the US Administration, its Israeli Labourite allies and their Jordanian cohort projected an "international conference" as the essential framework for negotiations between Israel and Jordan. This was because the Jordan regime was too weak to be able to afford a Sadat-style process of open negotiations with the Zionist state.

The Palestinian uprising has convinced the Zionist Labourites and the Reagan administration more than ever that their common conception was well founded. Shultz's new Middle East tour fits into the framework of efforts to promote it. However, this policy today is running up against two main obstacles. One is the opposition of Likud, which Shultz and Peres hope eventually to get around through a Labour election victory. Since that possibility is not yet shaping up, however, the US Ad-

ministration is trying to gain some time by relaunching, on a temporary basis, the idea of autonomy contained in the Camp David Accords, without abandoning the objective of an international conference. Shultz is bringing this suggestion in his baggage, hoping with it to be able to mollify both Shamir and the Palestinians.

Last card of the Arafat leadership

The other obstacle, of course, is the problem of who is going to represent the Palestinians. While it seems more and more impossible to "go around" the PLO in order to achieve a "settlement" of the Palestinian question, it is no less true that this organization as such remains unacceptable as an intermediary for Washington and Peres, insofar as it fails to officially recognize the "right" of the state of Israel to exist. But, in the present state of things, such a recognition would mean a new split in the PLO, already severely weakened by its successive capitulations since 1982. ⁷ This is the last card the Arafat leadership has left. It is hesitant to play it without solid guarantees regarding the role reserved for it in the proposed "settlement".

The PLO has already granted everything except this last concession. It has already officially adopted the principle of a "Jordanian-Palestinian confederation," as well as that of an "international conference," which Arafat has been playing up in recent weeks.

In other words, carried along by its substitutionist policy, the PLO is declaring its readiness to negotiate the fate of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel and the great powers, instead of holding firmly to the inalienable right of self-determination of the people of these territories. It goes without saying that nothing could come out of such an international conference but a diktat aimed at liquidating the Palestinian question and stifling the Palestinian people.

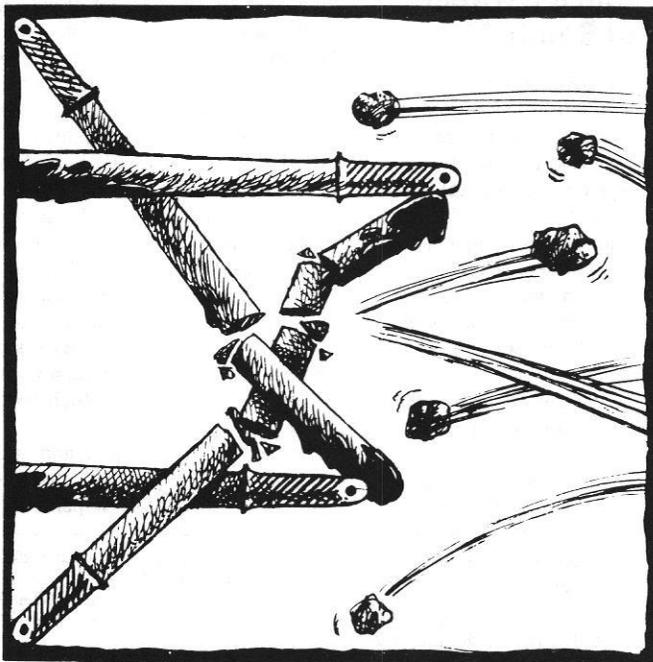
The only position worthy of the sacrifices made by the fighting Palestinians and faithful to the feelings that they have clearly expressed is an intransigent demand for a total and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967 and for self-determination for the population of these territories.

This would be partial self-determination for the Palestinian people. It would have to be complemented by self-determination for the Palestinians in Jordan, where they are the majority. Finally, it would have to be completed by self-determination for the whole Palestinian people, through a Judeo-Arab revolutionary dismantling of the racist Zionist state and abolishing all forms of discrimination against the territory of Palestine. ★

5. Speech made at the University of Tel Aviv on October 17, 1972.

6. Reagan's speech, September 1, 1982.

7. See IV 121 and 122; June 1 and June 15, 1987.



Healthworkers lead challenge to Thatcher

THEIR DETERMINATION to force through a root-and-branch attack on Britain's tax-funded National Health Service (NHS) could yet prove the undoing of Margaret Thatcher's Tory government.

Already, the resistance to government spending cuts has mobilized tens of thousands of health workers in protest strikes and demonstrations, forcing a reluctant Trades Union Congress (TUC) to call the first national demonstration for years on March 5. And on March 14 — on the eve of Chancellor Nigel Lawson's annual budget speech — mass strike action is likely from health workers with supporting action from many other workers following a call from the 250,000-strong Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE).

The fight to defend the NHS strikes a chord with millions of British workers. Thatcher's attack on the service (which this year marks its 40th anniversary) has caused serious unrest among many of her own supporters.

HARRY SLOAN

SINCE LAST AUTUMN, ministers have faced a hostile barrage of media coverage, revealing in lurid detail the effects of cutbacks in NHS provision across the country. At the root of all these cutbacks is systematic Tory underfunding of the NHS, and the chronic low pay of one million (largely women) health service workers.

An All-Party Parliamentary Committee has just revealed that government spending on the NHS lagged behind increased costs by a total of at least £1,800,000 million between 1980-87. In the current financial year the shortfall was at least £235 million; next year spending is set to decline in real terms by almost £400 million. The result has been a growing crisis, with enforced closures of beds, wards and whole hospitals, heavy cuts in pay and jobs for the lowest paid ancillary staffs, and growing queues of patients unable to obtain treatment.

In the years 1979-86, Thatcher's ministers axed almost 19,000 hospital beds. These cuts have been heaviest in London, where 6,500 acute beds closed in the same period — 21% of the 1979 total. The rate of loss is accelerating, however, as the finan-

cial squeeze is tightened: in the four years from 1982-86 London lost 4,563 acute beds. In 1987 alone another 1,400 London beds closed, out of a national total of over 3,500 beds axed.

The crisis is biting all over the country. One of the most emotive and persistent examples in the press has been that of the Birmingham Children's Hospital. This covers a catchment area of five million people in the giant West Midlands region, but has only seven intensive care beds available, and is only able to use four or

five of these at any one time because of a shortage of skilled nursing staff. This lack of intensive care beds has brought a horrific backlog of over 100 children needing urgent heart surgery but forced to wait weeks or months — and often finding their operations cancelled at the last moment. One baby, who eventually died, had his urgent operation postponed *five times* because there was no intensive care bed available. As this article is being written, the hospital has announced it can no longer take emergency heart cases, and will divert desperately sick children 100 miles to London or Liverpool for treatment.

It is not just the big cities that have been hit. Rural Shropshire (on the Welsh border) faces the closure of five hospitals, and has seen a huge local resistance mobilizing mass meetings 1,000-strong in small market towns.

A massive mood of public anger

Countless appalling local examples of the crisis have helped build a massive mood of public anger, and fuelled a new militancy among healthworkers. Significantly, this militancy has spread to the normally more conservative 500,000-strong nursing workforce, who have for the first time taken the lead in challenging government spending policies.

Nurses began to move into action last autumn. October and November brought a successful seven-week overtime ban and work-to-rule by 600 Scottish nurses in Edinburgh, who not only won their demand for 60 extra staff at the Royal Edinburgh Psychiatric Hospital, but began to put industrial action back on the agenda for NHS workers.

The same period saw nurses, and junior doctors, organize mass walkouts and lobbies of Tower Hamlets health authority in East London to defeat the closure of a large casualty unit. In November came a one-day strike by all grades of staff against the threatened closure of four major hospitals in London's Riverside district. By this time, healthworkers and campaigners across the country were mobilizing hundreds of supporters to lobbies of local health authorities against bed closures and



service reductions forced on them by government cash cuts.

Even the conservative 250,000-strong Royal College of Nursing (RCN) — which poses as a union but has a rigid “no-strike” policy — began to stage protests, including disruptive meetings in working hours of up to 300 nurses at a time at the giant St Thomas’s Hospital (opposite the Houses of Parliament) where 137 acute beds (20%) had been closed.

The normally Tory-leaning medical profession also emerged to challenge government spending policies on the NHS, with strong criticisms from the British Medical Association, with even the heads of the three most prestigious medical Royal Colleges penning an open letter to Margaret Thatcher.

A doctors’ petition, launched from scratch by two campaigns — London Health Emergency and Hospital Alert — attracted 1,200 signatures from 160 hospitals around the country in just a few weeks, among them over 550 consultants and 20 professors. It was presented to Thatcher in a fanfare of press coverage by a group of five consultants, one of whom had appeared only months earlier on Tory election platforms endorsing Thatcher’s claim that the NHS was “safe in our hands”!

There is little doubt that the depth and momentum of the fightback against NHS cuts has caught the Thatcher cabinet by surprise. Other equally vicious attacks — not least on Social Security payments (to take effect on April 1) and on the education system — have sailed through parliament without difficulty, rubber-stamped by the giant Tory majority.

Tories pursuing contradictory policies

Caught off-guard, the Tories at first found themselves pursuing contradictory policies. On the one hand they tried to appeal to the more conservative nurses, hinting at pay rises in the pipeline through a “restructuring” exercise. Yet at the same time ministers inflamed anger to new peaks by suggesting that the costs of restructuring nurses’ pay be largely covered by slashing the present Special Duty Payments for night shift and other duties. This could cut some nurses’ pay by up to £40 per week (basic pay for qualified nurses is less than £8,000 per year before tax — around \$14,000).

Another contradiction was on funding. The Tory line throughout last June’s general election campaign and up until this winter had been to quote partial and misleading statistics to “prove” that there was no financial crisis, the NHS was booming and “there are no cuts”. Yet within days of the doctors’ petition to Downing Street the government suddenly announced that an extra £100 million would be given to the NHS for the current financial year, £70m of which represented new money for local

health authorities.

This new money fell far short of the £170m needed to cover pay and inflation costs this year alone, and did nothing to defuse the anger of healthworkers, doctors and campaigners. Rather, it represented a retreat under pressure, which encouraged campaigners to press for more. Even Thatcher’s own backbenchers began calling for an extra £2,500 thousand million to restore the NHS, pointing out that this is the equivalent of just 2% on the basic rate of income tax, which Chancellor Lawson has been boasting he will cut in the March 15 budget.

The situation remained at boiling point over the holiday period, hogging news headlines into the New Year, when a well-publicized 24-hour protest strike by 37 night nurses in Manchester opened a new phase in the struggle. The nurses, organized by the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), walked out in protest at the Tory attacks on Special Duty Payments. Their action became national news and had immediate effects:

- within days, health minister Tony Newton had been forced to withdraw the plan to cut the special payments;

- also within days, nurses in London hospitals, in Scotland and other parts of the country began organizing to follow the Manchester example and take strike action — this time to show their disgust at the cuts in the NHS.

In London, where an evening trade-union rally (sponsored by COHSE and the white-collar unions ASTMS (technicians) and NALGO (clerical staff) had already been called and publicized by London Health Emergency for February 3, strike decisions



tended to focus on that date. Some hospitals varied the timing. The giant Maudsley psychiatric hospital in South London began their 24-hour strike on February 2, while in Ealing, West London, a very successful day of action backed by local busworkers took place on February 4.

The movement for strike action was a genuine brushfire spread of rank and file anger, with no particular political leadership. Many of the nurses who demanded meetings of previously inactive union branches, made militant speeches, and helped carry votes for strike action, had themselves only just become active in their unions. While many local union officials responded well to this new upsurge, others at higher levels were immediately hostile and suspicious, seeking to put the lid on a movement they did not expect and could not easily control.

The London example spread to other parts of the country, with February 3 the most common date for action at hospitals in Yorkshire and the Midlands. Being a rank-and-file movement, the results were patchy: some hospitals did nothing; some saw only a few activists take action. In Yorkshire, miners from one local colliery walked out in support of the nurses.

It seems that as many as 10,000 nurses and healthworkers, including ancillary staff, 1,500 technicians and thousands of clerical workers were involved in some form of protest action on February 3, with over 40 London hospitals affected. The evening rally organized by London Health Emergency saw an enthusiastic packed hall of 1,000 militant trade unionists, including hundreds of nurses.

Other regions held back, with the North

West opting to follow a regional TUC day of action later in the month (which was supported by strike action from 2,000 Vauxhall carworkers), and Wales planning protests on March 1. By far the most advanced was Scotland, where the Scottish TUC called for a day of action on February 24, to involve industrial as well as NHS unions; local hospitals in Scotland have meanwhile been staging their own, smaller scale, activities.

While the union rank and file have been demanding more action, union chiefs and timid Labour leaders have been divided on how to proceed. TUC policy has until now been largely dominated by the cowardly line of "new realism", avoiding confrontation with the Tories at the expense of members' jobs and conditions.

Union and LP leaders under pressure from base

However, the union leaders do not want to fall too far behind their own members, especially in the NHS where there is continual rivalry for recruitment between COHSE and NUPE. This rivalry can produce bizarre results. For example, on February 3, COHSE's right-wing leader Hector McKenzie was keen to be seen on picket lines, while NUPE's supposedly more "left wing" leadership, still in the clutches of "new realism", tried to tone down the strikes, and news coverage of NUPE leader Rodney Bickerstaffe showed him wandering around with a bunch of flowers!

Similar problems confront the Labour Party leadership. Party boss Neil Kinnock ignored the huge public support for the February 3 strikes, and roundly attacked the picketing for giving the party a "bad name", while the LP's spokesperson on health, Robin Cook, toured the picket lines.

Under this kind of pressure the TUC has been forced to call a national demonstration in London on March 5, which promises to be one of the biggest marches ever held in the capital. But they have shied away from following the Scottish example and ignored calls to organize a day of strike action in defence of the NHS. Indeed, COHSE chiefs have been reprimanded for issuing their call for action on March 14, and NUPE leaders have declared their intention to obstruct any move for strike action that day. Meanwhile, there is no sign that this rising movement will be placated or subdued. Thatcher appears to have decided to "take on" the healthworkers just as her government did with the steelworkers, miners and other sections of the working class. Already ministers are leaking plans to impose new charges for NHS treatment which will be fiercely contested. Among the issues that will keep anger at boiling point in 1988 are:

- the NHS pay review in April, in which Tory proposals have already suggested no more than a 3% basic increase in nurses' pay. In London, nurses are already bitter at management's offer of only £51 per year

increase in their £950 "London weighting" payments, against a union claim for an extra £1,000!

- also in April, health authorities will begin a new round of closures and service reductions to meet their reduced cash limits;

- late spring is also the threatened time for Thatcher's "review" of the NHS, in which its very existence as a comprehensive, tax-funded system, free at point of use is to be thrown into question.

Thatcher knows she is living dangerously — she has no mandate for any such changes. So great is the emotional and political attachment of the vast majority of the electorate to the NHS that the Tory manifesto avoided any mention of radical changes to come. Many Tory voters were partly persuaded by this, especially in the absence of any serious Labour Party focus on this potential vote-winning issue.

Opinion polls show a massive 81% of Tory voters favour spending more tax money on the NHS (compared to 91% of the whole electorate). This is no surprise. With only 9% of the British population covered by any form of private medical insurance, the rest — including most Tory voters — have a vested interest in defending the NHS.

Seven out of 10 voters would prefer to pay more tax to improve the NHS rather than opt for the Tory plan of tax cuts on March 15. This is why the nurses and other healthworkers who have been picketing, protesting and petitioning feel such a weight of support behind them. The defence of the NHS, unlike the miners' strike, does not polarize society, but unites all but a tiny handful in opposition to Thatcher's policy.

To take advantage of this, a national campaign is needed to unite the potential

forces that must fight for the NHS. Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* and *Labour Briefing* have been prominent in the struggle for such a campaigning unity between the health unions and the wider labour movement. It is vital to draw in the support of the wide spectrum of community organizations — pensioners, tenants, hospital patients, black community organizations, women's groups — even health charities — which should be mobilizing to defend the NHS.

One "local" campaign that has developed along these lines is the local government-funded London Health Emergency, with 16,000 copies of its tabloid newspaper distributed through more than 220 affiliated trade union, labour movement and community groups — including many outside London. In January, LHE convened a national meeting of 150 activists from over 70 campaigns and organizations to take the first steps towards a National Health Emergency network.

Despite the witch-hunting attacks against the new campaign that can be expected from some sections of the union bureaucracy, this is by far the most advanced national initiative towards the kind of concerted campaign that is needed. The mood is developing strongly for action on the NHS right across the trade union movement, overlapping with other struggles and disputes involving local government, teachers, car workers and many others.

As Thatcher sharpens the knife for major surgery on the NHS, the fightback against these attacks could yet be the catalyst that unites the workers' movement in mass general strike action to confront her hated, dictatorial government. ★



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The stakes in the Ford strike

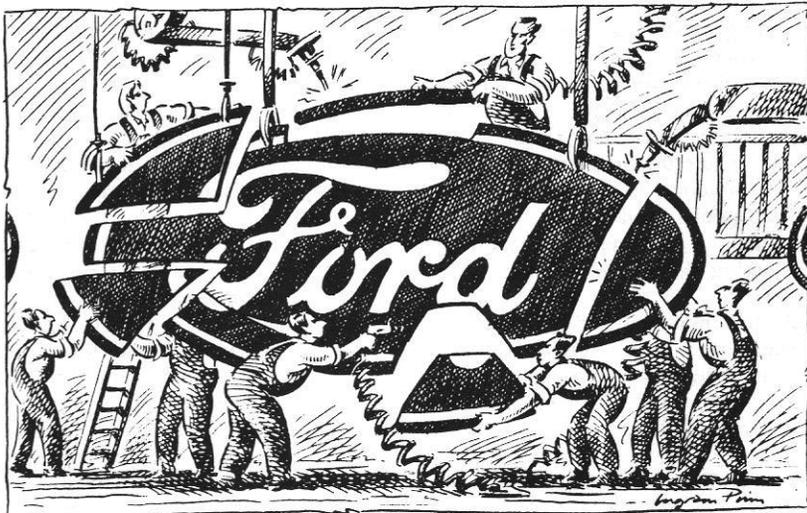
THE TWO-WEEK long strike of Britain's 32,500 Ford car workers ended on Monday, February 22, after a 70% vote in favour of accepting a revised two-year deal. The strike in Britain led to Ford laying off 10,000 workers in Europe, notably affecting the Genk assembly plant and Antwerp tractor plants in Belgium, and Ford's Saarlouis assembly plant in Germany.

The following articles look at the present offensive by bosses in the car industry internationally and, in this context, why the deal signed in Britain is a step backwards for car workers.

ALAN THORNETT

COMMENTATORS in the British financial press generally identified the key factor behind the strikes by Ford workers, and other car workers, as being the so-called "Nissan factor" — the influence of working practices introduced at the new Nissan plant in Sunderland (in the North of England). In doing so they take a very narrow view of what are, in fact, world-wide developments in the car industry. The fact is that if the Sunderland plant did not exist, car workers in Britain would still face a similar situation.

What lies behind the recent struggles is a new generalized offensive by the car companies designed to increase efficiency and productivity to new levels. The successful Japanese companies are the primary (al-



though not the only) model used by much of the industry.

But this is not a new thing. Ford's "AJ" or "After Japan" plan was drawn up in the early 1980s after Ford UK executives visited Japanese plants. The detailed plan was designed to achieve Japanese productivity levels in their British plants. This plan remains a central factor behind Ford management strategy today.

Fiat plant the most advanced in the world

What is new in the car industry today, however, is the scale of technological development and the scale of investment in new models now taking place. This is introducing new pressures to which Ford and other producers have to respond.

In Europe, the lead in this is being taken by Fiat, Europe's second largest manufacturer. They are in the process of launching the Tipo — a new family car in which they have invested over £1 billion. It makes their plant in Cassino, Italy, the most advanced in the world. They claim a 100% automated paint facility and 55% automation on assembly — a record previously held at 40% by Europe's biggest car manufacturer, VW/Audi, at their Hall assembly facility in West Germany.

Productivity levels produced by investment and automation, however, are only one side of the equation. High investment needs to be linked to high productivity of labour, which means brutally hard work, continuously carried out, and subject to repeated speed-ups — a factor which has become dominant for workers involved in the mass production of cars all over the world. It is in this area that the Japanese car bosses make their major contribution. They have developed techniques that have led the world in harnessing workers mentally and physically to continuous hard work at very high speed — although many of the others are now catching them up.

These techniques have been developed in Japan since the mid-1950s and are central to the profitability of Japanese industry.

The Ford package precisely contains the main principles involved in these techniques (see following article). They want the introduction of short-term contracts; the ending of all demarcation and the introduction of complete flexibility, including making skilled men a part of the same groups; the introduction of "group leaders", creating a higher-paid force of company spies on the shop floor. They also want so-called Quality Circles, as have been developed to a sophisticated level in Japan.

Quality Circles have far more to do with productivity than quality. In principle they are the same as the "worker participation" scheme which the last Labour government introduced into British Leyland (now called Austin Rover) in 1975, in the shape of the Ryder Report. It had disastrous results for the shop stewards' movement and the workforce. The objective of these techniques is to attempt to change the thinking of the workers from starting from their own wages and conditions to starting from the problems of production and profitability, and to undermine trade-union structures — particularly the shop stewards' movement, which is more responsive to the demands of the workforce.

Following the Japanese model

In Japanese car plants everyone is involved in a Quality Circle. They are required to meet regularly, generally weekly, in their own time, to discuss ways of improving their production performance. In some plants, failure to produce positive proposals from such meetings is regarded as "uncooperative" or "anti-management" and can lead to dismissal.

Clearly, Quality Circles could not be introduced as effectively as this in Britain at the present time. In Japan these techniques began to be introduced following the smashing of the independent unions and the creation of company-controlled "yellow" unions. Their most extensive use in Britain is still in the Sunderland Nissan plant. But that factory is still in a honeymoon period.

They are not yet pressing the workforce as hard as they intend to. Also, it is not a highly capitalized plant.

Quality Circles and flexibility

More significantly, Quality Circles have already been established in some other parts of the car industry in Britain. In Austin Rover Quality Circles, under the name of "Zone Circles", have been forced in as a result of a deal done at national level between national union officials — the same individuals negotiated the current package with Ford. Mick Murphy, the Transport and General Workers' Union national officer, became well known (but not so well respected) for saying that he was "over the moon" with the deal, a deal to which the workforce has become increasingly hostile.

In some Austin Rover plants, including the Cowley assembly plant at Oxford, these Zone Circles are already in operation, although in most places they still lack authority. In the Cowley assembly plant they have been backed by right-wing senior stewards and convenors and exist extensively throughout the factory. They operate on the basis of those workers who are prepared to

be involved and they meet in working hours. In the body plant, there has been more resistance due to the existence of a stronger left-wing there. They have now been pushed through by the convenors on the basis that the shop stewards will be involved in them as well. This actually makes the situation worse because it is then easier for management to use them as an alternative to the trade-union structures.

In Austin Rover, the introduction of Quality Circles has gone alongside the abolition of whole categories of workers — particularly grades such as inspection and rectification. This has resulted in self-inspection and self-rectification now being introduced on the tracks, involving many hundreds of job losses.

Radical changes in working practices

As important as Quality Circles is flexibility of labour. The ability of management to move workers from one job to another across grades and skill demarcations is crucial if work is to be continuous irrespective of breakdowns and other production problems. Also, if non-production workers can be switched to production when production workers are absent or there are abnormal production problems, management can cut down the number of absentee and relief workers needed, or abolish them completely.

The only break the track worker gets, apart from brief official relief times, is when the track breaks down. With flexibility production workers are required to do running maintenance themselves, or help the fitters in the repair of bigger breakdowns. They are also expected to do general cleaning to cut out the need for janitors. This is all designed to ensure that there is never a break in the work-load from one end of the shift to the other.

Short-term contracts are another major innovation. They are used massively in Japanese plants and allow management to maintain a core experienced labour force that can work flat-out all the time, while employing casual labour to cover peak periods and sacking them with no rights at the end of it. It creates a labour force in the plant outside of trade-union control and vulnerable to management moves. Such contracts have already been introduced in some British plants. The newly privatized Unipart (Austin Rover's service division), for example, regularly use short-term contract labour to meet peak demand periods.

There have been disputes in Austin Rover over the introduction of these conditions. There, management had already successfully introduced into some of their plants part of the conditions Ford are seeking. In the Swindon body plant, for example, short-term contract workers already exist, although the idea would be strongly opposed in the main plants.

Alongside these particular measures go

other developments which are taking place across the industry.

Discipline has been stepped up. New disciplinary procedures have been introduced in many plants and the rate of dismissals has gone up enormously. In the main Austin Rover plants workers are sacked every day for "offenses" such as failure to keep pace with the track, failing to work to standard or for breaking the very strict management codes on lateness or absenteeism. In some Austin Rover plants, workers are disciplined as a matter of course (although not necessarily sacked) for a single error on the track.

It is these conditions — the strings attached to the deal — that have been central to the Ford strike. It is not just a matter for Ford workers either. The success of the employers in the next stage of this process in Britain will be greatly increased by the sell-out of the Ford strike. A victory for the Ford management will lead to another round of speed-up. Car workers in Britain have to seek ways of confronting this.

The generalization of this employers' offensive has some lessons which need to be taken up by car workers in Britain and internationally. A generalized offensive needs a generalized response. In Britain, where the multi-union set-up in the industry fragments the workforce and prevents the workers speaking with a single voice, there is an urgent need for contact at rank-and-file level, particularly through the shop stewards' movement.

National and international coordination needed

Some shop stewards in Ford and elsewhere are calling for a national conference of car industry shop stewards to be held urgently to discuss and assess all these developments and develop a strategy in response to them. This would be a very popular initiative and could be the starting point of a fightback in the car plants in Britain. It could also lay the basis for greater links with car workers across Europe, the USA and elsewhere.

The high level of militancy in the car plants in Britain is likely to continue and increase despite the sell-out of the Ford strike. Already the Land Rover plant in Birmingham has rejected a wage offer from management and voted to strike. The General Motors plants in Liverpool and Luton have voted for strike action over the decision by management to plunder tens of thousands of pounds out of their pension fund, using new Tory legislation.

There needs to be an international response to this as well. The employers are organizing their offensive across national frontiers. It is an offensive with internationally developed techniques of attack. There needs to be a forum in which car workers, at least across Europe, can pool their experience and develop a response beyond national limitations. ★

Big profits from squeezing workers

FORD's European operations increased their profits by 93% in 1987, with net income nearly doubling from the previous year to a mammoth \$1.07 billion. In the USA, Ford announced a record group net profit of \$4.6 billion, compared to \$3.3 billion a year earlier. However, at the European level Ford was outdone by General Motors, which announced net profits of \$1.25 billion for its European operations in 1987.

Industrial action in Britain has taken place since pay negotiations began last October, and the strike cost Ford an estimated £500 million in lost production. ★

The Ford deal — a cynical sell-out

THE FORD's strike has been cynically sold-out by the national trade-union leaders and the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). The workforce has voted by a 2-1 majority to accept the revised deal. The only plant with a majority against the deal was the assembly plant in Dagenham (East London), which voted 3-1 against it.

Shop stewards at Ford plants in Dagenham and Halewood (Liverpool), who had called for rejection of the deal, were furious at this sell-out, particularly as it came when the strike was reaching its strongest point with European plants closing down and the strike 100% solid.

The stewards were absolutely right. The deal was the same as the original offer, the only change was from a three-year deal to a two-year deal, which means that the changes will be forced in in a shorter period of time. Everything else, the money and the strings, remain the same.

The acceptance vote was a direct product of both the recommendation to accept made by the JNC and the way in which they argued for it. They claimed that a massive victory had been achieved, yet every member of the JNC knew very well that this was not true. Some of them even claimed that strings had been removed from the document when they knew this was not the case. In fact, it is worse. Not only do the strings remain part of the document, but there is a precise commitment by the trade unions which provides for their implementation within the life of the agreement.

Flexibility negotiations to be held plant by plant

This could not be clearer in the revised deal: "To ensure that there are no misunderstandings...constructive discussion at local joint works committees will start within one month of the application of the principles. Implementation will be ongoing as required and as appropriate to each plant, and with the full support of the unions in this process. If, in spite of your agreement to the principles, areas of differences occur in local negotiations, the issue will be referred to the JNC for positive

resolution and may, if appropriate, be referred in turn to the relevant unions. With the above agreement from the unions we cannot envisage where these changes will need to be imposed."

So the real position is that the unions have committed themselves to the full support of the introduction of the changes, and management will only implement if they are unsuccessful. Yet, knowing all this, Derek Horn, vice-chair of the national JNC, told the *London Evening Standard*: "People are talking about conditions, but the simple fact is there are no strings at all attached to this agreement. We have an historic deal."

Nor is it just the right wing who are taking this line. The *Morning Star* [newspaper of the pro-Soviet Communist Party] was just the same. It quoted Jimmy Airlie, CP member and secretary of the national JNC, as saying that "Ford workers have won a terrific victory". Yet they all know that the JNC has signed an agreement which contains strings. It may go to national officials if they fail to get agreement, but these are the people who have been in favour of the strings from the start.

Union leaders accept productivity strings

Jimmy Airlie said during the negotiations that the strings were necessary for Ford to compete in world markets. Mick Murphy of the Transport and General Workers' Union last year enthusiastically accepted similar strings into Austin Rover, where they have been enforced. Murphy, however, has been the most honest in the present Ford situation. He told the *Financial Times* that "the importance of what we have achieved is that the company will get the changes it requires, but will carry the workforce with it".

Ford management have said that it was a good deal, since they will get the changes they wanted. The effects of this betrayal, however, cannot be seen just in terms of the conditions contained within this particular agreement. Flexibility strings were introduced in the last Ford deal as well, and conditions

in the Ford plants, as in other car plants, are one of speed-ups, victimizations and sackings over work effort.

A potential challenge to government policy

The Ford workers needed a victory, not just to stop this particular agreement, but to reverse the management onslaught which has been going on for several years. This sell-out has robbed them of that and put management back in an even stronger position. Politically, the situation is the same. The working class needed a victory as a focus around which to mount a fight-back. This has been denied them, although the present wave of industrial struggles are likely to continue.

The Ford's strike was a potential challenge to the policies of the Thatcher government, yet the same union leaders who make speeches about the evils of Thatcherism are prepared to employ the most cynical maneuvers and double-talk in order to stop that challenge. The sell-out was a political betrayal of the working class, as well as an industrial betrayal of the Ford workers.

Ford workers now have to regroup and reorganize, and the conditions for this are created by the current strike of Land Rover workers, and workers in General Motors who have also voted for strike action.

The issues involved apply to all carworkers, whichever company they work for. The methods employed by managements are nationally and internationally developed. There have been calls for a conference of carworkers and shop stewards from the industry to discuss this situation and to map out a way forward. Such a conference should be supported. ★

Alan Thornett

Nurses and healthworkers fighting the Tories' cuts were not slow to support the Ford strikers — and car workers throughout the industry have been in the forefront of solidarity with those struggling to defend the NHS (DR)



Democracy Aquino-style

THE MUNICIPAL and provincial elections on January 18, 1988, were supposed to put the finishing touches to the "re-establishment" of a stable democratic system in the Philippines. They were the last of the big electoral consultations kicked off a year ago by the constitutional plebiscite of February 1987. The Aquino regime's institutions are now in place; the government claims to have a majority at all levels.

The latest elections, however, did not assure democracy and stability in the country, any more than did the preceding ones. They confirmed the return in force to the political arena of the provincial "big families", excluded from power by Ferdinand Marcos. They again accentuated the process of political fragmentation, which began in 1987 behind the facade of a charismatic presidential regime. The army is further than ever from having made up its mind to return to barracks and submit to civilian rule. As for the mass organizations, they were to all practical purposes excluded from the elections, given the extent of the crude clientelist rules prevailing in the electoral arena.

PAUL PETITJEAN

AROUND 150,000 candidates competed for the votes of 27.6 million voters to win the 73 provincial governments and some 1,500 municipal councils — in all, around 17,000 seats of varying importance. According to the Electoral Commission, participation in the elections was high (at least 80%). But we will probably have to wait a long time before the complete results are known. A number of disappointed candidates are challenging the count, and in 11 provinces voting was postponed for "security reasons".

In May 1987, at the time of the legislative elections, the presentation of national slates for senatorial seats had given a semblance of political clarity to the consultation. There was a slate of candidates backed by the president standing against a left slate and two extreme right-wing ones. But already relations between the big provincial families — apart from any political programme — had profoundly influenced the composition of parliamentary alliances.¹ The January 18 elections marked a clear victory for patronage and for the local "political dynasties". To hell with principles — turncoats are part of the system — and Aquino's supporters welcomed a growing

number of ex-collaborators with the Marcos dictatorship into the majority.

Corazon Aquino, the very Catholic president, had promised to ensure a "moral" functioning in the government and institutions. She played, and continues to play, cleverly on her image as an honest woman, far removed from the base concerns of politicians. Although her charisma had faded somewhat it was not extinguished, and in order to be sure of winning candidates fought for her endorsement. It is therefore very significant that her own family today is being taken to task in the press and in political circles for excessive nepotism.

Patronage prevails in "her" province, Tarlac, to such a degree that both voters and candidates have to fall in behind one of the three factions of the families of her late husband and her own, the Conjuangcos. There are two clans for the presidential majority (those of her brother "Peping" and of her brother-in-law, "Butz"), and a clan which supports the right-wing opposition (that of her cousin Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, in exile in the USA). This is what they call a democratic choice!

The Aquino-Cojuangco family candidates have spread outside of their own province, looking mainly to establish them-

selves in the capital, Manila-Quezon City. Corazon's relations also control the two main national parties in the presidential coalition, which is known as *Lakas ng Bayan* (People's Power). Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, her brother and MP for Tarlac, leads the Philippine Democratic Party (PDP-Laban), while Paul Aquino, one of her brothers-in-law, leads the *Lakas ng Bansa* (Strength of the Nation) party. It should also be noted that a number of other family members regard themselves as potential presidential candidates for the next elections in 1992.

The growing strength of the Aquino-Cojuangco clans is upsetting the other supporters of the presidential majority. Jovito Salonga has publicly denounced the "return to the age of dynasties" — to the political system of the 1950s and 1960s.² He is president of the senate and leads the Liberal Party (PL), an important component of the ruling coalition. Competition is getting quite hot between the PL, the PDP and Paul Aquino's *Lakas ng Bansa*. It is at the expense of this last party, which is very close to Corazon, that PL leader Salonga has strengthened his parliamentary group. It has grown from 18 to 35 members.

National political blocs undermined by clan rivalry

This fierce competition illustrates the extent of the malaise inside the majority. The politicians have two worries: the danger of a military coup on the one hand, and the 1992 presidential elections on the other. In this particularly unstable context, local patronage and the intensity of the conflicts of interest between the "big families" are undermining the national political blocs. In fact, from the May 1987 election victory onward the majority bloc began to break up: last September, vice-president of UNIDO Salvador Laurel had already publicly broken with the government.³

The "reformers", who have been pushed to the political sidelines, are worried about this. Joaquin Bernas — the dean of Ateneo Catholic university, an influential member of the "Jesuit mafia" and an former advisor of Corazon Aquino — noted that "the bitter and intense rivalries between families and families, between burgeoning dynasties... are tearing the nation apart".⁴

So the fragmentation of the ruling coalition is continuing. It is one of the most persistent features of the institutional system set up after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship. This breakdown is impelled by the main social base of the Aquino regime: the big provincial families coming from the traditional elite. It is aggravated

1. See "Aquino scores another personal triumph" by Paul Petitjean, *IV* 123, June 29, 1987.

2. Cited by Kim Gordon-Bates, *Le Monde*, January 19, 1988.

3. UNIDO is a coalition of small right-wing political groups.

4. Cited by James Clad, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 28, 1987, p.17.

by the unceasing pressure of the army on the regime. An electoral victory does not of itself guarantee political stability. This was dramatically illustrated by the failed putsch last August 28, instigated by Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan only three months after the triumphant success of the presidential slates in the May 1987 legislative elections.*5

Colonel Honasan was finally captured on December 9, 1987. He probably fell victim to the faction struggles inside the general command. However, he still has serious backing. Other seditious officers are still at large, such as Brigadier General Jose Maria Zumel and Lieutenant Colonel Reynaldo Cabautan. The threat of a coup d'état has not been removed. Raising the accusation of a plot, General Fidel Ramos put more than 200,000 soldiers and police on a state of alert on January 18, voting day. The army thus gave a forceful reminder to the government and the population that democracy continues to be under the shadow of military power.

Defence Secretary Rafael Iletto resigned at the end of February, noting that all his efforts to reform the army had failed. He is going to be replaced by General Ramos, the current chief of general staff. The dividing line between civil administration and military bodies is becoming increasingly blurred. Although he belongs to a "clan", General Ramos used to like to portray himself as a pure "professional". Today, he is up to his neck in big-time politics and barely conceals his presidential ambitions.

The Aquino regime is not the same as that led by Marcos. The Marcos' regime got along quite nicely without elections, or else held rigged votes. It denied elected institutions any real authority, accepted no independent parties and imposed an extreme state centralization, the instrument of personal dictatorial power. Today, electoral confrontations play a real role in the political system. Congress is not under Corazon's orders. And presidential power is eroding as the power of the "families" rises.

However, a double historical heritage has shaped both the Aquino and Marcos regimes. One long-standing aspect is the weight of the clans, which leads to a continual privatization of the public administration. The other, more recent, is the role of the military caste that came into politics with the establishment of martial law, and which intends to keep its hand in. What this in fact reflects is the real social content of Philippine democracy (and of the dictatorship before): namely, the interests and impasses of a bourgeoisie dependent on its links with imperialism, which is incapable of breaking from the shackles of the debt, and of the traditional elites, who are incapable of breaking with clientelism in order to bring about a genuine modernization of this bourgeoisie's state.

12 Being so rooted in the struggle between different family group interests, electoral

jousts can easily become bloody affairs. The last campaign cost the lives of around 100 people, of whom over 40 were candidates. Although this is distinctly less blood-letting than in some of the elections before martial law, it is still no small thing. Indeed, it demonstrates that it is foolhardy to take on the ruling "families" seriously in politics without body guards for protection — and, therefore, without the money to pay them. Aquino-style Philippine democracy excludes *de facto* what the Marcos dictatorship excluded *de jure*: genuine free participation by the popular organizations in institutional political competition.

Corazon Aquino contends that she wants to fight the communist guerrillas, but the repression is hitting all the popular movements. Threatened by assassination, the le-



gal left leaders are permanently insecure. Since the murder of Lean Alejandro*6, pressure has increased on the coalition of mass organizations, Bayan (of which Alejandro was general secretary), on the Volunteers for Popular Democracy (VPD) and on the Partido ng Bayan (People's Party), as well as on other progressive formations and personalities like Doctor Prudente, president of the University Polytechnic, near-victim of an attack last November 10.

Land occupations by the peasants have been decreed illegal, since the agrarian reform law has not yet been passed. The needy must wait on the good will of the big landowners who sit in Congress. On October 20, Corazon Aquino announced an order to "the police and other peacekeeping authorities to give full assistance to the labor department to remove all illegal strike blockades at the factory". She explained to an assembly of businessmen that "a special peacekeeping force had been organized

and was now being trained to enforce return-to-work orders and injunctions."*7

After having given the army a free hand for its rural counter-insurgency operations, the president thereby in practice declared war on the militant workers' movement — and already the most elementary workers' rights were very often not being respected by the bosses. However, nothing reflects the elitist and repressive social character of the Philippine political system better than the formation of "vigilante" groups, real private armies of the bosses. Since the end of 1987, they have mushroomed right across the archipelago. Para-military organizations or fanatical religious sects, they are virulently anti-communist and systematically create insecurity and terror locally. Amnesty International gave an early warning about this problem: "(we are) worried...by the extra-legal exactions perpetrated by the vigilantes, financed and equipped by local authorities, either civil or military."*8

On October 22, 1987, Corazon Aquino publicly gave her backing to the top vigilante group, Alsa Masa of Davao, in the southern isle of Mindanao. She called on the civil population of the country to participate actively in the "battle against communism" by joining up with vigilante groups. Despite the cautious language used, she thus legalized the savage parallel-police repression she previously condemned. She gives the most sinister implications to the declaration of "total war" against "communism" issued after breaking off peace negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front.

Protests have grown since the president came out behind the "vigilantes". Karina Constantino-David, deputy minister of social affairs, resigned from the government. The human rights movements, all the independent left from the Partido ng Bayan to the socialist organization Bisig, have vigorously condemned the official support given to terrorist para-military groups.

The anti-dictatorial uprising in February 1986 raised democratic hopes both within the social elite and among the working people. The elites have got back their democracy — elections in which victory is determined by corruption, armed force and clientelism. Workers and peasants today are rediscovering the insecurity they had previously fought under Ferdinand Marcos' martial law. ★

5. See "Aquino under the shadow of the gun" by Paul Petitjean, *IV* 126, September 28, 1987; and "L'armée philippine défie ouvertement les institutions démocratiques" by Pierre Rousset, *Le Monde diplomatique*, October 1987.

6. See *IV* 127, October 12, 1987 (and Erratum *IV* 128).

7. Corazon Aquino, "Speech before businessmen at the Manila Hotel, October 20, 1987", *Chronology of Events* 38, October 1987, p.11.

8. Amnesty International, SF 87 RN033/ASA 35/05/87. Substantial extracts from this report were published in *Philippines informations* 59, December 1987.

IN RELATION to the Soviet Union today the question therefore arises: have the internal reforms introduced by Gorbachev been accompanied by corresponding changes in the country's foreign policy? (At the same time the extent and character of the changes in Soviet foreign policy should be able to shed light on the real nature and depth of the internal reforms.) Changes in Soviet policy in the area of the East-West arms race have been the most striking.

Gorbachev's domestic policy, the *perestroika*, has its origins in the need to improve Soviet economic performance that, by various indices, has been declining since the middle of the 1970s. The basic idea of the economic reform is to replace the centralized, "administrative" system of management with a decentralized system coordinated through a market mechanism. The role of the center in this system will be limited to longer-term strategic planning, accomplished through regulation of the market mechanism by manipulating such economic levers as taxes, interest rates, subsidies, controls on foreign trade and a limited number of centrally fixed norms and prices.

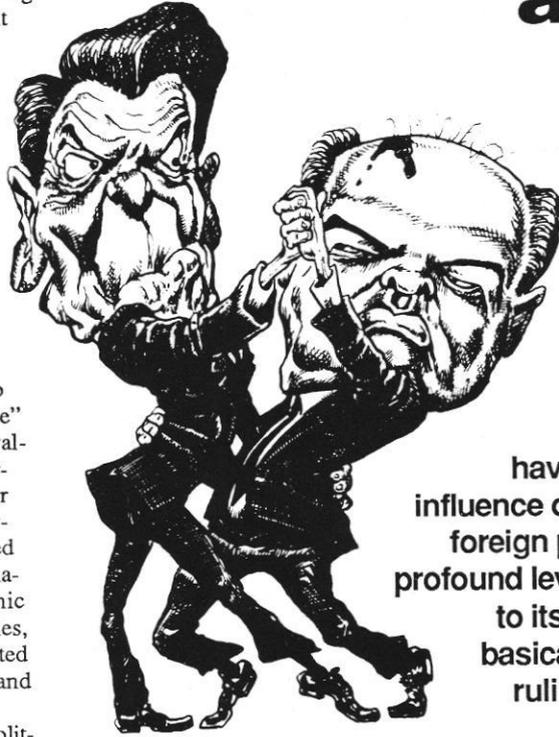
The other side of the *perestroika* is political reform, what Gorbachev calls "democratization", but which is really more of a liberalization in the sense of increased individual freedoms and protection against official abuse of power. As for democratization — empowering ordinary people to decide major questions of public life — this has been of a very limited and halting, though in the Soviet context not negligible, character.

Bureaucratic interests threatened by the reform

Gorbachev himself has called democratization the very essence of the *perestroika*. This reflects his understanding that powerful bureaucratic interests are threatened by the reform and their resistance can be overcome only if there is popular pressure in favour of the reform. At the same time, since the economic reform will not be able to significantly improve consumption for a number of years (indeed, many workers view the reform as immediately threatening), the political reforms are a necessary measure in order to mobilize the working class behind it.

Politically, then, the *perestroika* has entailed a certain shift — albeit unstable and hesitant — in the political base of the regime (that is, the central power: in the last analysis the politburo). It has moved away from the position it had assumed under Brezhnev, as spokesperson and arbiter of bureaucratic interests, and has attempted through changes of style and substance to acquire a more popular base, one that

Perestroika and the arms race



MARXISTS have always contested the sharp distinction that bourgeois politicians and political scientists tend to draw between a state's internal and external policies. For Marxists, it is not simply a matter of internal politics having a more or less important influence on foreign policy. Rather, the foreign policy of a state, on the most profound level, necessarily corresponds to its internal policy, because it is basically the interests of the same ruling class that are in question.

DAVID SEPPO

would actively support its policies.

At the same time, there have been some important changes in foreign policy, particularly in the area of East-West relations and the arms race. These changes reflect, of course, a desire to cut military spending in order to facilitate the economic reform. But, more profoundly, they have been made both possible and necessary by the shift that has occurred in the regime's political basis.

Soviet policy under Brezhnev toward the West, and in particular towards the US as the West's hegemonic power, was of a typical bureaucratic character and in its essence dated back to Stalin. This involved a search for security based on the military might of the Soviet Union on the one hand, and on diplomatic accords with the capitalist powers on the other. In this view, military power was a precondition for the accords.

In this approach, popular and revolutionary movements abroad were not seen as allies of the Soviet Union but as adjuncts of its diplomatic strategy. This meant that they were counselled moderation, a strategy that rarely, if ever, met with success. In any case, for most of the post-war period, particularly in countries where the Communist Party was weak, it was often enough for the movement to become even indirectly associated with Soviet goals for it to become discredited among the broader strata of the working class.

This was particularly evident in the area of the arms race under Brezhnev. Soviet policy here has always been "defensive" in the sense that it reacted to American initiatives and was clearly interested in reaching agreements to limit or put an end to this extremely burdensome and dangerous competition. At the same time, Soviet policy seemed designed precisely to perpetuate the arms race, based as it was on the premise that the Americans would take the Soviet Union seriously and treat it as an equal only when they realized that it was as strong as they are, and completely determined and capable of matching any escalation they might attempt.

Deadlock under Brezhnev

The result was the growth of a huge Soviet arsenal to match that of the Americans. But instead of convincing the Americans that military superiority of the Soviet Union was a pipe-dream, Soviet military growth supplied the US with its most convincing, albeit entirely hypocritical, justification for its continued arms escalation. The ordinary citizens of the NATO states were unable to discern the "defensive" nature of Soviet missiles, which were after all aimed at their heads. Along with the ubiquitous press reports on the repressive nature of the internal Soviet regime (not to

mention the "defensive" invasion of a neighbouring state every decade or so), the very existence and constant growth of this arsenal were generally enough to convince people in the West of the reality of the "Soviet threat" and the necessity of the Western arms build-up. In this context, the peace movement had a very hard time fighting accusations that it was the dupe, if not the conscious agent, of Moscow. The call for a negotiated mutual reduction of arms, a stand that was politically acceptable to the broad public, was utopian, given the American policy of maintaining nuclear "superiority" and the Soviet insistence on parity. On the other hand, the demand for a unilateral Western reduction, a politically more "correct" demand, was clearly unacceptable to most people.

NATO's "two-track" policy

The deadlock under Brezhnev was nowhere more evident than in the case of the 1979 NATO decision to introduce American intermediate-range cruise and Pershing-II missiles into Europe. Despite all the talk of allaying fears of the US "decoupling" from Western Europe, the basic motivation behind this decision was NATO's new "forward strategy" called "overland battle". The idea was that in case of war, NATO forces would move forward rapidly to carry the war into Warsaw Pact territory, thus sparing Western Europe. Intermediate-range cruise and Pershing missiles stationed in Western and Central Europe were just what was needed. Fortunately for NATO, as has often occurred in the past, the Soviets inadvertently supplied the pretext: quite independently of the NATO decision, they decided to "modernize" their own intermediate-range missiles. The SS-20s thus became the "reason", after the fact, for NATO's new and very dangerous escalation.

NATO policy was officially "two track", that is, we won't install our new accurate and fast intermediate missiles in Europe if you remove all the intermediate missiles you already have there. At the same time, the US refused to consider elimination of the French and British nuclear arsenals, which were due to be upgraded. This so-called "zero option" proposal was put forward in 1981 only because it was assumed to be unacceptable to the Soviets. And it was. Moscow broke off all arms negotiations and, following its policy of "parity", answered the Americans with an increase in the number of SS-20s and their installation in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia.

When all this failed to move the Americans, the Soviets finally agreed to return to the START (long-range missiles) talks, believing that the Americans had agreed to put "star wars" on the table. While this indeed seemed to have been the case, the US soon emphatically denied any intention of negotiating on this question. It seemed that

the Soviets, with nothing to hope for, would cancel the scheduled summit.

But, soon after Gorbachev came to power, Gromyko — who represented the traditional policy — was "kicked upstairs" out of his post as foreign minister and into the presidency of the Supreme Soviet. This was a sign of a shift in policy. There followed a most remarkable series of unilateral concessions and proposals from the Soviet Union beginning with the freeze on nuclear testing, repeatedly extended in the face of American testing. This was followed by Soviet agreement to separate the talks on the European missiles from the two other arms reduction negotiations. Finally, to the Americans' total consternation, the Soviets in effect accepted the zero option proposal, including the total exclusion of the French and British arsenals.

The Americans, at a loss, then added a new demand: no longer a freeze of SS-20s in Asia but significant cuts and finally their complete elimination. The Soviets accepted this too. Then the Americans insisted on linking the agreement on intermediate missiles to the short-range missiles based in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, as these could be seen as a substitute for the SS-20s. The Soviets agreed to this too, thus causing consternation among West European political leaders, who began worrying about the de-nuclearization of Europe (the truth finally came out) and its "decoupling" from the United States. (Actually, it is not so much that they fear a Soviet invasion or "nuclear blackmail" as that they fear being left to govern without the "Soviet threat", which has been a crucial basis of political stability in Western Europe since the second world war.) All this without the slightest American concession.

Balance of terror immoral

The new orientation in foreign policy was summarized in an article by Academician Primakov in *Pravda* of July 10, 1987. Primakov begins by rejecting the traditional view that "increasing fighting sufficiency...[is] virtually the *only* means of maintaining the country's security at the proper level.... Today, such assessments and interpretations are clearly insufficient and inaccurate. While maintaining the great importance of improving its defence capability, the Soviet Union is bringing to the fore political means of ensuring its security."

Primakov argues that deterrence based upon parity, upon a balance of terror, is both immoral and unreliable. However, until nuclear weapons are eliminated and replaced by political and legal guarantees, strategic parity, despite everything, will

have a stabilizing significance. However, he rejects the traditional view of parity as a quantitative concept, putting forth rather the notion of reasonable sufficiency: "the inability of either side to avoid a devastating retaliatory strike". It is this abandonment of the policy of parity and the return to the concept of minimal deterrence (which was the policy under Khrushchev at least until 1962-3) that has allowed the Soviet government to make these unilateral concessions, unthinkable under Brezhnev.

Primakov admits that the old policy was a losing game for the Soviet Union that played directly into American hands:

"In the past, in a number of cases we agreed to the 'rules of the game' that were imposed on us, which consisted of symmetrical responses to American steps in the arms race. In this way, the US, one can assume, deliberately wanted to wear us out economically. Now, with the introduction of the principle of reasonable sufficiency, the US will find such attempts very difficult."

"Concessions to common sense"

It is clear that this policy is not to the liking of a very significant part of the military establishment or to the more conservative sectors of the party and diplomatic bureaucracies. As Primakov notes:

"Sometimes the measures are perceived as concessions on the part of the USSR. In fact, one must say in no uncertain terms that in a number of cases concessions are made and are designed to reduce things to a common denominator where the problem of arms reduction is con-



cerned. But these are concessions to common sense, not a retreat under US pressure...

"Events have shown that stagnation is by no means a synonym for firmness; the flexible and dynamic Soviet proposals, which are constantly being developed and clarified, keep the militaristic forces that felt much more comfortable without this flexibility and this dynamism on our part in a state of constant tension and give them no respite.

Gorbachev sends warning to the military

"We proceed from the premise that the new approaches to international affairs that are guiding Soviet policy are not just the only approaches possible in today's conditions, but also are perfectly realistic."

Despite popular Western theories about the supposed militarization of the Soviet regime, civilian control of the Soviet armed forces has never been challenged, although Brezhnev definitely did have a warm place in his heart for the military and generally shared its outlook on the arms race. Gorbachev, however, has not had much trouble in moving away from these policies and putting the army in its place. He sent a warning to the military, when, following Matthias Rust's 'plane landing in Red Square in May 1987, he dismissed not only

the commander of the anti-aircraft defences, but the minister of defence himself, to replace him with a man of his choice.

This, of course, has not necessarily put an end to the military's complaints (for example, it has openly taken exception to recently published too-truthful accounts of the second world war), and it might well

eventually play a role in any coalition that sought to remove Gorbachev or force him to abandon his internal and external policies. But, for the time being at least, despite certain signs of a slowdown in the reform process due to internal opposition (especially after the dismissal of Moscow party chief Boris Yeltsin), Gorbachev and the backers of *perestroika* are still quite firmly in control.

Of course, Gorbachev does not have any illusions about being able to change the basic course of Reagan's policy. In particular, the agreement on intermediate-range missiles has not at all affected NATO strategy in Europe. Land-based missiles, in any case, were too visible politically and too easily aroused popular opposition. Now, with the public's fears allayed by the removal of European land-based missiles, the move to precision and deep strike air and sea weapons can go ahead smoothly just as Reagan continues to push "star wars", the real aim of which is to give the US the ability to launch a first strike without itself being exposed to "unacceptable" destruction by Soviet retaliation.

But Gorbachev's aim is not to influence Reagan. Soviet concessions are aimed at influencing American and NATO policy indirectly through the US Congress, but more generally through public opinion. As Primakov wrote:

"Of course, the situation is still a long way from one in which these new approaches and the new political thinking are adopted by the American leadership. More than that, the US is putting up fierce resistance to the Soviet course. Militarism does not surrender so easily, and it is not going to surrender its positions.

"Popularity of Soviet state abroad is unprecedented"

"All the same, the situation today is far from what it was two or three years ago. It is becoming more and more difficult for the anti-Soviet elements in the West to maintain their artificially created image of the USSR as a bellicose undemocratic state that threatens the world and thinks about nothing but expansion. Public opinion polls in the US and Western Europe indicate that this myth is not holding up when it collides with *perestroika* and *glasnost* [openness] in the USSR and the Soviet Union's constructive foreign policy. The popularity of the Soviet state and our leadership abroad — among the masses and among intellectuals — is unprecedented.

"Of course, a change in public opinion in the West still does not create, in and of itself, a decisive shift in the international situation. But important preconditions are forming for such a shift. The flexibility and constructiveness of the Soviet Union's foreign policy is certainly conducive to the development of this trend."

In the area of the East-West arms

race, then, Soviet policy has clearly taken a turn, one that seeks to create the conditions for a genuine alliance between the Soviet Union and the popular anti-militaristic forces in the West. There are definite signs that popular belief in the "Soviet threat" and the gut-level anti-Sovietism, basic elements of the dominant ideology in the post-war West, are indeed weakening. It goes without saying that if this process were to be carried through to its conclusion, it would have a tremendous impact on politics in the capitalist world, both international and domestic.

But whether this process can be carried through depends in the last analysis on genuine democratization in the Soviet Union. Democratization means the genuine and complete shift in the political basis of the regime from the bureaucracy to the people (that is, the working class). The liberalization and the ultra-cautious playing with democracy that have so far marked the *perestroika* clearly do not provide a stable basis for the change to a consistent internationalist foreign policy.

A potential threat to imperialism and militarism

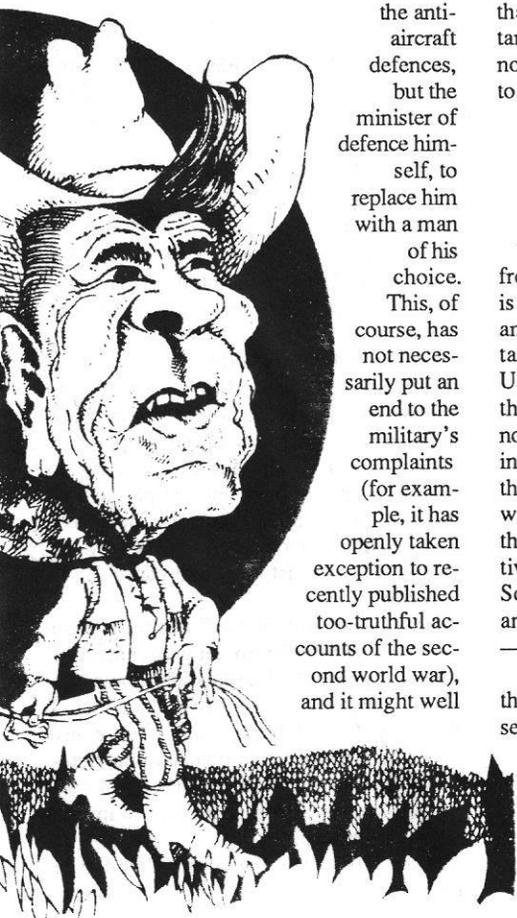
But the opposite is equally true: a consistent internationalist foreign policy is not a realistic option for the Soviet regime unless it is democratic. For unless the Soviet Union convincingly sheds its authoritarian, anti-popular domestic policies to become a genuine socialist democracy, any attempt to base its foreign policy on alliances with working class and popular movements in the West will necessarily fail.

On the other hand, as even the liberalization to date has demonstrated, a democratic Soviet Union (which would necessarily be infinitely more democratic than any existing bourgeois state), would have a tremendous attraction in the West. Such an alliance would pose the greatest threat to Western imperialism and militarism.

The prospect of genuine democratization in the Soviet Union depends upon the independent mobilization of the working class, possibly in alliance with the most radical sectors of the bureaucracy. So far, despite some popular stirrings, this has not occurred. It probably will not happen until the crisis at the top, the struggle between pro- and anti-reform elements in the bureaucracy and in the leadership, becomes much more acute.¹

Developments in the Soviet Union over the next few years will therefore be decisive, not only for the USSR but for the entire world. ★

1. For an analysis of the politics of Soviet reform, see "Economic reform and democratization" in IV 128 (USSR special issue), October 26, 1987.



Swords into plough- shares

THE COSTS of the arms race are a heavy burden for all peoples, even the richest. Worldwide last year between \$750 and \$800, 000 million were spent on armaments, half of it by NATO and a quarter by the Warsaw Pact (see Table 1). An enormous potential for repression and aggression has been built up, threatening not just the movements for liberation and independence, but the survival of humanity as a whole.

Never has the age-old yearning to turn swords into ploughshares been more justified. The signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty in Washington on December 8 seemed to many to mean at least a halt in the arms race and a turn toward disarmament. Is this just a vain hope?

HANS-JÜRGEN SCHULZ

WORLDWIDE, at least 50,000 nuclear weapons with an explosive potential of 20,000 megatons are being kept in readiness. This is a grotesque and irrational over-armament. One US navy submarine carrying 220 missiles with an explosive potential of 0.01 megatons could make Hiroshimas out of all the Soviet big cities.

Nonetheless, for decades the the US government has been stepping up the arms race to gain overwhelming nuclear superiority. And the Soviets have been striving to keep

Table 1: World Military Expenditure 1985 (1980 prices)

	\$ billion	% of total
USA	205	30.9
Other NATO	123	18.5
Total NATO	328	49.4
USSR	146	22.0
Other Warsaw Pact	14	2.1
Total Warsaw Pact	160	24.1
Other Europe	17	2.5
China	30	4.5
Third World states	128	19.5
World total	663	100

(Military expenditure in current prices was \$720 billion in 1985)

Table 2: Deployment 1987

	USA	USSR	Britain	France	China
Strategic forces					
Intercontinental missiles	1,000	1,398	-	-	20
Submarine-launched missiles	640	967	64	96	26
Bombers	339	140	-	-	100
Theatre forces					
Aircraft	2,900	3,800	238	129	15
Artillery	4,300	3,700	-	-	-
Missiles	2,300	5,500	-	62	125
Strategic warheads	13,680	9,900	128	192	46
Tactical warheads	8,960	9,000	536	295	260
Total warheads	22,640	18,900	536	487	306

Table 3: Missiles eliminated (Washington Treaty)

	Range (km)	Deployed	Reserve	Total	Missiles
USSR TOTAL		857	895	1,752	3,600
<i>Intermediate-range</i>					
SS-4, SS-5, SS-20	2-5,000	470	356	826	2,500
<i>Short-range</i>					
SS-12, SS-23	350-900	387	539	926	1,100
USA TOTAL		501	358	859	950
<i>Intermediate-range</i>					
Pershing-II, Cruise	1,7-2,500	429	260	689	
<i>Short-range</i>					
Pershing 1 A	740	72	98	170	

up with it, trying to achieve a numerical equality that has become absurd. Table 2 shows the extent of its success.

Even the generals consider this excessive, and have quietly undertaken corrections. Thus, the number of US nuclear weapons stationed in Europe was reduced from 8,000 to 4,600 (at the end of 1986). In five years' time, this is supposed to be further reduced to 3,400. In fact, this does not involve voluntary disarmament.

What are going out are atomic mines, atomic artillery (with a range of 15 to 30 kilometers) and atomic anti-aircraft guns. These weapons are an expression of military stupidity. Because of their short range, they are not only weapons of nuclear mass destruction but also of self-destruction, because they would endanger the forces of the armies using them.

The number of of nuclear weapons is, in any case, so great that numerical superiority becomes meaningless. Even if it fell victim to the worst conceivable nuclear attack, the Soviet Union would still have enough nuclear weapons left to wipe any attacker off the earth several times over. In these

conditions, the peace movements in Eastern Europe and a section of the left in Western Europe have also called on the Soviet Union to take unilateral disarmament measures.

This would have no effect on the military relationship of forces. But by such demonstrative measures, the Soviet Union could highlight its desire for peace. Imperialist propaganda's lies about a Soviet threat would be undermined, and the pressure of the peace movement would be increased. Such positions have been attacked by the official Communist parties in particular as anti-Soviet.

Now these "anti-Soviet" positions have been adopted by the Soviet government itself. In signing the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) treaty it met a demand that NATO had been raising for many years. It renounced its own intermediate-range missiles. In return for that, it got very little. Thus, in a formal sense, the imbalance is increased.

In the INF treaty, the Soviet Union gave up 1,752 missiles with over 3,600 warheads. The US, however, gave up only 859

missiles and less than 1,000 warheads (see Table 3). These weapons are supposed to be scrapped within three years. The dismantling of these weapons and the ban on further production is supposed to be monitored not only by satellites and other forms of intelligence, but also through local and factory inspections. (Over a period 13 years, the Soviet Union is supposed to carry out 240 such inspections, and the US 400.)

In this way, NATO increases the quantitative superiority that it had before. Its losses in terms of investment are minor, since the missiles only cost it \$6,600 million or 3% of its yearly arms budget. Long before starting to dismantle the missiles, these nuclear weapons will be replaced with new and more powerful ones. Between January and April 1988, for example, 34 of the new B-1B bombers with 1,300 atomic bombs and cruise missiles will be deployed. All other arms programs, in particular the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and the production of chemical weapons will, of course, continue.

In fact, for the time being, the treaty does not make any difference either to the murderous over-arming or the arms race. But, by its concessions, the Soviet government has achieved a big political success. Washington, which previously rejected any treaty limiting the arms race, had to accept a minimal but symbolic measure of real disarmament.

Large parts of Europe will become nuclear free

Missiles are going to be dismantled. By their withdrawal, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Belgium and perhaps Italy will become nuclear free. Ballistic missiles (not cruise missiles) with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers are not supposed to be produced or tested any longer. In Washington, the American government even reluctantly agreed to common declarations of intent. A desire was expressed to cut the number of strategic weapons in half (1,600 delivery systems and 6,000 warheads). A reduction in the number of troops in Europe and a ban on nuclear tests is being sought, and an exploratory treaty on monitoring tests has even been concluded. That would be real disarmament.

In June, President Reagan is to visit Moscow. Both sides give the impression that they are determined at that time to come to an agreement at least on reducing strategic weapons. It would be an irony if it were Ronald Reagan who went down in world history as the disarmament president, and then inevitably got the Nobel Peace Prize together with Gorbachev.

It has not gone as far as that. That eventuality is a very unlikely but not entirely excluded variant of the expected development. The Reagan administration will think of some way to wiggle out of the embrace of a disarming Soviet Union. ★

AROUND THE WORLD



SOUTH AFRICA

Botha's new clampdown

A TIGHTENING of the state of emergency has been announced by the South African government. Seventeen movements have been banned from any activity. That means that the main anti-apartheid movements will have virtually no right other than to have offices. The main organizations hit are the United Democratic Front (UDF), the trade-union confederation COSATU and the political movement AZAPO.

This decision by the government comes on the eve of by-elections in which the ruling National Party is in danger of coming under heavy pressure from the right. The pretext for this new escalation of repression was that a "revolutionary climate" was prevailing in the country. Unfortunately, the struggles had already been very substantially restricted by the extent of the repression and by the arrest of hundreds of leaders.

On the other hand it seems that in reality the racist regime wants to widen its room for maneuver at a time when it is launching a very ambitious policy of economic reforms, freezing wages and privatizing state enterprises. This new policy is aimed especially at satisfying certain liberal capitalist circles and getting the country out of recession. It needed to be complemented by guarantees against strikes and any social mobilizations.

Against this new attack by the Botha regime on the South African Black movement, protest demonstrations, while useful, are not enough. In the resistance struggles that it will continue to wage, the South African people's movement, especially the trade-union movement, will need to be able to count on other forms of solidarity. There should not be any strike in a subsidiary of a foreign country or in a major industry without immediate solidarity actions being organized abroad in the corresponding enterprises or industries. COSATU, which in recent months has been the major organization involved in the social struggles, may now face serious difficulties in functioning.

It is still too early to know exactly what effect these latest measures are going to have on the general level of the struggles. Over the two years of the state of emergency, the capacity for action of the Black movement, especially in the townships, has been greatly reduced. The main question

that arises today, therefore, is whether labor disputes will still be "legal" and whether the unions will be able to maintain their general activities. ★

A U S T R A L I A

Celebrating 200 years of struggle

IN ITS FIRST issue (February-March), *International Solidarity*, the magazine of Solidarity, an Australian group linked to the Fourth International, reported on the demonstrations against the ceremonies commemorating two hundred years of white settlement in Australia:

For many Sydneysiders the Bicentenary will fade into memory as another New Year — grog and fireworks by the harbour. For tens of thousands of Aborigines and land rights supporters January 26 was a decisive show of strength and resolve.

Outside the Central Lands Council building in Alice Springs the red, black and yellow flags were at half mast. Marcia Langton spoke at a brief ceremony of mourning before people returned to work, refusing to mark the anniversary of the invasion as a holiday. In the centre of Melbourne, the official flag-raising came to grief, besieged by angry Aboriginal and white demonstrators whose land rights chants drowned out the official speeches.

While Sydney Harbour bore the brunt of the national festivities, the southern end of the city was choked with hundreds of red, black and yellow banners, carried by marchers from all over Australia. Led by tribal elders and dancers, the march united 12,000 blacks from NSW, Central Australia, Tasmania, the Top End, Victoria and South Australia.

Falling in behind the Black section of the march were trade union, feminist, lesbian, gay and Uniting Church contingents. Thousands marched under the banners of migrant socialist organizations from Italy, Latin America, Turkey and Lebanon. Indigenous peoples' groups from Chile and other Latin American countries, and Kota-hitanga, representing Maori communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia, had joined the Aboriginal march in Redfern.

By the time the march reached Hyde Park, 40,000 strong, it was clear to everyone that this was one of the largest and most important political rallies ever held in Australia.

Greetings from overseas indigenous peoples' organizations and anti-imperialist

fronts, such as the PLO and the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front, were warmly received.

Aboriginal speakers explained the centrality of land rights to the struggle for sovereignty and self-determination. Speakers denounced the impoverishment that leads to tragically high rates of trachoma, leprosy, deafness and malnutrition. The enormous gap between white and black life expectancy and infant mortality rates testifies to the racist oppression that the bicentennial ceremonies cover up.

The main message from the speakers' platform, however, was optimistic. There was a deep feeling of unprecedented unity of Aboriginal communities from very different areas and situations; a new pride and confidence, reflecting the strength of this mobilization. Awareness by non-Aboriginal Australians and people overseas of these struggles has grown dramatically and will persist. ★

ISRAELI STATE

Spark papers banned

ANOTHER ATTEMPT to suppress anti-Zionist publications put out by Jewish group is threatened in Israel. On January 14, Jerusalem District Commissioner of the Ministry of the Interior Eli Swissa informed the publishers of *Derekh Hanitzotz/Tariq Ash-Sharara* ["The Way of the Spark"] that he was considering revoking their licence because of their "real link with the Democratic Front." The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), led by Na'ef Hawatmeh, is banned in Israel.

The papers concerned are biweeklies in Hebrew and Arabic that have been published in various forms since 1977. They

are put out by a small group of Trotskyist origin that in 1986 joined the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, the coalition whose major component is the Israeli Communist Party. The group was associated for a time with the Israeli section of the Fourth International.

The first attempt in many years to suppress publications inside the formal boundaries of Israel and in which citizens of Jewish origin were involved came in the raid on the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem in February 1987. It involved the arrest of the director of the center, Michael Warschawsky, a well-known leader of the Israeli section of the Fourth International. Despite widespread protests, this new attack on the Spark group makes it clear that the Israeli authorities are still on a course toward greater censorship.

In its February 9 issue, the publication of the Alternative Information Centre, *News From Within*, expressed its defense of the Spark group against the threat of suppression:

"We too have suffered at the hands of the occupying authorities. The Alternative Information Centre was closed last February for six months. The Centre's former director, Michael Warschawsky, currently on \$50,000 bail and banned from working with us, is still awaiting trial under the Defense Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance — acts which permit conviction on the basis of secret evidence, which even the defence lawyers are not permitted to hear. Our equipment and archives are still held by the police, allegedly as evidence in the trial. We express our full solidarity with *Derekh Nitzotz/Tariq A-Sharara* in their resistance to this arbitrary and antidemocratic decree and endorse their defiant words that "His-

tory has proved stronger than arbitrary measures. It is not we who invented the Palestinian uprising, and the closing down of our newspaper will not prevent the Palestinian people from fighting for their just rights."

A representative of the Spark group, Roni Ben-Efrat denied the charge of links with the DPLF in an interview with *News From Within*. "I am not an expert on the Palestinian organizations, but if any of them ever happens to take a similar position to that of Nitzotz, then so much the better for them."

Protests against the threatened banning of the Spark papers can be sent to Eli Swissa, Jerusalem District Commissioner, 1 Queen Shlomzion St., Jerusalem 94146, Israel. ★

INTERNATIONAL

Moscow Trials Campaign

THE CAMPAIGN to clear the names of the accused in the Moscow Trials has been collecting signatures from all over the world (see *IV* 129 for the full appeal and initial list of signatories). You can contact the campaign c/o Michael Löwy, 34 rue des Lyonnais, 75005, Paris, France.

Latest signatories:

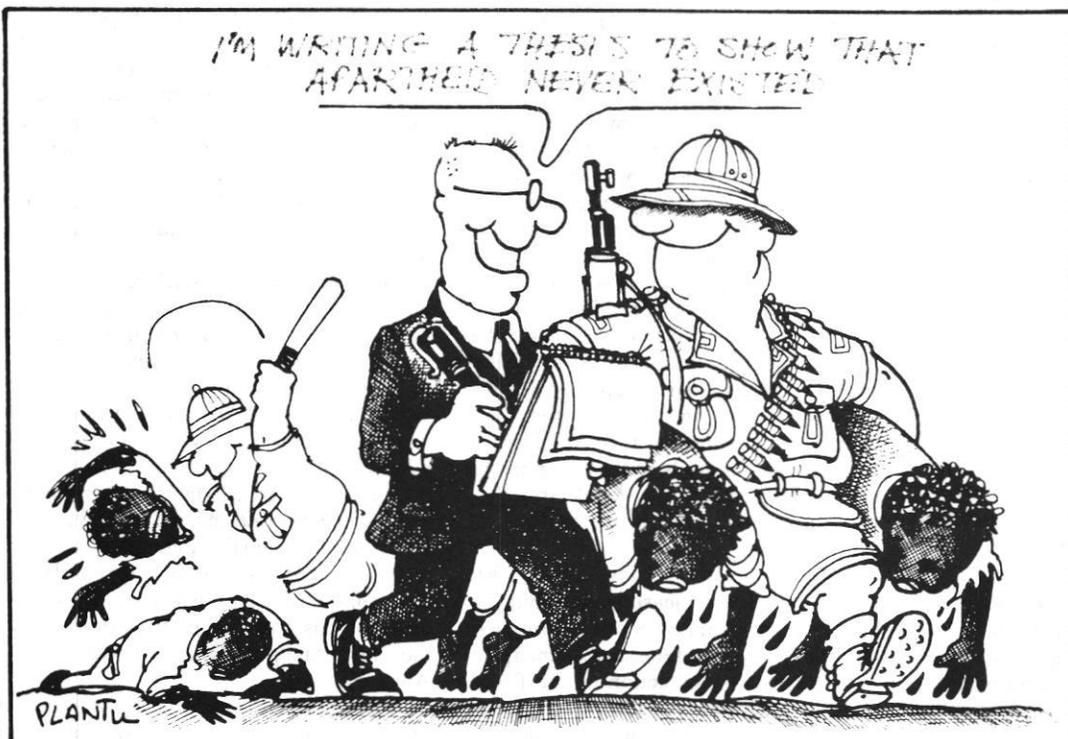
Britain: David King, designer; The following members of the Socialist Workers Party (GB): Tony Cliff; Sheila McGregor; Duncan F. Hallas; Chris Harman; Chris Banbury; Peter Alexander; Lindsey German; Mel Norris; Philip Taylor; Paul Foot; Alex Callinicos.

Greece: G. Perouzéos.

Mexico: Carlos Saguna Zavala, ambassador; Carlos Fernandez del Real, defence lawyer for political prisoners; Eduardo Neules; Maria Teresa Jardi; Jorge Melendez, president journal-

ists union; Eduardo Melma; Eva Grosser; José Carreño.

USA: David McReynolds, president War Resister League; David Cortright, co-director SANE; Philip Gasper, Uni. of Michigan; Irwin Rosenthal, ed. board Jewish Currents; Phylliss Jacobson, Julius Jacobson, co-directors New Politics; Patrick Quinn, Northwestern Uni. archives. ★



The human rights movement debates *glasnost*

THE PRAGUE SPRING began 20 years ago, when the Central Committee plenum in January 1968 removed Antonin Novotny as head of the party and replaced him with Alexandr Dubcek, accelerating liberalization. That opened the way for a tempestuous process of mobilization and questioning of the bureaucratic system.

In August 1968, the Soviet bureaucracy and its client bureaucracies in Poland and East Germany sent their armies into the country to stop it. Since the changes were initiated by the party leadership and the resistance to the occupation was led by the established authorities, the political limitations of this leadership undermined opposition to reconsolidation of the bureaucracy.

Petr Uhl was a leading figure in the revolutionary Marxist current that was beginning to grow rapidly toward the end of the Prague Spring. He has continued to play a leading role in the opposition to bureaucratic dictatorship since, most notably in Charter 77, the main human-rights organized in "normalized" Czechoslovakia.

In the following article, he assesses the state of opposition to the bureaucracy 20 years after the start of the Prague Spring and 10 years after the founding of Charter 77, in particular in the light of the Soviet new course under Gorbachev, which many of the Prague Spring Czechoslovak Communist Party leaders see as a vindication of the policy reversed by the August 1968 invasion. The article has been reproduced in a shortened form from *Inprekor*, a Czech-language bulletin published under the auspices of the Fourth International. It is the first in an occasional series of retrospective articles on 1968-1988 that we will be publishing this year.

PETR UHL

FOR DECADES, the Soviet Union and the East European countries have been painted as black in the West or, more precisely, grey.

Influenced by Orwellian visions and the testimonies of Solzhenitzyn, Western journalists have been tempted, especially after the Soviet interventions in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Afghanistan in 1979, to present the Soviet system as in essence aggressive, to argue that it is by nature expansionist. Totalitarianism — a dehumanized state power seeking to absorb and dominate all social life, from whose domination nothing escapes — has become the analytical framework of most works devoted to Eastern Europe.

Such conservative schemas have often included an attempt to demonstrate an ideological and functional similarity, if not an identity, between Soviet-type totalitarianism and the Nazism. The advocates of this approach are fundamentally interested in justifying capitalist productive relations and bourgeois democracy. Many of these authors, in fact, say that openly.

Nonetheless, a simple rejection of this approach is insufficient. It is insufficient first of all for those who have the experience of bourgeois democracy but whose views on the Soviet regime are influenced by a flood of second-hand information, or even outright disinformation. It is all the more insufficient for people in Eastern Europe who have little reliable information and are apt to form schematic notions about Western society and often about the causes of the phenomena that they encounter daily in their own lives.

Not the ideology of Marxism-Leninism

The scope of this article cannot offer a political analysis of the following points: that the development of the disagreeable state of society in Eastern Europe is not the ideology of Marxism-Leninism (or any other ideology); that the alleged expansionist character of the Soviet "empire" is not the logical outcome of the concept of "world revolution," but rather undeniable aggressiveness of the USSR is more and more the mark of its increasing defensiveness; that the tendency to totalitarianism — that is, absolute control and domination of everything and everyone — began to weaken in the 1950s; that judicial norms do exist (both good and bad ones, from the standpoint of the ruled), which the executive powers are increasingly trying to respect; or that the equation between Nazism and the system under which we are living is senseless, because the historical roots, economic causes and political features of the two social systems are distinct — just as the phenomena of these systems, their aspirations and their crimes, as well as people's lives in both political formations, are distinct.

What we will take up in this article is the



political development in Czechoslovakia over recent months in order to point up some facts that may contribute to a better understanding of our part of the world.

The grey totalitarian picture of the Soviet bloc, as we know, began to change with Gorbachev's rise to power. Many writers, but also many politicians and state leaders, welcomed his declarations and some of the changes that took place in the USSR with so much satisfaction that this gave a lot of people illusions that the Soviet system could be transformed into a democratic social order. This 180-degree turn, while not general and hedged with many reservations, has the same result as the old approach of damning Soviet totalitarianism as something malevolent. Before, everything was reprehensible: Soviet and East European society were "regimented" by the state power; law was denied, and there no human rights or human freedoms.

There was therefore, no reason to to bother with the details, to study the complex mechanism of power and of the political system, to look for allies in these countries, to make specific demands. Everything was grey, antipathetic, evil. But today, everything is on the right road. Gorbachev's reforms are advancing, sooner or later, they will carry the day. Stressing demands for respect for human rights or supporting the democratic opposition and independents — which would require a deeper understanding of the complex political, social and cultural scene, based on detailed study — might in fact damage the Gorbachev leadership, weaken it, shake its precarious position.

Idea of reformability of the Soviet system

Or, from another point of view, pointing up the convergence of the two systems toward the elusive democratic mean could discredit it in the eyes of influential Soviet conservatives, for whom this might be proof that the Gorbachev leadership was "making deals with the capitalists." So, even today there is no need to concern yourself with details and get too involved with the problems of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Convenient notions, however, tend not to be the most reliable of guides. The dilemma is not totalitarianism or reforms, because believing in either is an illusion fostered by a lack of information or political prejudices.

Even a man known for his extraordinarily sharp judgement, secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party at the time of the Prague Spring, Zdenek Mlynar, has fallen into the trap of this false dichotomy. While clearly rejecting the right-wing view of Soviet totalitarianism, he proposes as the only alternative the idea of the reformability of the Soviet system.

Despite living in exile in Vienna since

1977, Zdenek Mlynar is an excellent representative of the ex-Communist milieu, those who were expelled from the Czechoslovak CP in 1968. He is the spokesperson of a section of it. Let us look at the way this milieu interpreted Gorbachev's policy.

Belief in rehabilitation of reformist concepts

In the first place, it needs to be said that for the expelled Communists, especially inasmuch as they occupied the leading posts before 1970 and committed themselves in 1968-69 as the "progressive tendency," the present Soviet course represents a certain personal hope. That is understandable from a human point of view. Most of them, of course, if only because of their age, no longer believe that they will be "reintegrated" — to use their term — into the power structures. They do believe, however, in the rehabilitation of their reformist concepts. In fact, the similarities and correspondences between the Prague Spring and the present developments in the USSR are striking.

Only reluctantly do these former Communist Party members concede that the overall social, economic and political situation in the USSR is very different from the situation in Czechoslovakia today or 20 years ago. Moreover, they often see only one feature of this difference — Soviet technological and social backwardness, and in the political field its lack of democratic traditions and so forth. They cannot therefore explain the fact — which indeed has escaped many of them, and most of of the Czechoslovak population — that Gorbachev's reforms have little social support in the Soviet Union. That only the intelligentsia, in particular, the humanistic intelligentsia, has greeted them with enthusiasm, but that the Soviet working class and numerous other strata of the population are showing a lack of interest, or even sometimes opposition. The problem is that in discussions among former party members and other independents there is often a confusion of language. Concepts such as reform, democracy or self-management have different meanings for different people.

The nub of the argument about the relationship between the process of renewal in Czechoslovakia and the present Soviet changes is probably that those who maintain that there is a resemblance or even a partial identity see the Czechoslovak process in 1968 (more accurately 1968-69) as only a process of reform. That is, they see it as positive political and also cultural, social and partially economic changes implemented by the party leadership of the time, headed by Alexandr Dubcek, which aroused a positive response among the population and encouraged initiative and activity by the people.

But truth is (although this is putting it necessarily a bit schematically), that there

were two processes in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1968, which conditioned and complemented each other but had two rather clearly distinct aims and were supported by distinct social and political forces.

The first was the process conducted by the Czechoslovak CP, especially its leadership, parts of the apparatus, of the party intelligentsia and to a lesser extent by the party base. That was, to be sure, a reform process. This was a continuation of the 1963-68 period, which went barely noticed in the world because it was far from as spectacular or as stormy as the years 1968 and 1969. At that time important social changes took place, that were reluctantly accepted by the Novak and Lenart government, although over a long period.

The labor code was altered in the interests of the workers, the way was opened for travel abroad, the major barriers to international exchange of information fell. In the cultural world people began to breathe more easily, the most scandalous forms of "cadre policy" [discrimination] were eliminated in employment and education. Former political prisoners were gradually granted legal and civic rehabilitation. In a nutshell, conditions became freer. You could say that in the country an undramatic, slow but palpable liberalization, in the political sense of the term, painfully gained ground.

Economic situation called for reforms

This was the result of an international thaw, the overcoming of the cold war atmosphere and obviously of the changes in the USSR under Nikita Khrushchev, which appeared in Czechoslovakia somewhat later. Within the country, these changes have to be credited to those forces that fought for them — the humanitarian party intelligentsia, but also those working in the national economic sphere and technical sphere, as well as writers and to some extent students.

However, in the party and state apparatus there were also those who supported the reforms to a certain extent. The economic situation in particular called for reforms. It is quite appropriate to draw a parallel between that liberalization and the Soviet development. But there are also many differences. Among the most important are the much more pronounced stagnation of the Soviet economy today, by comparison with the Czechoslovak economic maladjustments of the time. In addition are the several decades of violent Stalinism in the USSR, which to a large extent broke the historical continuity of Russian, Baltic, Caucasian and other democratic traditions, and in particular the traditions of popular self-organization that developed in 1917 and the years that followed.

Another difference is in the general orientation and tempo of the two reform efforts. Slow changes in Czechoslovakia relaxed the grip of bureaucratic severity for

many social groupings in the population. But the "enlightened despotism" in the USSR is stressing intensification of work, discipline and order. That is not very popular. It explains the fundamental difference in the reaction of the population to the reforms. The Soviet population as a whole does not consider *glasnost* — that is, more honest information and the removal of the bureaucratic barriers to art and culture in general — as a fundamental change, and is watching *perestroika* in the economic and political spheres with reserve and partial hostility.

The Czechoslovak population in the 1960s, on the other hand, was much more favorably inclined to the Czechoslovak CP's efforts at reform. In the area of rights and freedoms, it received welcome "gifts." In the economic field, it looked with sympathy on the introduction of less rigid forms of work and management.

The political crisis of the Czechoslovak CP leadership at the end of 1967 and the beginning of 1968 not only speeded up but underwent a qualitative change. That was because a second process was gradually taking hold on the country's political scene, a process developing *from below*. More and more people in various circles, first among the students and the humanistic intelligentsia, later among the youth in general, among the technical intelligentsia and the trade-union functionaries in the factories and finally among the workers, joined this powerful democratic current.

This current's objective was no longer reforms, that is, changes in the *functioning* of the existing political and social system, modernizing it and making it more efficient and generally loosening the bureaucratic straitjackets stifling the society. Its aim was *structural* changes, advancing increasingly towards a total change in the regime, to the creation of a pluralistic society, to a democratic order.

The fundamental thing is that this current had a real popular base — the broadest masses of workers adhered to it. The decisive thing is not that millions of the supporters of this current saw their own self-organized activity as support for the Dubcek leadership of the time and were not able to distinguish very well (with some exceptions) their own interests, aspirations and goals from those of the party leadership.

For the party leadership of the state, the meaning of the reform was only consolidating the existing political system, in order to prevent the rise and development of a democratic social order, toward which a more and more massive initiative from below was heading. This is why the reformist approaches, which in 1963-67 made such pos-

itive improvements in the social climate in the country and improved the living conditions of the population, became an *obstacle* in the spring of 1968 — a very effective one in view of the illusions that had been spread — to a thoroughgoing democratization of the country.

That became evident after the Soviet intervention, from August 1968, to April 1969, when the party leadership still adhered to the reform policy, because the Czechoslovak CP set out on the road of concessions, "normalization" (re-bureaucratization) mainly through waves of illegal repression. What was not accomplished by repression was achieved by a relatively rapid transition to "consumer society, the corruption of part of the population and general demoralization".

It is necessary to clarify the concept of democracy. In the Czechoslovak and East



European conditions, it has to be understood as a program. Its definition has to have — in contrast to Western Europe, for example — revolutionary content. But it has to be defined. Otherwise, people are apt to regard any liberalization, any improvement in conditions, as an element of democratization.

However, you can only call "democracy" a political order that *institutionalizes* a pluralism of views, which explicitly supports the development of such pluralism — pluralism in politics, philosophy, religion, culture and so on. You can only call "democracy" a political order that constitutionally, legally and irreversibly guarantees a plurality of conceptions, programs, projects and so forth. It can only be democracy if it guarantees freedom of discussion and publication of such a plurality of positions, in short, if it offers the possibility for competing and winning supporters for different viewpoints.

It can only be democracy if it systematically guarantees that anyone can adhere to any conception or view, and influence it.

The majority have to be guaranteed the right to choose among various orientations, and the minority the right to criticize any conception and seek to win over more people to get the previous orientation changed.

The indications that the party leadership's attempts at reform in the spring of 1968 had an antidemocratic character are numerous. They can be seen from the discussion on eliminating censorship and the attempt to restore it at least partially, to the discussion on social democracy, on opposition and so-called oppositionism in the Action Program, on the leading role of the party, on the factory law, and the proposed law on association, and finally to the concealment of the real state of things — the Soviet threat — which the leadership must have known about.

In fact, many party members, and the party leadership itself, often made important progressive changes. Some of them overstepped the bounds between liberalization and democratization, between improving the political system and overcoming it. But, going up the pyramid of power, they became rarer and rarer exceptions. The celebrated progressives themselves often took bureaucratic stands in crucial disputes in an attempt to maintain what had been previously achieved.

So, it is simply an illusion — to come back to the positions that are held today by people who were Communist Party members at that time, those expelled from the party, positions that unfortunately

influence public opinion, although more often Western than Czechoslovak — to look at the Prague Spring process of renewal as a single current, to present it as reforming and democratizing at the same time.

Finally, also in the ex-Communist milieu, the responses to the present Soviet process are quite differentiated. The view that the changes in the USSR may mean — as Gorbachev says — a real revolutionary transformation, whose aim is to democratize Soviet society (to democratize it in the sense we proposed) is far from universal in this initial period.

The minority that held this opinion (in any case, always with reservations, especially regarding the time necessary for such a change) were more disappointed by Gorbachev's visit this April than those who thought otherwise. An expression of this position before Gorbachev's visit was the well-known letter by 18 former Czechoslovak CP functionaries (including four members of the Central Committee), which certainly did not represent a broad spec-

trum of the views of ex-Communists. Their identification with Gorbachev's policy, which forms the basis of the letter, aroused a wave of dissent in their milieu and others. Representatives of Charter 77 published a statement denying radio accounts linking the letter to the Charter.

Little in common with real democratization

A certainly more sophisticated position was taken by some other former Communists and non-party people. They recognize that today the Gorbachev leadership's objectives have little in common with real democratization. But at the same time, they argue that by stressing the democratic aspects Soviet policy could have today, if Gorbachev were taken at his "word," by pointing out that his proposals have lacked credibility so far but could gain it in the future (pretending that they want to see it gain such credibility), it is possible to create a certain pressure from below, to change illusions into conceptions, and conceptions into results. In fact, they argue, that when ideas are embraced by the masses, they can become a powerful social force, even if they are taken from a leadership that does not sincerely hold them.

However, particularly in Czechoslovakia, the insincerity of the "democratization" theses is quite apparent. And those who hold such views, with varying intensity and various nuances, slackened somewhat in their propagation of the new Gorbachev "thought," when they saw the shift in the attitude of Czechoslovak citizens — as well as many ex-Communists — toward Gorbachev's policy after his visit to Czechoslovakia, a shift from hope to scepticism.

A very critical attitude to *perestroika* and

glasnost was not exceptional, even in the ex-Communist milieu, even before April. There were and are people who see the changes in the USSR as purely cosmetic, who retain the conception of a basically unchanging Soviet (totalitarian) society. Most people, however, criticize this view, pointing to concrete changes and concrete liberalization in culture and art, partial liberalization in the area of human rights — with a decrease in repression and release of political prisoners however inadequate these measures may be. In particular, they point to liberalization in the economic sphere, where the term reform is justified, insofar as this is understood as a certain improvement in the quality of goods, discussion on the economy and its management in general.

With the exception of a sceptical minority, in the former Communist Party members' circles everyone starts out from the idea that the Soviet system can be reformed, meaning that it can be democratized. The argument is only over whether Gorbachev is serious, and whether in the given political, economic and other conditions his leadership is really able to direct this reform current, and over what chances he has for success.

The road of reforms from above

Generally, only one road to improved conditions is recognized — the road of reforms from above. Depending on how democratic an outlook participants in this debate have, and that of the former Communist Party members associated with Charter 77 is certainly more democratic than those who are not, this view is usually complemented by the idea of the need for pressure from below. This means pressure from the lower levels of the official struc-

ture (the base of the Communist Party, official departments, the Church, youth organizations, and so on), as well as pressure from the independent associations and initiative groups (Charter 77, Vons, Underground and so on).

From the opposite standpoint — that is, the standpoint that Soviet political system is basically unreformable — it does not, of course, follow that reform from above should be entirely rejected. While recognizing that improvements in the political system and of the economic "mechanism" are aimed at preserving this system, it is quite possible to support reforms of some aspects of it that improve the lives of specific people or groups of citizens, and which offer everyone a definite possibility to breathe more freely.

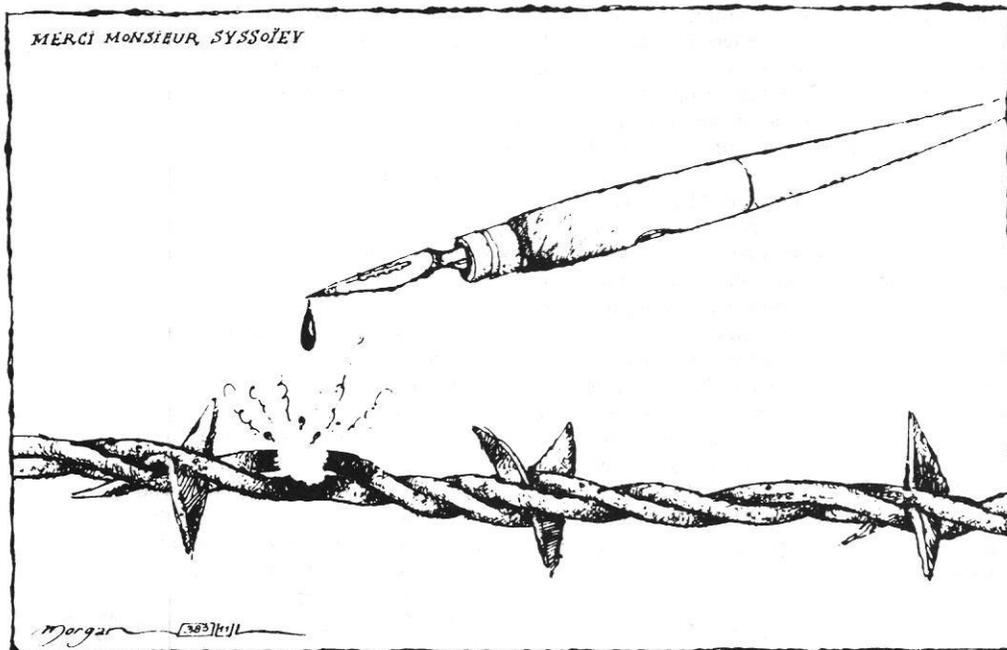
It is all the more necessary to support such reforms so that the entire society, and first of all intellectuals and technicians, can attain a higher level of social consciousness. A freer spirit generates more and more demands from below, and after liberalization real democratization starts to knock on the door — even though this is not what the reformers intend — even though they fear it as much as the devil is said to fear holy water.

In the circles of former Communist Party members, people have their eyes very firmly fixed on another road to democratizing the system. It is gradual transformation of the existing state and party institutions (first of all, the Communist party, but all institutions in general) into instruments of those who work in them and those whom they are supposed to represent. In effect, these institutions are supposed to be transformed into instruments that can be used to defend and advance the interests of the working people and the broadest layers of the population.

This is a conception of reform "from below," based on the conviction that the existing political system can, through its own structures, through its own institutions, renew itself, transform itself, change into a democratic system — insofar of course as the *members* of the CP, the departments, various unions and associations and so forth join in this process. On the basis of the experience of the Prague Spring, this conception is often linked with first road, that is, with reforms from above, viewed as part of an interlocking system.

Rigid boundaries of political system

This second conception of "reform from below" is certainly more agreeable than the first road [reform from above], because it is imbued with a democratic spirit. It must be acknowledged that as the *beginning* of a restructuring of society, of transition from bureaucratic dictatorship to a democratic order, such an approach is conceivable, and, in combination with the third road, which will be taken up further on, it de-



serves consideration. Under certain conditions, it would be possible to give it full support.

Insofar as the USSR today is concerned, it is necessary, of course, to discuss seriously why the Gorbachev reforms are not generating ferment in the structures (at least they have not so far). Likewise, there needs to be discussion on whether the real attempt at reform in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s was the sole cause of the tempestuous development in the official organizations and institutions in the spring of 1968 and into 1969.

In fact, the Czechoslovak experiences shows precisely that the bounds of the political system are quite rigid, and that reform "from above" and "from below" grinds to a halt and is transformed into an obstacle as the holders of power come to feel threatened by ever bolder demands. Nonetheless, it has to be recognized that a reform process in the official institutions can be the main current in the first phase of confrontation with the political system. It can prepare the way for a change in the system, that is, a political revolution.

Solidarnosc and Charter 77

In relation to Czechoslovakia (and more so to Poland), it is appropriate to formulate a third possible conception of democratization — the road of independent associations, a "parallel society," the road of influencing society by independent activities and the growing over of such activities into a movement of the society as a whole. Polish Solidarnosc tried this road, and to a more modest extent Charter 77 did so in Czechoslovakia as well. This conception is not counterposed to reformist views, in particular not to conceptions of reforms from below.

Historical experience, including that of the Prague Spring, testifies that if a reform movement from below develops in the official structures, it generates centrifugal, autonomistic tendencies.

On the remains of the old, unreformable bureaucratic "transition belts," new organizations, institutions and initiatives arise. They link up with independent initiatives. Their function is the opposite of a repressive or manipulative one. They strive for the emancipation of society by creating the conditions for the emancipation of every individual.

A section of the former Communist Party members reject this third road — that is, support for an independent movement as the germ of future social order — and turn their backs on Charter 77. Some even call on their old comrades to abandon this adventurist enterprise.

But many others sympathize with the Charter and a few hundred of them have even signed it. Among the few dozen active Chartists, roughly half are from these circles. ★

The role of Charter 77

AN ANALYSIS of the view of former Communist Party members on possible changes in Czechoslovakia and on the influence of the Gorbachev reforms is necessary because they are the most politicized in the unofficial, relatively independent part of society. The spectrum of their views corresponds to a considerable extent to the spectrum of opinions of the population.

Among the people, we find the most incredible views. Some are convinced that the Czechs are under the domination of the Slovaks (Husak, Bilak and Chnoupek are Slovaks). Another idea is that everything is a deception, like 1968 when the Dubcek leadership made a pact with Moscow and through the liberalization deliberately created the conditions for the Soviet military intervention. On the other hand there is a notion that Gorbachev will soon oust the Czechoslovak leadership in order to put Dubcek back in. Some think that it's all the fault of the free masons or atheism, and so on.

Nonetheless, the visit of Gorbachev, in whom so many "unpolitical" Czechs had placed their hopes, shattered a lot of illusions.

Despite the variety of views, and often the absence of any idea about how the country might develop, the population is united in its rejection of, and at times in its contempt for, the Czechoslovak party and state leadership.

Positive and enriching contribution

Let us, return, however, once again to the former Communist Party members. Especially among Czechoslovak exiles, the most widely varying rumors and illusions prevail about their influence on Charter 77. Of course, they have a relatively great influence on Charter 77, both because of their numbers and their comparatively well-worked out, but highly differentiated, political and economic analyses. Nonetheless, as an opponent of many of their positions, stereotypes and conceptions, I would say that this influence is positive and enriching. Charter 77 is indebted to them for many ideas.

By accepting some of their ideas, as well as by rejecting others, Charter 77 orients

and defines itself. In this way it also consolidates its vitality. Similarly, this goes for the influence of conservative circles and for all ideological positions appearing among Chartists and their sympathizers. Anyone who conceives of the Charter as an opposition coalition or the Czechoslovak National Front of 1945-48 does not understand it. The Charter is an association striving for human rights, it is a continuing citizen's initiative group with features of a movement (may they grow stronger!).

Simply to be able to exist at all, it has rejected any possibility of developing a common political program or, in general, of being a basis for political oppositional activity. The reasons for this basic self-limitation have to do more with consolidating internal cohesion than with fears about any threat from the outside, although those have played and continue to play a role. A pluralist association understood in this way, of course, does not prevent Chartists from organizing on a political basis outside the Charter. Nor does it prevent the existence of other groupings outside the Charter, and not only political ones, whose relations to the Charter tend to be complex. The notion of some sort of dominance in the Charter is, however, an illusion.

Affection for feudalism and the Austrian empire

Inside Charter 77, people sometimes criticize the tendency to use it for the benefit of the political or ideological objectives of a part of its signatories. Before we discuss whether and, if so, to what extent such a tendency appeared this year in the formulation of the Charter's attitude to Gorbachev's *glasnost* and its reflection in Czechoslovakia, let us briefly look at the rather agitated discussion that took place in Charter 77 and its sympathizers' circles two or three years ago. It developed after the publication of the Charter document "The Right to History," and especially after the publication of an additional explanation by its anonymous authors.

From these texts it was clear — although there was little open expression of this — that the authors opposed not only the fundamental concepts of Marxism and socialism, but modernity, the renaissance, the reformation and any sort of godlessness. Also clear was their affection for feudalism and the Austrian empire. This coincided with a lot of noise about an alleged religious revival in Czechoslovakia (this tendency has deeper socio-political roots and most likely is statistically weaker than the continual advance of atheism — or rather "agnosticism" — in society, not excluding Slovakia).

This argument was possible because the percentage of Christians (mainly Catholics) in Charter 77 is many times higher than it is in general, especially in Bohemia and Prague. (About a third of the Chartists consider themselves believers, even if only a

minority of them are practicing. With the exception of Slovakia and some Moravian districts, only a small percentage of people are practicing Christians, while in Prague this is less than one per cent of the population.)

Some months of discussion did not settle the question of whether we should accept or reject "positive science." But it did illustrate again the limits of Charter 77 as a pluralistic association, united around its striving for human rights.

Another, less virulent tendency has threatened the Charter from its beginning. That is nationalism. The number of those in the Charter who consider the nation and the fatherland as sacrosanct values is insignificant. A certain healthy "national nihilism" of the population, especially among the youth, is very evident, and is useful as an argument in discussions.

In recent months, there has been a good discussion about the Charter's "ghettoization" (precisely in connection with the proclamation of *glasnost*), and about its insignificant, basically non-existent influence on Czechoslovak public opinion, which contrasts with its relatively weighty reputation abroad. The Charter's isolation is linked by its many critics and by a number of the signatories to an atmosphere of intellectual elitism and paternalism, and to the customary law of the Charter that decrees that the basic decisions are to be made by a vaguely defined "active cadre" of the group.

Charter governed by consensus

Criticism has been both justified and unjustified, and there have been no lack of efforts to change this situation. The difficulty is that the Charter is not an organization, and so there are no democratic rules for it, either the right of the majority to decide or the right of minorities to organize opposition to the majority decisions. The Charter is basically governed by so-called general consensus, which Charter 77 representatives try to sound out — on the basis of their own judgment, but mainly in accordance with real possibilities — before they issue documents or take other actions.

The principle of consensus is quite vague. Strict observance of it would condemn the Charter to ineffectiveness, because in an association of roughly a thousand signatories (out of 1,300, about 200 have gone abroad, some dozens have died, and some others have "renounced" their signatures), there will always be some objection to anything. What is worse is that most of the signatories have no contact with the designated representatives of the Charter.

This is partly because hundreds of the signatories are completely passive. Often this is not out of fear of the police but out of an aversion to the work that the Charter has done so far. Or there are other reasons,

such as inadequate education, age, shyness and geographical isolation. In the main, outside Prague contacts are made difficult by actual or threatened police interference, in the absence of any organizational structures.

Stalinist legacy of "unity"

Perhaps as a result of general debate about the possibilities for democratization, both inside and outside of the Charter, these problems are beginning to be discussed in the group. The lack of critical spirit, the Stalinist legacy of "unity," a conservative, self-indulgent clinging to the present unsatisfactory internal functioning of the Charter — all these are obstacles to this discussion. Therefore, real improvement is proceeding only very slowly and with many difficulties.

This internal weakness of the Charter also has a negative effect outside of it. The group is only slowly and hesitatingly developing new initiatives and activities (both those that fall directly under its aegis and those that it might stimulate and support). And new forms of work are being carried out only with great difficulty. But this is the area where the first signs of a revival appeared this year: increased interest in international collaboration with East European independents (such contacts with the Western peace movement and effective dialogue have been a reality for some years); increased interest in ecology; appeals to the population; public appearances by signatories; various conferences — mainly, the organization of so-called Charter forums — places where signatories can meet non-signatories and where the consensus in the Charter can be verified with those who previously have not been in a good position to express opinions about its work.

Despite all these good signs, a clear turn has not yet taken place in the Charter. It is necessary, however, to remember that for ten whole years its main importance has been that in a relatively unfree society, it has been a milieu of relatively free people and relatively free discussion.

A new phenomenon has been appearing in the Charter in recent months. It is an appeal for democracy, for political democracy for the society — that is, for the possibility of a new order that is beyond the scope of the Charter alone to conceive. There is no doubt that this new tone is the result of the developments in the USSR and of the outlook mainly of the former Communist Party members. A call for democracy was included in this year's declaration on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Charter, which was published under the title "A Word to Fellow Citizens."

The Charter's formulation of the need for a democratic order is probably only a general framework, justified by a logical connection between the political conditions in

the country and the state of human rights. In this regard, it is similar to the formulation of conceptions of a future political order in a peaceful Europe, or of the Charter's dialogue with the Western peace groups. This dialogue and these conceptions are limited by the Charter's explicit renunciation (in its founding declaration) of "any program of its own for political or social reforms or changes." Likewise, the Charter's interest in questions of peace is explained by the connection between peace and human rights.

However, further steps in this direction, a more precise definition of the nature of the democracy proposed (and this is far from simply being a question of a contrast between parliamentary and self-management forms of democracy), is hardly possible for the Charter. That is a task for political formations that have been virtually nonexistent up until now, whose formation the Charter could support and which it could defend.

Theories of "limited democracy"

Even the call for democracy, which only appeared explicitly in the Charter's materials this year, probably does not enjoy a complete consensus in the group — especially on its fringes. Certain special-interest group tendencies in the conception and assessment of the role of spokespersons for the Charter could have parallels in special-interest group conceptions of the society as a whole. Moreover, it is the case that theocratic, expressly anti-democratic conceptions have shown up not just outside the Charter but among its sympathizers, and have received a certain amount of publicity.

Likewise, conservative thinkers often declare their support for the democratic social model. But some of their formulations have aroused certain doubts and reminiscences of theories of "limited democracy." The most distinct threat to the Charter's democratic platform, however, comes from technocratic positions that claim formally to support democracy (representative, of course), but in reality propagate decision-making by experts and professionals.

Despite everything, we recognize that the Charter propagating the general need for democracy is *entirely* justified. This need is the heart and soul of the Charter. It flowed already from its founding statement.

A distinct threat to Charter 77 can be seen in the political philosophy that accompanies the proposal for democracy and democratization. It was indicated in some documents of the Charter this year (and in earlier ones). It has often been expressed in objections before the publication of documents, in a watered-down form. It is a reformist support for transition of the society toward democracy, a conception of "democratization from above," which of course stresses pressure from below, and may even

include a call for reform of the official structures from below.

This approach is based on calling for potential allies among those holding power and in the executive apparatus. "Together we, you who hold power and we who are excluded from it, along with all people of good will, have to proceed to democratize society, its political system, in harmony with the *glasnost* proclaimed in the USSR and with your own proposals for the transition."

That, obviously, is not a quote from any Charter document, but it paraphrases the reformist point of view, which is advocated in Charter 77, mainly (but not entirely) by people from the milieu of former party members. They take Gorbachev's fervent appeals and the cautious versions of the Czechoslovak ruling group at their word. A concrete expression of this approach was the offer of so-called national reconciliations, which was formulated by the Charter in two documents this year, in the "Word to Fellow Citizens" and the "Statement on August 21." But in Czechoslovakia there is neither civil war nor the threat of one. In view of the passivity of the population, social disputes do not have an excessively conflictual character. Therefore, talking about "national reconciliation" does not make very much sense.

Critics of the strategy of taking Gorbachev and company "at their word" and of the political line advanced in the Charter by supporters (either real or "tactical") of Gorbachev's line often get the objection that the Charter was founded on the idea of dialogue with the state power, and that it would be absurd not to take advantage of today's more favorable situation, when the state leadership itself, albeit in still vague terms, supports a nationwide discussion.

The Charter was indeed founded on the idea of dialogue about *human rights*. Later formulations, indeed, indicate what such dialogue cannot touch on, what is not the province of the Charter. On the other hand, no objection could be raised if people called for dialogue with the authorities not in the name of the Charter, regardless of whether they were signatories.

Human rights are bound up with the political order

It is true that human rights are bound up with the political order. But the gamble of the Czechoslovak supporters of Gorbachev's *perestroika* in the party apparatus is not — like a gamble on any other political or ideological force and conception — a standpoint that the Charter could adopt as a goal. It is, of course, a good thing that such a position is developing precisely in Charter circles and that it is being discussed and corrected, precisely by the criticism of other Chartists.

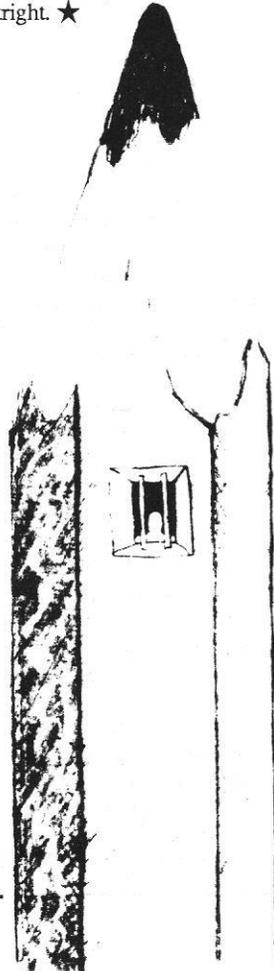
The former Communist Party members and the very weak conservative forces have bases outside Charter 77. The non-Chartist

ex-Communist Party members are very much more reformist than their former comrades in Charter 77. Likewise, the conservatives working outside Charter 77 are much more reactionary than their ideological friends in the Charter. Both these bases outside the Charter are very heterogeneous, unorganized. They represent no influential force in the country, even in comparison with the Charter, which can only exercise its influence by means of various pressures from abroad.

As was said, in its unpolitical, human rights orientation, the Charter has been and continues to be enriched by Christians, both Catholics and Evangelical Reformed. It is unfortunate that in the present period of somewhat freer conditions they have not come forward with an overall proposal for solving the social problems.

Those modern Catholic currents — which for example have sought political expression in Latin American through liberation theology, or in Europe through new approaches to society and morals and to the Church itself — have left Czech and Slovak Catholics essentially untouched. However, many common points can be established between the fight for more just social conditions and for respect for human dignity waged by Catholics in various countries, including Latin America and Czechoslovakia.

The main problem seems to be the position of the Catholic Church itself, that is of its hierarchy (with the exception Archbishop Tomasek of Prague) and the majority of the clergy, who not only do not support social commitment by believers but often stifle it outright. ★



Prospects for the opposition

BEFORE Gorbachev's visit, a sharp dispute developed within the Czechoslovak CP leadership between its two traditional wings, the conservatives (dogmatists) and the progressives (pragmatists).

The conservatives openly rejected "mechanical transference" of the Soviet experience (that is, elements of Gorbachev's reforms). This had a rather comical effect, because 20 years ago they flaunted the slogan "The Soviet Union Is Our Model."

This obviously does not mean that there are fewer conservatives than progressives. In the party apparatus, in the armed forces, and especially in the police forces, a nostalgia prevails for toughness. There is little sympathy for Gorbachev's idea that precisely in order to preserve the existing system (which guarantees the privileged position of the individual bureaucrats) it is necessary to make changes, to liberalize, even to "part" with those who are too ossified or too marked by the past.

The 1968 syndrome is still strong in bureaucratic circles. In Czechoslovak conditions, those who fear for their jobs or positions say that any liberalization will unleash a groundswell that will grow and finally sweep away the whole political system. Their fears are not unfounded. The great majority of top party and other functionaries worked in the party apparatus or other top posts in 1968.

Illusions about Soviet-style restructuring

The power elite (the Politburo, the Presidium of the Central Committee and some people around it, who directly influence central decision-making) are a complex conglomerate. They include people who ruled happily even before 1968 (the positions of some were shaken in the Prague Spring), after August 1968 and who have remained in high positions continuously to this day.

That is the reason for the increasingly painful delay this summer, when finally, through the voice of Husak, the Czechoslovak leadership adhered to the Soviet policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Some months previously, it had limited itself to the slogan of "restructuring the economic mechanism." Now, even in Czechoslovakia, they are talking about democratization — albeit cautiously. While there are still illusions about the Soviet restructuring of society (the people have little information about

the situation in the USSR), there is probably no one in Czechoslovakia who believes in the sincerity of the parallel declarations of the Czechoslovak leadership.

In view of their extraordinary long continuance in their posts and, in the case of most of them, their advanced age, most of the members of the power elite are not inclined to make even the most necessary reforms, except perhaps in the economic sphere. In this regard, it is necessary to explain that the Czechoslovak leadership and the functionaries of various apparatuses were not, as is often wrongly assumed in the outside world, put in their posts after August 1968 by the Kremlin (with the exception of a few individuals who Moscow pushed at the outset of the normalization or who were kept in their previous posts). The fact that these people were not brought in by Moscow gives them a certain independence from the present Soviet leadership. And if the Czechoslovak leadership finally bowed to Moscow this summer, unlike the East German leadership, for instance, it was no easy victory for Gorbachev.

It seems, in fact, that both the Soviet and Czechoslovak parties had a common interest at the time of Gorbachev's visit. It was to preserve the Czechoslovak leadership as a whole. This is why Gorbachev supported it as a whole, and both party and non-party public were deprived of amusement. It brought to an end the period of shows, such as the party meeting in Prague's Lucerne a few weeks before Gorbachev's visit, when Strougal and Kapek as representatives of the progressives "publicly opposed the conservative dogmas and blamed the present disconcerting economic situation on their comrades in the Politburo." (They did not do so directly of course, and also took some of the blame themselves.)

The extent of the compromise between the two wings of the party reached under Gorbachev's aegis can only be guessed at. Most of the concessions, however, must have been made by the conservative group. For his support to the Czechoslovak leadership, Gorbachev certainly gained something. The development in the months

since his visit indicates that the Czechoslovak leadership and its conservative wing yielded mainly on the question of repression. In this period fewer people have been locked up. There have been fewer political trials. Sentences have been shorter (mainly suspended sentences and fines). Two leading Charter 77 activists, Petr Pospichal and Jan Dus, were released from prison without trials.

Gorbachev's demand for reducing repression was made and met not because anyone in the Soviet and Czechoslovak

Gorbachev leadership or part of the Czechoslovak leadership might entertain any sympathy for independent activists of the Charter type, or to the those expelled from the Czechoslovak Communist Party. To the extent that there is a greater possibility for independent initiative today, this is the result of a complex development of international politics and of the current plans for some changes, especially in the economy, that the reformers are pursuing. Independent initiatives, in fact, represent a constant danger to the political system. And no one

can afford to make any mistake about the fact that, if those who hold state power find it necessary, very harsh measures will be taken once again against independent activists.

The second area in which the influence of Gorbachev's *glasnost* has exercised a certain influence is culture, although the cultural liberalization is so far much weaker than in the USSR. It is interesting to note that a slight trend to cultural liberalization has been in evidence for some years, with small, gradual changes for the better. There has not been a



leadership wanted to humanize the society. The reason for this was rather to make the Soviet and Czechoslovak system look better to the world, and perhaps also so that economic reforms (the modernization of the economy and increasing its effectiveness) would gain more support among the intelligentsia.

The activity of independents is obviously still kept under surveillance and "disrupted" by the state security forces. Repression against those who have little chance of getting publicity for their cases and international solidarity remains roughly on the same level as before. But this is changing. According to the statement of the general prosecutor reported in the party paper *Rude Pravo* of September 17, in the future some offenses, including political ones, may be dealt with more leniently and punished only by fines — insofar as they are not overly dangerous to society. Brutal repression, including beatings, continues against non-conformist youth, rock music fans, punks and so on.

It would be preposterous to think that the

marked shift in this in recent months. Definite efforts have, however, been made to achieve compromises, to create certain new possibilities in culture, for example for the youth (which would of course be kept under surveillance by the state apparatus). It can be said that Gorbachev's new policy and perhaps his visit to Czechoslovakia confirmed or even strengthened this liberalizing trend in culture.

Self-censorship (which is more effective than the censorship of the authorities) has relaxed somewhat. More interesting things are being written. But the difference from the past is not so terribly great.

The timid experiments to improve commandist and centralized decision-making in administrative matters in the USSR (for example the experimental introduction of two candidates for a few representative posts, public criticism of higher functionaries and so on), which are sometimes wrongly considered democratization, have in practice had no concrete echo in Czechoslovakia, aside from the publication of information about such phenomena in the USSR.

Clearly, questions that are taboo in the USSR remain taboo in Czechoslovakia. This includes the structure of power (the hierarchy) in society and the party, outright anti-democratic conditions in the Czechoslovak CP, the party apparatus' control over the organization of the national economy, security, the army, as well as the subordination of justice to the party and sometimes to the security apparatus.

Complexity of economic questions

The question remains of the economy, which is the the most complex and the most important. The assessment of this area continues to divide the two wings in the party, even if this is not apparent today. From the outset Gorbachev's call for economic restructuring was grist to Strougal's mill, inasmuch as he is the spokesperson of the progressives. It is true that many elements of this restructuring were cautiously formulated by him and other politicians dealing with economics some years ago. In recent years, they became more insistent. But they had to avoid the word "reform," which became a "non-word" after August 1968. It was first used again by Husak this summer.

More independence of factories, self-financing, more linking of workers' interests — mainly those of the leaders but also of rank-and-file workers — in the economic results of the factories, shops and individual units. All these were the means by which to raise the low productivity of labor, to increase the efficiency of the national economy, to reduce the technological lag (which is notable, for example, in computer technology), to progressively increase the range of goods, to improve the possibility for innovation, to reduce the energy input in goods and so on and so forth.

The conservatives, who sought the same goals, always limited themselves to non-economic incentives (instructions and orders, appeals to socialist emulation and to greater effort by workers). The progressives on the other had had a better understanding of the interconnections in the economy, and won numerous supporters for their reform concepts among the leading economic workers. The conservatives' strength among the "captains of industry" was negligible.

Politically, it is amusing to note that similar reform projects, sometimes formulated in the exactly same terms, were put forward during the Prague Spring. And it was precisely the political anathematization of the Prague Spring in the 1970s and 1980s, up to last spring, that constituted the main obstacle to formulating a general economic restructuring. Proposals for improvements were half-way measures, they took the form of short-lived campaigns, and always ran out of steam.

With Gorbachev's rise to power, a lot of this changed. The progressives got un-

hoped-for moral support from the party. Now they were the ones who could base themselves on the argument that until then had been conservatives' trump card: the Soviet example.

As a result of this, in the first months of 1987, the Czechoslovak leadership gave reserved backing only to economic restructuring, which the progressive propagators of reform were able to get accepted more easily and were most interested in. Only later, again under the pressure of the progressives, who were prompted by an interest in a broader political-economic liberalization, did the political aspects of *perestroika* begin to emerge, naturally in ambiguous formulations.

It was only on July 18, 1987, that is more than three months after Gorbachev's visit, that the "State Enterprises Bill" was introduced. It is the counterpart of the Soviet enterprise law. The bill offers a certain picture of the Czechoslovak leadership's conception of how the economy is to function in the future. The solution it proposes is entirely technocratic. Workers must have the feeling that they are collaborating in the resolution of economic questions in the enterprises. That should increase their collective responsibility, improve their relationship to the enterprise and their attitude to their work, which in turn will increase labor productivity (not only in the sense of intensification).

The bill, of course, did not provide for real involvement of the working people in decision-making, only a quite formal form of consultation. Self-management by teams of workers is also limited in practice to a certain inspection role. Moreover, the possibility of state intervention was assured in manifold ways.

First of all, there is a new proclamation of the leading role of the party. Then, there is a codification of the right of higher bodies to intervene directly, including the right to take over in cases of economic mismanagement. The economic power is, to a certain extent, to shift from the ministries to the "enterprises," that is, to the factory managers and their teams, but in no way to the workers themselves.

The law also does not provide for democratic means of drawing up the plan, only for formal assent by workers' collectives (in five-year plans), or a councils of workers' collectives (in yearly plans). Aside from the provision permitting a certain workers' control, but which can be blocked by bureaucratic obstacles, the following democratic feature of the law deserves mention — election of factory managers by all the workers in the enterprise,

However, we know very well that elections, and in particular candidacies, can be manipulated. Only practice will show whether the implementation of the new enterprise law will, after all, open up real possibilities for workers. Today, scepticism is in order. And though the newspapers are printing reports and contributions that make a positive assessment of the law,

and comments full of democratic spirit, most of the reactions in the present discussion are burdened by conservative approaches — by the fear that the "leading role of the party" may be weakened, that the authority of the managers may be reduced in the eyes of the workers' collective, and so on.

What is worse is that the discussion in the newspapers is so artificial. People are not taking an interest in the proposed law, they sense its fraudulent nature. It has not become a cause that they consider their own. Finally, since the whole thing was conceived hastily, the bill contains a number of contradictions and many unclaritys.

So how do we move forward in these somewhat changed conditions? There is no other way but to pursue our citizen's initiative with patience, courage and determination. In order for Charter 77 not to stagnate, it has to broaden out, consider new roads, take up new problems, involve new, mainly young people. Only in this way can it overcome its relative ghettoization.

The new atmosphere that has developed as a result of Gorbachev's reforms and their echo in Czechoslovakia is more favorable for that than the previous bureaucratic rigidity.

Charter's international links growing

One of the positive aspects of such a broadening out is the gradual internationalization of our movement. So far, international meetings, common statements and common actions, have been mainly with the Polish democratic opposition, but also with peace and human-rights initiative groups in East Germany and with our friends in Hungary. These methods should be developed to a higher level and extended to other countries in Eastern and South-eastern Europe.

We cannot afford, on the other hand, to lose sight of another road leading to democratization of the society or of a development that can start such a process rolling. It is the road of "reform from below," that is gradual changes within the official structures whenever there is a real possibility for such changes. Today, in Czechoslovak there is no sign of such phenomenon.

We must, however, energetically speak out against believing in "reforms from above," believing in "enlightened despots," and at the same time give critical support to every small liberal change that such reform from above might bring, every change that improves living conditions and creates a freer atmosphere. Our criteria for this will be acts and not words. We should continue take pride in our independence and not identify ourselves with positions held by rulers, even by implication.

And if we are again driven into greater isolation, once again we must maintain the continuity of critical thought, which is the only guarantee of a better future. ★

Towards a revival of the mass movement

ALREADY before the Thatcher government started kicking its would-be Irish collaborators in the teeth visibly and repeatedly, the conditions had begun to be assembled for for a turn in the political situation in Ireland. In hindsight it seems that the crossroads was the massive raids in early November, which were carried out in both jurisdictions on the island.

GERRY FOLEY

FIFTY THOUSAND homes were hit, affecting about 8 per cent of the total population. The miscarried IRA bombing in Enniskillen that followed the raids enabled the Dublin government to push through a law for extraditing persons sought by British and Northern Ireland authorities for political offenses. This period marked a highpoint of the collaboration between the Irish bourgeois establishment and the British government that was consecrated by the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The very magnitude of the repressive offensive gave a strong impulse for the revival of united-front work and broad protest activity. That had an important impact on the major anti-imperialist organization, Sinn Fein, as well as independents who had tended to stay on the sidelines since the end of the mass campaign in support of the H-Block hunger strikers in the autumn of 1981.

In January and February, public discussions began to be held to lay the groundwork for broader initiatives. In Dublin on January 21 People's Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International, organized a meeting in collaboration with Sinn Fein and other anti-imperialist and anti-repression organizations and activists to

discuss how to build a broad response to the Fianna Fail government's reactionary attacks. On the same day in Belfast, People's Democracy sponsored a forum on strategy for the anti-imperialist movement, which attracted an unexpectedly large number of activists.

On February 7, a conference was held in Coalisland, called by an ad-hoc committee, including Bernadette McAliskey, to initiate planning to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the civil rights movement. In her words, it brought together "almost every geographic and political area."

"One of the many points of consensus running through the numerous, well-articulated contributions," the Sinn Fein paper *An Phoblacht* reported in its February 11 issue, "was the need to broaden the forces, the need for a mass movement.... Tom Hartley of Sinn Fein said: 'We do see the isolation and we do see the need to break out of it.'"

The keynote speech of the day, according to *An Phoblacht*, was given by Michael Farrell, a revolutionary Marxist and one of the original leaders of the civil rights movement. Among other sections, it stressed the following part of Farrell's speech:

"The most dangerous thing in the world is if serious political resistance in the North can be confined to a republican ghetto. That is how the establishments North and South have succeeded in the past. The republican ghetto is much bigger today, but it is still a ghetto, a minority of a minority. It was when the resistance spread beyond that ghetto — in 1968-69, in 1972 after Bloody Sunday, in 1981 during the hunger strikes — that the British became seriously worried their position in Ireland."

Frame-up of Birmingham Six

At the same time, beginning in early December, Anglo-Irish collaboration began to run into a mine-field, made still more explosive by truculently reactionary character of the Thatcher government. The first blowup was over the appeal of six people condemned to life imprisonment for the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. The six were sentenced on the basis of confessions and forensic evidence in a lynch-mob atmosphere. Evidence was submitted that the confessions were extorted by violence and intimidation and that the so-called forensic evidence was unreliable. Even the

violently anti-IRA bishop, Cathal Daly, expressed his low opinion of the British justice that convicted them and refused to admit its error.

No prosecutions after shoot-to-kill inquiry

Then came the conclusion of the so-called Stalker Affair, the driving out of the police force of the official assigned to investigate a series of apparently deliberate murders of unarmed suspected IRA men by British forces in Northern Ireland in 1982. Stalker's accusations were essentially confirmed, but the British attorney-general announced that there would be no prosecutions of the individuals involved. The scandal was magnified by the Thatcher government's bellowing calls for sanctions against Stalker.

This scandal was followed up almost immediately by a report that a British soldier sentenced to life for murder in Northern Ireland was being released after serving only a few years. And then a Catholic who had been repeatedly harassed by British forces was "accidentally" shot while crossing the border to play football. At the same time, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which criminalizes Irish people living in Britain or travelling to and from it, was made a permanent part of British law.

On top of that, the Thatcher government could not bring itself to observe the least diplomatic niceties in dealing with its Irish collaborators. "Taking the Irish seriously is something British governments are not good at," *The Economist* commented on February 20. It noted that the British authorities have been ignoring the conditions for extradition included in the Irish extradition law.

They failed even to warn the Irish government of the decision that there would be no prosecutions coming out of the shoot-to-kill investigation. The timing of the announcement on the PTA was also considered an affront by the Irish bourgeois politicians, *The Economist* indicated.

So, a public split is opening up again between the Irish bourgeois authorities and their imperialist overlords. At the same time, the Irish question has been propelled again to the forefront of British politics. In all, the conditions seem to be coming together for a revival of a broad movement against imperialist and pro-imperialist repression and oppression. ★

