

# International VIEWPOINT

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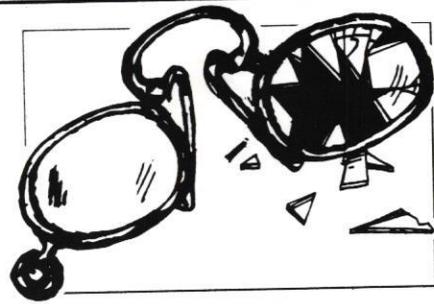
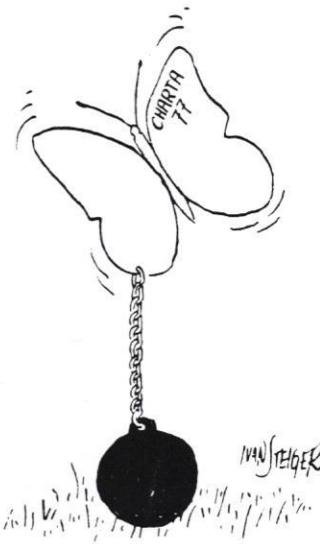
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### International VIEWPOINT

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# Is the Gulf war over?

ON JULY 18 this year, the Iranian regime announced that it would accept UN resolution 598 that called for an end to hostilities between Iran and Iraq. The resolution, passed unanimously by the UN Security Council almost a year to the day previously, was accepted by Iraq immediately.

Iran's decision was greeted with general astonishment, for good reason. It was only two weeks earlier, on July 3, that a US warship had shot down an Iranian Airbus with 290 passengers on board, arousing a violent competition in warlike rhetoric in Iran. Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini called on Iranians to "rush to the front for an all-out war", while the Islamic republic's parliament raised the slogan of "war on Iraq until final victory" to the level of a "strategic priority"!

SALAH JABER

OF COURSE, it was easy after the event to enumerate the military and economic reasons explaining Iran's about turn. But in this case, the mullahs' regime was distinguished by behaviour reflecting a peculiar kind of "rationality". Scorning obvious material considerations, not to mention humanitarian ones, Khomeini had showed an unwavering determination, tinged with mysticism, for pursuing the war at any cost until the defeat of his sworn enemy, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. It seemed that nothing would stop this relentless course excepting Khomeini's death, which never ceased being "imminent". So was ideology — or rather one individual's whim — in the driving seat in Iran?

In fact, the rationality of the mullahs' regime in the war against Iraq, for all its peculiarity, was nonetheless real. It was linked to the regime's very survival, to that of the dictatorship of a social stratum, an "estate" (in the sense that the clergy constitutes one) for which the war became the supreme *raison d'être*.

There were several reasons for this. The war maintained the cohesion of the regime, despite numerous social and political cleavages. It ensured the regime's hold over a regimented and fanaticized mass base, and its ability to cheaply re-absorb an enormous mass of unemployed, which had already been considerable under the Shah and was given a big boost by the decay of the economy under the mullahs' management. Final-

ly, and less importantly, the war enhanced the role of traders, the principal ally of the fundamentalist dictatorship, insofar as war consumption and its offshoots (notably the creation of a mass of dependants — disabled veterans, widows, orphans and so on) combined with the disorganization of production to inflate massively the role of imports and distribution.

## Economic disaster behind Iran's turnaround

From the standpoint of a modern bourgeoisie, concerned about economic growth, Khomeini's behaviour would appear absurd. It nevertheless suited the real interests of the "Islamic" regime. It is therefore exclusively there that the reasons for Iran's recent turnaround should be sought.

Khomeini could neglect the needs of capitalist development, close his eyes to the weight of accumulating destruction, lost earnings and unproductive spending<sup>1</sup> as long as Iran's oil income and monetary reserves could sustain the war effort and support dependants. But the point is precisely that this "sinew of war" was no longer able to match up to the effort required.

Despite draconian austerity measures, Tehran's imports are still around \$10 billion a year. For the most part they have served the needs of the war, which, according to the calculations of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London,



cost Iran more than \$6 billion in 1987. However, the country's oil receipts will probably not exceed \$7 billion this year, while its currency reserves are drying up! Admittedly, Iran has the advantage of having practically no debts in comparison to Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Outside of a complete turnaround in foreign policy, Tehran cannot expect its war to be financed by credits from abroad, either from the East or from the West.

Aware that this is Iran's Achilles' heel, Baghdad adroitly chose to attack on this front intensively from 1984 on. Thus, the "tanker war" became a fundamental dimension of the Gulf war. By considerably obstructing Iran's maritime oil exports, Iraq forced Tehran to grant large discounts for its customers to compensate for increased transport and insurance costs, and this in a context of excess world oil supplies and falling prices. Baghdad thus contributed to Iran's oil income falling by a third (from \$20 billion to \$13 billion) between 1983 and 1985. Moreover, this is without counting the even greater fall of the real buying power of this income owing to the dollar's depreciation and inflation.<sup>3</sup>

In the first months of 1986, Iran's victories over Iraq — above all the taking of the Iraqi port of Fao in February — led to a combination of an upsurge in the "tanker war" and the "price war" unleashed by Sau-

1. The total is estimated at \$216 billion for Iran and \$193 billion for Iraq during eight years of war, according to the *Economist Intelligence Unit*.

2. Iraq is up to its ears in foreign debts of \$60 billion, of which nearly half is owed to creditors who are unlikely to be lenient in collecting their money.

3. This is without counting revenue given over to what could be called "imports substituting for production", due to damage inflicted by Iraqi air attacks. So, for example, Iran is presently obliged to import more than 200,000 barrels per day of petroleum products because of damage to its refineries!

di Arabia partly to put the brakes on Iran's progress. The official price of a barrel of crude was to fall from \$28 to less than \$8, bringing in its wake a drastic fall in income for most of the oil-exporting countries. Iran found itself forced to dip into its already very diminished financial reserves and take out \$2.5 billion in one year, from mid-1986 to mid-1987. This represented a third of its available reserves, which in mid-1987 were at only \$5.3 billion, compared to \$20 billion in 1980! In spite of a partial firming up of prices from summer 1986, Iranian revenues for the year were less than in 1985.

The success of the secret deals between the Reagan administration and the powerful president of the Iranian parliament, Hashemi Rafsanjani, led Saudi leaders, who were also involved in these deals (as revealed by the Contra-Irangan scandal, among others), to interrupt the "price war". The Saudis were keen to conciliate with an Iran that was running before the wind, and judged that their other objectives vis-à-vis OPEC could be attained by other means.

However, the Irangan revelations at the end of 1986, sparked off a revival of the bluff against Washington's protégés in the Gulf, allowing the "fanatics" in the mullahs' regime to go into action. Kuwait suffered the consequences of this, from April 1987, followed by Saudi Arabia, which bloodily suppressed the riots by Iranian pilgrims to Mecca on July 31 and August 1 that same year.

From then on, nothing went right anymore between Riyadh and Tehran, and after this the Saudi leaders deliberately provoked a new drop in oil prices. The 1986 "price war" had been a devastating blitzkrieg. What followed from December 1987 was more like a war of attrition. In seven months, barrel prices fell by \$4, from \$18 for standard crude oil — a price that had been established in December 1986 and maintained for a year — to \$14 in July. This new "price war" waged by the Saudis undoubtedly owed more to political considerations than to economic calculations. It was widely seen that way, as shown by the reaction of the market to Iran's announcement on July 18 of its acceptance of UN resolution 598.

Logically, the ending of the Gulf conflict can only mean a growth in the already existing oil glut, by allowing Iran to increase its exports as soon as the hostilities cease. So, just as the beginning of the conflict in 1980 sent oil prices up, the announcement of an imminent cease-fire should have depressed them. However, the opposite has happened. In just a few days, prices went

up again by \$2! The explication of this paradox is that the market estimated that, given Iran's decision, Riyadh would agree to cooperate again with other members of OPEC to shore up and stabilize prices. Speculators were quickly disenchanted. The Saudi leaders held their course, distrustfully awaiting the outcome of the negotiations in progress between Iran and Iraq.

So the real value of Iran's oil revenue this year — taking into account inflation and dollar parity — will probably be 20% lower than last year's, 16% lower than in the disastrous year 1986, and 66% lower than in 1985, to say nothing of previous years. This economic strangulation of Iran, which was the determining factor in turning Tehran, in fact the product of an international convergence made possible by the US's decision in the summer of 1987 to end the Gulf war.<sup>4</sup>

so as to make possible a definitive ending of the Gulf war. Iraq's particular objective was to confront this eventuality in the best possible conditions.

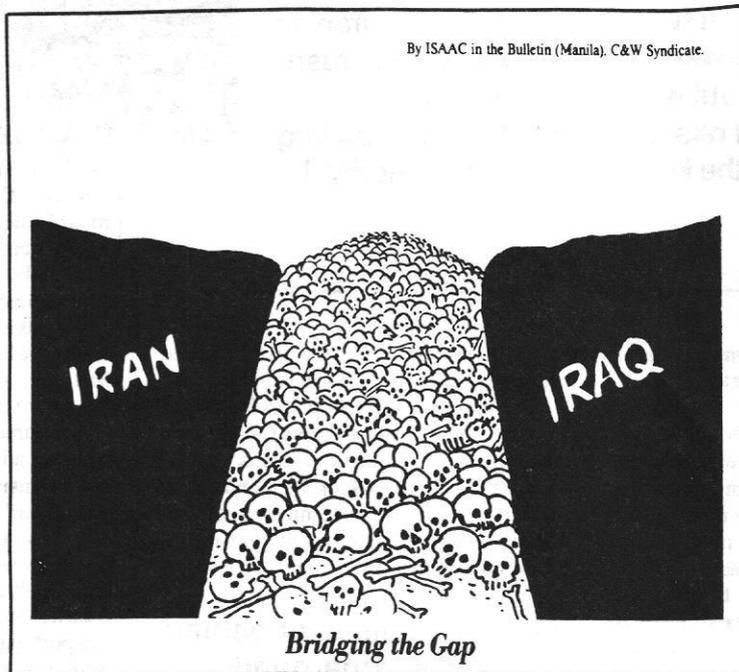
The interaction between this strangulation of Iran and the ruinous internal state of its economy led to a vicious circle that increased the effectiveness of external pressure by amplifying its consequences. The lack of currency led the mullahs' regime to de-industrialize the country. The political choice to give absolute priority to the war effort and the social choice to favour trade at the expense of industry combined to deprive industry of spares and raw materials. Result: in 1985, 690 out of 7,628 industrial production units had to close their doors; and in 1986, 750,000 workers were partially laid off. One example of the priority given to traders was that 20 million metres of textiles were imported in 1987, while textile factories in the country were running

far below capacity because of a lack of currency!<sup>6</sup>

So, the circle is complete. The lack of currency leads to reduced production, thereby increasing imports, which in its turn means that more currency is needed... Iranian capitalism thus becomes more dependent than ever before.

The corollary of all this is that poverty and unemployment increase. With shortages and the black market helping things along — in a country where freedom of trade is sacred in the religious sense of the term — inflation gallops at between 60% and 70%, with exorbitant prices for some basic goods and services.<sup>7</sup>

This state of things has helped considerably to increase disaffec-



This combination of factors included firstly Iraq's aerial raids, aimed at obstructing Iran's oil exports. Secondly, there was the activity of the imperialist fleets deployed in the Gulf for over a year. By preventing Iran from carrying out reprisals on the maritime traffic of other countries bordering the Gulf, it deprived Tehran of its only means of counterattacking against the Iraqi raids.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, there was the "price war", waged since the end of 1987 by Saudi Arabia. And, finally, there were the French and US embargos on oil imports from Iran, which, combined with restrictions on Japanese imports, aggravated the problems Tehran was encountering in selling its oil (thereby leading the Iranians to offer discounts that correspondingly cut its oil income).

The sole common objective of all these converging actions was to force Iran to accept resolution 598 and to comply with it

4. See "Imperialism and the Gulf war", IV 132, December 21, 1987.

5. Because Iraq has had no access to Gulf waters since the beginning of the conflict, Iran chose to reply to Iraqi attacks against its shipping by attacking the fleets of its neighbours who sponsored Iraq, mainly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The intervention of the imperialist fleets, was aimed at protecting these ships and access to their ports in the name of "freedom of navigation". This is in fact the role they played.

By reacting violently to the mine-laying attributed to Iran last April, the American fleet wanted to dissuade Tehran from making up for the reversals that its army was beginning to suffer on the front with Iraq by escalating its operations in the Gulf. In fact, Tehran profited from the subsequent repeated confrontations between its weak naval forces and the American armada. This was a means to exonerate itself given its defeats at the hands of Iraq by attributing them to the US intervention in Iraq's favour.

6. "Iran's economy on its last legs", *Le Monde*, December 11, 1987; *Tudeh News* 94, July 20, 1988; *Report* (Iranian Communist Party bulletin) 46, August 1-15, 1988.

7. *Le Monde*, April 12, 1988.

tion among the Iranian masses for the mullahs' regime and its "holy war". During the early years of the war, the fundamentalist regime was able to benefit from a nationalist reaction, tinged with chauvinism, from a population facing an invasion of its territory. Once the invader had been repelled and the war continued on Iraqi territory (that is, since 1982), the Persian nationalist consensus gave way to religious fanaticism for a war whose declared aim from the beginning was to place Iraq under the banner of Khomeinism. The regime was able to wage its war whilst final victory seemed within grasp — that is, until 1986 — benefitting from a vast ideological and social clientele (plebeian layers receiving benefits). In particular it exploited young teenagers, the favourite prey throughout history of all pied pipers of fanaticism.<sup>8</sup>

### Iran suffered three times as many losses as Iraq

Religious-chauvinist fanaticism and the mobilization of volunteers<sup>9</sup> undeniably played a key role in the Iranian war effort during this period. It could not be otherwise for a war with low "capital-intensity" and high "labour-intensity", as illustrated by the strategy of "human waves" and the important role of the *Sepah-e-Pasdaran* (guardians of the revolution) and other *Bassiji* (volunteers) in combat. This was the only possible choice for the mullahs' war, for a number of interconnected reasons. These included the limited amount of finances available; the break with the US, the main source of high-technology Iranian armaments, and the problems of access to alternative sources; a more than three-to-one numerical advantage over Iraq; and the enormous problem of absorbing unemployment.<sup>10</sup>

The consequence of this was, of course, three times higher human losses on the Iranian side: from 750,000 to one million deaths, against nearly 300,000 Iraqis. This death toll was accentuated by Baghdad's use of chemical weapons on a number of occasions in order to try to break the "human waves" assailing its territory.

Up until 1986, there was no shortage of candidates for suicide for the mullahs' war. The victories won seemed to justify the slaughter, even though the cost in human lives per square meter of occupied Iraqi territory was exorbitant. The last great Iranian victory, the taking of the Fao peninsular in February 1986, was achieved by an offensive lasting several weeks and involving more than half a million combatants. One year later, however, the morale of the Iranian troops was irredeemably broken.

Two elements contributed to this change. A political factor, first of all, with the Iran-gate scandal in November 1986 and the revelation that relations had been established between Iranian leaders and the US and the Israeli state. There for all to see, the duplicity of Tehran's leading lights had the

effect of a cold shower on the most determined of their combatants — precisely those who had believed the rhetoric. A profound crisis of confidence set in between the regime and the ideologically motivated section of its troops, its spearhead.

The second factor — even more important than this, although linked to it to an extent that is hard to judge — was a military one. This was failure of the big offensive launched by Iran in January 1987 to seize the port of Basra, Iraq's second largest city and the capital of the Shi'ite south of the country. Iranian "human waves" were hurled at Iraq's defences, unsuccessfully, for five weeks: 200,000 attackers were concentrated on a front just two miles long. The result was that 50,000-70,000 of them were killed or wounded. The elan of Tehran's troops, continuously renewed since 1981, was broken.

Mehdi Bazargan, the leading personality of the only opposition tolerated in Iran (Islamic liberals), undoubtedly expressed the majority view of his country's people in his open letter to the regime's strong man, Rafsanjani, on January 25, 1987. When the Iranian offensive against Basra was running out of steam, Bazargan, addressing the president of the parliament and Khomeini's representative to the Supreme Defence Council, in fact attacked the "Imam". His letter deserves to be quoted at length:

"Who has given you the right," he wrote, "to dispense with the lives of today's generations and the riches of the country in order to obtain, as you say it, the punishment of one man — even if this man is the biggest criminal of all time? Is his head worth the lives of hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of deaths and the destruction of entire cities...?"

### "War, war until final destruction"

"Your slogan, 'War, war until victory' is in the process of being changed into 'War, war until total destruction'. Who mandated you to lead the people towards total destruction under the pretext of bringing about Saddam Hussein's fall, when his disappearance would only succeed in his replacement by another dictator or by a government favourable to the United States, an eventuality that you have maintained that you would accept...?"

"Israel is the biggest winner in this war. It is throwing oil on the fire, and its objective is the total destruction of Iraqi and Iranian military forces, in order to rid itself of both armies at the same time..."<sup>11</sup>

In spite of the tight control exercised by various bodies of the Khomeini regime on the Iranian masses, demonstrations and incidents indicating a growing anti-war sentiment multiplied in Iran from 1987 on, while the capacity of the regime to organize mass demonstrations dwindled. At the same time, the enrollment of volunteers was appreciably diminishing, while the

number of deserters was growing. The new flare-up of the "war of the cities" increased the masses' resentment of the carnage that Khomeini's pig-headedness was inflicting on them.

Last February, a new stage in the aforementioned "war of the towns" was crossed by Iraq, whose missiles — modified Soviet Scud-B's — reached Tehran for the first time where more than a quarter of Iran's population was then concentrated.<sup>12</sup>

### The impact of Iraq's massacre of the Kurds

Finally, the dramatic images of the massacre by chemical weapons perpetrated by the Iraqi army in the Kurdish town of Halabja (in Iraqi Kurdistan) were shown widely in Iran. Taken in March by Iranian forces and their Iraqi Kurdish allies, they made an important contribution to the demoralization of Tehran's troops. They were a cruel demonstration that, in a corner, the Iraqi regime would stop at no atrocity to impede Iranian progress on its territory. The goal — the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein — appeared increasingly, even to a number of Khomeini supporters, to be out of all proportion to the hundreds of thousands of deaths that it has already cost and the even bigger number of lives that would have to be sacrificed trying to reach it.

From then on, it was a debacle for the Iranian troops. In April, Fao was retaken in less than two days of fighting. The Iranians abandoned the peninsular in disarray, leaving an impressive amount of material there. The same scenario was to be repeated, in rapid succession, in the Shalamsheh region, the Howezah swamps, the Majnun islands and, finally, at the end of June, in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In three months, it seemed as though the film of the six preceding years was running backwards at high speed. So much so that in July, Iraq not only recovered the whole of its territory, but it took the liberty of re-occupying pieces of Iranian land to use as trading chips, with an eye towards negotiations resolving the conflict. Moreover, this new willingness of the Iranian combatants to surrender allowed Iraq to take thousands more prisoners, thereby redressing a balance that was previously tilted distinctly in

8. Certainly, a growing section of Iran's population were forcibly enlisted into Khomeini's troops. Many chose to flee the country to escape conscription, going to Turkey where the number of Iranians has reached one to two million.

9. The cult of "martyrdom" and the promise of direct access to paradise for those who die fighting in the "holy war" are the fundamental ideological ingredients of the Iranian mobilization.

10. The problem for Iraq was the complete opposite: it had to take in more than a million immigrant Egyptian workers into production to replace Iraqis mobilized for the war, as well as using women to a far greater extent than in Iran.

11. *Le Monde*, February 8-9, 1987.

12. Because of its distance from the demarcation line, until this point Tehran was protected from missiles, as opposed to those towns nearer the front such as Baghdad, which was a target from 1985 onwards.

Iran's favour.

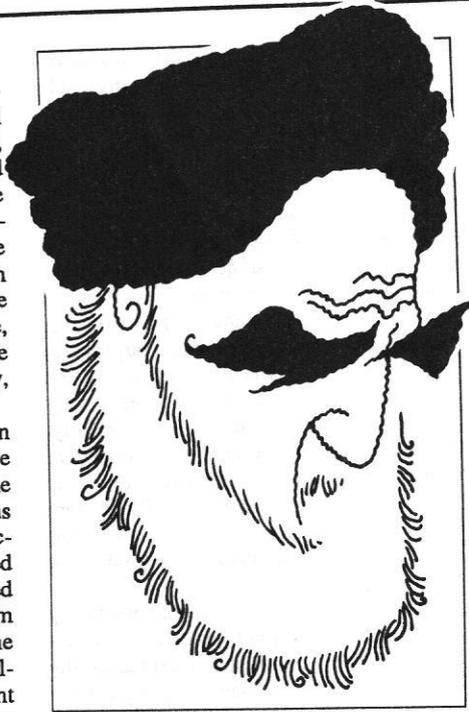
Economic strangulation, social discontent in the population, a growing political disaffection with the regime and the war, military debacle and complete turnaround in the situation in favour of an Iraq once again encroaching on Iranian territory — all of this led to the acceptance of the cease-fire being the only sensible option for Iran. However, the fundamentalists are not best known for their common sense, and inside the Iranian regime itself there were factions which, right up until today, challenge this option.

Khomeini himself, without whose green light the July 18 announcement would have been unthinkable, was to hesitate until the last moment. In the wake of the Airbus tragedy, at the beginning of July, the declarations of all-out war (such as those cited at the beginning of this article) multiplied in Tehran. Only Rafsanjani tried to calm people down. Ayatollah Montazeri — the spokesperson of the militant fundamentalists and, until further notice, heir apparent to Khomeini, who, however, has been increasingly crossing him — asked the "Imam" to "give the order to all the resistance networks inside and outside the country to attack American interests worldwide". Rafsanjani replied by warning against any "heavy-handed reaction" that would only profit the United States by "relieving the international pressure currently on them".

### "I promised to fight until my last drop of blood"

Rafsanjani, who has long demonstrated his demagogic skill, even managed to make the Airbus tragedy the main pretext for the decision to accept a cease-fire, a solution to which he had long been inclined. He explained on July 18 that this tragedy was the decisive element that had convinced Khomeini to change positions (although just a few days earlier Khomeini had said the opposite). Describing the affair as a "turning point", he presented it as "an American declaration that it would perpetrate abominable crimes if Iran continued the war".

Khomeini himself was less hypocritical. Admitting that for him the decision to stop the war had been "more painful than taking poison", he acknowledged that "a few days before" he had still "been convinced that it was necessary to continue the war against Baghdad". But he refused to reveal what had led him to change his mind. "I had promised you to fight until my last drop of blood" (sic), but "I have renounced what I said and have entrusted my dignity to God's judgement" he added. To those who may have wondered "what has been the point of the blood spilt by our young people", Khomeini replied in kind, in his usual grotesque style, that these people had forgotten "the meaning of the philosophy of martyrdom" which gives "our martyrs eternal life!"



In fact, it was Rafsanjani who preempted Khomeini's decision<sup>13</sup>, a choice that reinforced his own power and assures his position as strong man of the Iranian regime. In a previous article<sup>14</sup>, I stated that Rafsanjani had every reason to end the war, notably since the return of the regular army from the front would tilt the balance decisively in his favour in Tehran. This is even truer today. Since the flagging of the Iranian offensive (Kerbala-5) against Basra at the beginning of 1987, Rafsanjani (at the time representing the "Imam" at the Supreme Defence Council) — who was a strong partisan of this offensive in an attempt to get people to forget his role in Irangate — had cynically thrown the blame for the failure onto the irregular troops of the *Pasdaran* and *Bassiji*, the cannon-fodder for the "human waves". Thus at a stroke he dealt a blow to an essential bastion of the tendencies in the regime opposing him at the same time as launching himself into a highly hypocritical warlike demagoguery. This put him in the good books of a Khomeini obsessed, above all, with his hate for Saddam Hussein and worried about maintaining the cohesion of the regime that he set up.

The conciliatory attitude that Khomeini adopted towards Rafsanjani will be a decisive factor of division in the fundamentalist movement. The line of cleavage runs between the most "radical" elements, opposed to the president of the parliament, Rafsanjani, and rallied around Ayatollah Montazeri; and the unconditional supporters of the "Imam", led by his son Ahmed Khomeini, as well as by the *Hodjatuleslams*<sup>15</sup> Khomeyni and Mohtashami. For example, although the latter faction won the majority of seats in the parliamentary elections last spring, it nonetheless reinstated Rafsanjani in his function as president of the assembly.

Beforehand, Khomeini had intervened in favour of the government led by Hussein

Mossavi, an ally of Rafsanjani's, against another faction in the regime opposed to Rafsanjani and which has been predominant inside the Constitutional Supervisory Council (CSC). This faction, grouped in the Tehran Association of Fighting Clergy and linked to the Central Council of Traders in the capital, is the most conservative wing of the regime. It opposes all measures that could in the slightest way attack the sacred principles of private property and freedom of trade.

### Factional struggles among the fundamentalists

Nevertheless, as regards foreign policy this faction exploits anti-American and anti-Iraqi extremism. On this ground it converges with Montazeri's followers, as it also does in the fight against Rafsanjani's faction. Last January, Khomeini decreed — to general astonishment — that governmental action had to take priority over the "secondary laws of religion" often invoked by the CSC. In so doing, he turned upside down a practice that had been in force since 1980.

In spring, the devastating series of defeats suffered by Iranian forces finally convinced the "Imam" to go over to Rafsanjani's point of view and shift onto him the responsibility of a war that was becoming a rout for Iran. On June 2, Khomeini named Rafsanjani temporary commander-in-chief of the armed forces, giving him "full powers" to "unify all the military forces" under his control. An unscrupulous and case-hardened opportunist, Rafsanjani made the most demagogic sort of speech of thanks a day later, in which he committed himself to "pursuing the war against Iraq at any price...until all the objectives set by the Imam Khomeini have been achieved". What he actually did is common knowledge. Rafsanjani's first step using his new powers was to force the commander of the *Pasdaran*, Mohsen Rezai, to make a humiliating self-criticism in front of the TV cameras. He also tried to reinforce the regular army.

What does Rafsanjani want? The present strong man of the Iranian regime can be described as a supporter of normalization and stabilization of Iran as a developing capitalist country. He wants to strengthen the role of a consolidated and homogenized state in developing and managing the economy, as well as in the control of a society whose present imbalances he knows to be extremely explosive. Within this general perspective he wants to reestablish relations of confidence with world capital, including with US imperialism, and he tries less and less to hide the fact. Until July 18, Rafsan-

13. On this subject, see the information brought back from Tehran by Jean Gueyras in *Le Monde*, August 21-22, 1988.

14. See *IV*, op. cit.

15. The rank just below that of Ayatollah in the hierarchy of Shi'ite theologians.

jani justified this choice because of the necessities of the war against Iraq. On July 2 he was still saying that "we have, by our revolutionary posturing, pushed those who would have stayed neutral into the camp of our enemies, and we have done nothing to win to our cause those who could have been our friends".

It is Rafsanjani's faction that is behind the striking improvement of Iran's relations with the imperialist countries. This was demonstrated in a spectacular way this year by the gradual liberation of the Western hostages held in Lebanon, beginning with the French hostages. Since July 18, Rafsanjani has been trying to put forward other justifications for the rapprochement with Washington than the question of the war against Iraq. Thus, in front of a group of American academics participating in a conference in Tehran in August he stressed the convergence between the two states in their anti-communism.<sup>16</sup>

### "An opportunity to improve US-Iran relations"

The US administration, which knows Rafsanjani well from its dealings with him before the scandal came out into the open in November 1986, could only be pleased at the concentration of new powers in his hands since June 2. Some days later, the US magazine *Newsweek* quoted an "expert" from the State Department who saw this as an occasion not to be missed, "a fleeting opportunity to move toward ending the Iran-Iraq war and improving US-Iranian relations as well".<sup>17</sup> The "expert" was insightful. Three weeks later, in the same magazine another "expert" who is listened to in Washington, Henry Kissinger, said the following:

"Fundamentally, there are few nations in the world with less reason to quarrel and more compatible interests than Iran and the United States. Though the Shah came to symbolize the friendship between the two countries in the 1970s, those interests did not depend on him. They reflected political and strategic realities that continue today....

"Two radical threats exist in the Gulf: secular Iraq and fundamentalist Iran.... So long as Iran seemed to be winning the war, it was necessary for the US to tilt toward Iraq. But in the end America can have no conceivable interest in the victory of either side."<sup>18</sup>

The title of the Kissinger's article was "Time to talk with Iran". On July 25, Reagan declared: "If they want to talk and are ready to do it, now's the time". Rafsanjani's answer came on July 26: "If they want to talk, they must adopt an unhostile attitude by freeing our assets. In that event, we will use our influence in Lebanon to sort out the problem of the hostages".

The first gestures by Washington in Iran's direction were made in the days following Rafsanjani's new appointment in

June. America protested against the use of chemical weapons by Iraq (two months after the Halabja massacre!) On June 9, the State Department received Jalal Talabani, head of the Kurdish Patriotic Union (from Iraqi Kurdistan), allied to Iran and fighting alongside its troops. In reaction to this reception, Tarek Aziz, the Iraqi minister of foreign affairs, cancelled a meeting he was to have held with George Shultz. Then, on June 28, Saddam Hussein accused the Americans of passing on to Iran intelligence obtained by means of their satellites. The tension between Baghdad and Washington has grown since then. On September 9, the US Senate went as far as adopting a motion demanding that heavy economic sanctions be inflicted on Iraq. Baghdad's reply was a demonstration of 10,000 people organized by the regime on December 11 in front of the US embassy, denouncing the collusion between the USA and Israel. The latter indeed did not hide its disappointment at Iraq's military successes, and has missed no opportunity to stir up Washington against Baghdad.

Rafsanjani's promotion at the beginning of June and the immediate positive reaction of Washington could only arouse a profound distrust on the part of the Iraqi regime. So when Iran announced its acceptance of UN resolution 598 on July 18, Baghdad was extremely wary of agreeing to an immediate cease-fire. The Ba'athist dictatorship demanded guarantees of good faith from Tehran and tried to consolidate its military advantage on the ground. Baghdad's demand for direct negotiations with Tehran was aimed at getting assurance that the mullahs' regime was well and truly prepared to accept the existence of the Ba'athist government, which it had sworn to destroy. Iraq won this objective and the cease-fire, supervised by the UN, was able to go into force in August.



Since then, negotiations between the two states hit a snag due to a new condition raised by Iraq for withdrawing its troops from parts of Iranian occupied territory: that was the cleaning up of the Shatt-Al-Arab, the confluence of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and Iraq's sole access to the waters of the Gulf.

In fact, Baghdad wants reassurance that Iran has definitively renounced the war, and to obtain the maximum possible concessions in exchange for the only card it holds in the negotiations, the withdrawal of its troops. The Ba'athist dictatorship is extremely worried by the idea that Iran only wants to gain a more or less prolonged tactical respite so that it can rebuild its forces and renew the assault on Iraq — this time with the complicity of the US. Moreover, the Iraqis know that even if Rafsanjani really wants peace, other factions in the mullahs' regime are opposed to it. The announcement made by the new chief of Iran's armed forces on July 18 was described as "treason" by the newspaper *Resalat*, mouthpiece of the ultra-conservative faction.

For their part, the *Pasdarans* supporters of the Ayatollah Montazeri do not hide their ill feelings towards the same Rafsanjani.<sup>19</sup> The outcome of the fight between these various factions, above all after the imminent death of Khomeini, will determine the evolution of the relations between Iran and Iraq and the future of the peace.

### Suffering will continue in other forms

This large margin of uncertainty explains the extreme savagery with which Baghdad has moved to reestablish its total control on the part of Kurdistan included in its national frontiers. Thus, as quickly as possible, Saddam Hussein wants to make the most of what can only be a short-lived truce so that he can dispose of a national rebellion that has caused him military problems by allying with Iran. On the other side of the frontier, since the cease-fire the mullahs' regime has begun a wave of executions of political prisoners.

So the halting of the carnage at the Iran-Iraq frontier — positive as it is without the least doubt, and supposing that it will last — by no means signifies an end to killings inside the two countries. In truth, the peoples of the region will only know real civil and external peace when they have got rid of all forms of social and national oppression, eliminating the warmongering and oppressor classes and layers. In the meantime, their suffering will continue in different forms. ★

16. See the article by Jean Gueyras, *op. cit.*

17. *Newsweek*, June 27, 1988.

18. *Newsweek*, July 18, 1988.

19. "Even recently the *Pasdarans* put up posters in Tehran that had a flag of stars and stripes in the middle of which one could clearly see Rafsanjani's face." Jean Gueyras, *op. cit.*

AROUND  
THE  
WORLD

## ISRAELI STATE

**Financial appeal**

THE TRIAL of our comrade Michel Warschawsky and the Alternative Information Centre are due to begin on October 19. Warschawsky and the AIC are accused of services to an illegal organization and support for a terrorist organization (see IV 147). If found guilty, the accused could face up to 23 years in prison.

The Revolutionary Communist League, Israeli state section of the Fourth International, are appealing for international solidarity around the slogans: "No to political trials against Israeli-Palestinian coopera-

tion; No to restrictions on freedom of information; Drop the charges against Warschawsky and the AIC". They are calling for solidarity pickets to be held outside embassies and consulates on October 19 or earlier and for telegrams and petitions. These should be sent to the Attorney General, with copies to embassies and the RCL.

Because the costs of the trial are very high, it is necessary to start collecting money now.

Financial contributions for the campaign can be sent via bankers order to "Rouge" CCP 2504388 S Paris, France. The RCL can be contacted via PO Box 22434, Jerusalem, Israel. ★

## SOUTH AFRICA

**Slums and shantytowns**

THE HOUSING shortage in South Africa has reached alarming proportions. Millions of South Africans presently live in slums and shantytowns.

To resolve this problem from now until the year 2,000, it is estimated that 78 billion rand would have to be invested and 3,572,000 new homes built. Such a programme would mean the construction of 1,190 homes every eight-hour working day for 12 years, or one every two minutes and 47 seconds!

The government officially acknowledges that there are 935,697 squatters — the majority in the Transvaal — but the Urban Foundation estimates that in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Sereeniging region alone there are 2,445,000 squatters occupying 312,000 slums and 67,000 garages. ★

## OBITUARY

**Panatt Vasu**

COMRADE PANATT VASU, a long time leader of the Kerala provincial committee of the Inquillabi Communist Sanghathan (ICS, Indian section of the Fourth International) died at the age of 61 at his home in Trichur, Kerala, on July 26.

Born into a poor proletarian family, he had to go to Ceylon, then a part of the British empire, in search of a job. He went there at the age of 16 and worked in many areas of the country doing different jobs before settling down as a beedi worker. Meanwhile, he came into contact with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) leadership. At that time the LSSP was the Ceylonese section of the FI. Vasu became an ardent supporter of Trotskyist ideas. His life from then on was a struggle to propagate the ideas and ideologies of the Fourth International. In Ceylon, he proved his worth as an efficient party worker and built up a strong working class movement among the beedi workers. He learnt Tamil and Sinhalese. Though he had no formal education, he was fluent in English, Hindi and Malayalam as well.

In 1959 he came back to Kerala under the direction of the LSSP leadership to build up a Trotskyist movement in Kerala. At that time the Trotskyists in Kerala were spread into different parties, most notably the Kerala Socialist Party (KSP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). The majority were in the RSP. Comrade Vasu was opposed to the tactic of entryism into the RSP as he thought it would be detrimental to the future interests of a Trotskyist movement. (Later he was proved right.) But at last he joined the RSP to avoid a split among the Kerala Trotskyists. He became head of the Trichur district committee of the RSP and worked hard to build up the party. Because of his position in the party he came to be called "RSP Vasu". At the same time, he formed a faction within it.

In 1967, along with many of his comrades Vasu left the RSP in protest against the policy of allying with communal

organizations. By this time, the RSP had declined substantially as a political force. Thereafter, it became his objective to build up a strong FI unit in Kerala and India.

He was the man behind all FI publications in Malayalam. He owned a small printing press which was mainly used to print Trotskyist and FI literature in Malayalam. At the time of his death comrade Vasu was the editor, printer and publisher of the ICS journal in Malayalam, "Varola" or "Poster". He took his political activities so seriously that he decided never to marry or set up a family.

Comrade Vasu was fragile in body and weak in health. He was the victim of many diseases. But these could not deter him from his political activities. It was because of his influence and capacity to attract the youth of the local area that the local units of the Stalinist CPI and CPI(M) prohibited their youth from meeting or discussing political issues with him.

Along with his political activities, he was active in many other fields like the atheist and rationalist movements, science and ecology movements, human and civil rights activities and so on. When the Kerala government unleashed its oppression on the cadres of the CPI(M-L), a Maoist organization, he was there in the forefront of the fight to defend them against state violence and violation of their fundamental rights.

Comrade Vasu was a model communist. He was the guide, the leader and the guardian of the Kerala Trotskyists. He was, at the time of his death, a member of the control commission of the Inquillabi Communist Sanghathan. He was one of the key links connecting the old generation of Trotskyists with the new.

We, the comrades of the ICS, feel that we have lost an exemplary leader, one who spent his whole life and material earnings for the propagation of the ideas and ideologies of the FI.

We will remember this fighter as long as we continue our political activities, and these memories will be our inspiration in the future. Comrade Panatt Vasu showed us how a Marxist should live and fight for the revolutionary cause. ★

**Moscow Trials campaign**

**THE CAMPAIGN** to clear the names of all the accused in the Moscow Trials, launched over a year ago, has been collecting signatures from all over the world (for the full text of the appeal, see IV 137). You can contact the campaign c/o Michael Löwy, 34 rue des Lyonnais, 75005 Paris, France.

**Final list of signatories:**

**Britain:** 18 MPs have sponsored a parliamentary motion to demand that the Soviet government rehabilitate Trotsky and Leon Sedov, alongside all those assassinated by the Stalinist regime: Terry Fields; Dave Nellist; Pat Wall; Mildred Gordon; Dennis Skinner; Jimmy Wray; Chris Mullins; Alan Roberts; Clare Short; Robert Parry; John Hughes; Bob Clay; Tony Banks; Ronnie Campbell; John Cummings; Jeremy Corbyn; Alice Mahon; Dawn Primarolo.

**Denmark:** Keld Albrechtsen, ex-MP, Left Socialist Party (VS); Margrethe Auk-en, MP, Socialist Peoples Party (SF); Ole Bach, SID ex. cttee., Randers; Prof. Claus Bryld, historian, Univ. of Roskilde; Leif Clynor, shop steward HK, SAS; Inger Harms MP, SF; Gitte Hesselmann, Socialist Workers Party (SAP); Anne Grete Holmsgaard, ex-MP, SF; Lars Hutter, cllr. Copenhagen, VS; Prof. Neils Hybel, historian, Copenhagen Univ.; Hanne Thaning Jacobsen, MP, SF; Helmuth Jacobsen, shop steward, SAS, ex. cttee local 16 Metal; Claus Jensen, int. sec. SID; Ivan Malinowski, author; Bent Moos, pres. HRF; John Mølgaard, trade union sec., SID; Kjeld Rahbaek Moeller, MP, SF; Jørgen Nielsen, pres. DLF, local 61, Naestved; Martin P Nielsen, shop steward SAS, ex. cttee local 16 Metal; Elisabeth Bruun Olesen, ex-MP, VS; Gert Petersen, MP, pres. SF; Poul Petersen, trade union sec., VS; Thora Petersen, trade union sec., KAD, local 5 Copenhagen; Halfdan Rasmussen, author; Soeren Rishoej, MP, SF; Viljo Sigurdsson, ex-mayor, Copenhagen, VS; Gunna Starck, mayor (city planning), Copenhagen, VS; Ole Stender-Petersen, historian; Ebba Strange, MP, SF; Finn Sørensen, pres. Trade Union of Brewery Workers, Copenhagen; Jens Thoft, MP, SF; Kirsten Thorup, author; Steen Tinning, ex-MP, VS; Boerge Trolle, author/journalist, SF; Michael Voss, SAP; Boris Weil, author/librarian.

**Netherlands:** Leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (SAP); Otto van de Haar, CP; Suzane Legene, CP; EJF Molenaar; PWH Drenth; Anet Bleich, journalist; Max van Weezel, editor VN; Constant Vecht, journalist; Leo Jacobs, chief editor Radio Stad; Florian Diepenbrock, FNV; Maarten van Traa, MP, PvdA; Jan Gerritze, CP; Truus Beumer-Ronday, CP; Cathir van de Haar, CP Utrecht; Jan Marinus Wiersma, international sec., PvdA. ★

**Errata**

In the last issue of IV (147), the name of the author of the article reprinted from the Italian CP journal *Rinascita*, Michal Reiman, was inadvertently omitted. It is important to note that Reiman is not a member of the Italian CP, but a Czech refugee living in Italy.

**LEON TROTSKY**

Il y a 50 ans  
Trotsky fondait  
la Quatrième  
Internationale  
pour lutter contre  
le capitalisme et  
le stalinisme

Aujourd'hui,  
où est-elle,  
que fait-elle ?

**RASSEMBLEMENT**

samedi 10 décembre  
14h - 24h

à LSC, 144 Avenue  
du président Wilson  
La Plaine St Denis (93)

*Débats, exposition, films, bal,  
meeting avec des militants,  
des délégations étrangères,  
des personnalités . . .  
& la présence de Esteban Volkov,  
petit-fils de Trotsky*

**JLCR**  
Ligue communiste révolutionnaire  
section française de la Quatrième Internationale  
**JCR**  
Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire

# INTRODUCTION

## Polish opposition discuss the next steps

IN THE WAKE OF Lech Walesa's tête-à-tête with Poland's top policeman, interior minister Czeslaw Kiszczak, there was a veritable summit meeting. It took place on September 16 between a Solidarnosc delegation including Lech Walesa, Wladyslaw Frasyniuk and the leaders of the August strike committees and a weighty delegation of bureaucrats presided over by Kiszczak and Communist Party secretary Stanislaw Ciosek.

CYRIL SMUGA

**T**HE OFFICIAL communique published shortly afterward stated that a round table would be held in October on "the model of functioning of the state and public life, the acceleration of the development and modernization of the economy and the form of the Polish trade-union movement". Once again, although in fact what was involved was negotiations between Solidarnosc and leading bureaucrats, the communique did not specify the position of the two delegations. On September 16, the Polish parliament accepted the government's resignation. Everything was moving.

At the same time, nothing had changed. On September 21, the trial of Jozef Piniór, Czeslaw Borowczyk and Jolanta Skiba was held in Wroclaw. They were jailed for trying to organize a strike in May. In the worst bureaucratic tradition, the presiding judge continually took sides against the defence witnesses, refused to grant bail and, at the same time, observed that this trial of Polish Socialist Party (PPS) members had nothing to do with politics! The defence lawyers' attempts to argue that there was a climate of détente in the country were dismissed with a wave of the hand. In Wroclaw young people from Alternative Orange carried out a mass distribution of a leaflet. It showed a big pig, with a laconic caption, "round table in place of the trough."

The official press has been talking constantly about an "understanding." This is the term used also by many Solidarnosc leaders. Journalist Maciej Szumowski rejects this term (he was editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Krakowska* in 1981 when the daily was in the front line of liberalism of the official press, and was fired after the

December 13, 1981, coup d'etat). "Let's say rather that after some years the two sides have reached the conclusion that they have to live together without an understanding." He dotted the "i's" by speaking of a "coexistence" within which both the regime and Solidarnosc would try to score points.

Speaking in a Polish broadcast of Radio Free Europe, Jacek Kuron said that it was necessary "to force the regime to accept radical political and economic reforms." He went on to say: "It is not the same thing if this is done through strikes or through a discussion in society as a whole, with participation, involvement in public groups, social movements and therefore a debate through representatives in various negotiations between social groups and above all between the society and the regime. This second way is far more profitable for the country and the society. Everything that has happened recently gives hope that this second way will be possible."

Jozef Piniór does not share this view. From prison, he explained to his comrades in the PPS that the bureaucracy was trying to create a sort of a "Bantustan" for oppositionists.

With Lech Walesa's appeal to stop the

strikes, Solidarnosc chose to utilize every means of negotiations to win legalization. But the hope aroused by the *de facto* recognition of Solidarnosc in the negotiations is nothing comparable to what gripped the country in September 1980, after the signing of the Gdansk accords. This hope is mixed with a distrust made particularly acute by the experience of years of repression and the 1981 coup d'etat, as well as all the periods of hardening up that have always followed interludes of liberalization since the establishment of Stalinist domination in Poland. In the plants, tensions have not subsided. The prevailing atmosphere is one of a truce, as is shown by spontaneous strike attempts, which Solidarnosc members are still managing to control.

### The outlines of the debate

This feeling of uneasy waiting also predominates among the leaders of the various currents in the Polish opposition. It casts so heavy a pall that, although everyone is asking themselves what should be done if Solidarnosc gets legalization in one form or another, this question is not being faced. This situation is reflected in the interviews that follow. They are at least partially representative of the positions of new forces on the Polish political landscape.

For some years, the activities of the Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP) have marked a political remobilization of Polish youth. The appearance and trajectory of the new Polish Socialist Party have reflected a radicalization and left politicalization of a part of the new generation of opposition activists.<sup>1</sup> Finally, "Striking Solidarnosc" — that is the independent union structures that appeared in the spring and summer 1988 strikes — have operated publicly in a mass way, bringing together both traditional leaders of independent trade-unionism and those who have emerged from the recent struggles.

It would be an exaggeration to say that these three interviews sum up all the political and ideological positions held, or even that the opinions expressed here are fully representative of the organizations to which these people belong. Nonetheless, they indicate the outlines of the debate. ★

1. See our dossier on the refounding of the PPS in IV 137, March 21, 1988.



# "Our problems are not yet over"

**Interview with Stanislaw Handzlik, Solidarnosc leader at the Lenin steelworks**

**A HISTORIC LEADER** of the Nowa Huta steelworkers, Stanislaw Handzlik was an active leader of Solidarnosc in the complex in 1980-81 and one of the underground leaders of the union in the Cracow region after the imposition of the state of war. In this capacity, he was a member of the underground national leadership of Solidarnosc, the TKK.

He was imprisoned several times for his activities and fired from the factory. In April 1988, he joined the strikers in the Lenin steelworks and was elected to the strike committee. After its transformation into the Solidarnosc Organizing Committee in the factory, he has served as its spokesperson.

**WHAT DO YOU think about Lech Walesa's appeal to halt the strikes on August 31?**

The idea was a good one, but the way it was carried out left something to be desired. First of all, Lech appealed in a statement that the demand for legalizing Solidarnosc should be left to him, while the internal problems in the striking factories were settled locally — security for the strikers, wage increases, payment of strike days and so on. The next day, he called for

stopping the strikes immediately, while the majority of the strike committees were in the course of getting an agreement on these questions.

The strikers were thus confronted with an accomplished fact, and had to interrupt these negotiations. As a result, a lot of the strikers remained fired, and there was no guarantee of security or payment for days on strike. It was possible, however, to get all that, because before Lech's appeal in some of the striking plants negotiations with the management were going well. As soon as he made his appeal, the managements hardened up and did not want to negotiate any more.

**■ Do you think that there was a chance of getting an agreement with the authorities, especially about the legalization of Solidarnosc?**

It seems that there were serious divisions on the side of the regime. We are betting on those who want an understanding, who want to set out on the road of democratizing the country. The immediate future will show if this proves effective.

For us it is clear, however, that our problems are not yet over. If we get Solidarnosc now, so much the better, but if not, we will wait for the next opportunity. We do not see this in terms of "today or never," or "all or nothing" — we will wait, if necessary, for the opportune moment, when the regime is ready for that. Without the society, without Solidarnosc — which in one way or another is an institution that represents the society — there can be no question of any economic reforms. In order to succeed, reforms involve recognizing society's right to self-determination and its subjective role.

**■ Some Solidarnosc leaders and representatives of the government camp have been raising the idea of an understanding around an anti-crisis pact. What is your attitude to this?**

The idea seems reasonable to me, because the main question in Poland today is not who will win, but whether we can get out of the crisis as a nation. And if both sides prove willing, such a national understanding is the only way. Solidarnosc is not putting forward too radical a program. On the other hand, the regime — while wanting as much as possible to maintain its possessions — has also to show a readiness for concessions. In fact, the regime is seeking above all to assure its tranquility.

Introducing reforms that would make it possible to stabilize the market would allow it to win time to reconsolidate its ranks and save its stake. It seems that if the regime proves incapable of making concessions on the question of the *nomenklatura* [bureaucracy] in the plants — which is a precondition for any economic reform — we will not be ready to commit ourselves to such a pact. The question is whether the changes that the regime will grant us can lead to a radical transformation of the econ-

omy. We are not demanding such a transformation for today, but we want guarantees that it will resolutely commit itself to this road.

**■ As regards economic reform, in 1980-81 Solidarnosc primarily put the accent on the question of self-management.**

Yes.

**■ On the other hand, today above all the question of the market is stressed — especially by the government. There is a difference there.**

I think that Solidarnosc has also matured on this point. Moreover, we have quite a different situation. Self-management cannot accomplish anything today. The Hungarian experience, and above all the Yugoslav one, show that self-management is incapable of curing the economy here. It is an outdated remedy. On the other hand the experience of our Western neighbors shows that the market system, the capitalist system, is the most stable and efficient. So, why seek a special road, why involve ourselves in experiments, when we have a ready-made model that works marvelously and achieves a perfect balance?

**■ Nonetheless, this "perfect balance" is going hand in hand today with considerable unemployment and a certain economic stagnation.**

That is a cyclical problem. But the West's economic development is incomparably greater than what we know here. As regards unemployment, I am not afraid of that. The problem is whether unemployed people get decent benefits. If we manage, after some time, to get wages here comparable with those of workers in the West, then it would be possible to live on such benefits.

Of course, unemployment can have other tragic effects for the mental state of those suffering from it. But no one has invented a better system yet. There must be a labor market, and that means that some people will be temporarily out of work.

Today, we have to try to begin producing in a capitalist way, and the question of dividing up this product is one for negotiation between representatives of the society and the authorities, or the managers of various plants, or even the owners. I think that we will manage to settle that.

**■ In the recent strikes, a new radical generation of worker and student activists came to the fore. This generation feels a total lack of perspectives, and that is the source of its radicalism. What can it expect from an understanding around an anti-crisis pact?**

This new generation now has only one choice: either go abroad to earn money or wait here until God gives it to them. The youth are aware that unless an understanding can be achieved with the regime, the only hope left to them is to emigrate to the West. That means that every attempt to find

an understanding with the Communists is perceived by them as a way of getting out of this blind alley in five to ten years, of being able to earn enough money to get an apartment or a car. On the other hand, they are very impatient. For a young person, five to ten years is a long time.

But there is no other solution. Unlike the Afghans, we do not have a common border with Pakistan and therefore we also do not have the possibility of obtaining arms to form a guerrilla force in the forests. There is no doubt that the Poles would be ready to fight arms in hand against Communism, but our geo-political situation totally excludes that.

That is why the tactic of non-violence is so popular here. It is not because we are particularly gentle or pacifistic, because we want to wage a peaceful struggle against an enemy who uses all the means at their disposal, but because we have no other choice.

That is the way young people see it. Today above all they want a hope, a future. They want to beat the regime like a drum — regardless of what sort of a regime it is, Communist, a national entente or even a democratic parliament — to get a living standard comparable to the one in the West. If young people cannot get this in their own country, they are simply going to emigrate, because they feel an integral part of world civilization.

All young people consider themselves primarily human beings, that is a part of human civilization, and secondly as Christians, because many young Poles feel very bound to Christian ideals, and only thirdly as Poles. This hierarchy of values is new in our country.

**■ Has the rather negative attitude of many strikers to Lech Walesa's appeal posed the question of the unity of Solidarnosc, especially if the current negotiations do not produce anything?**

I think that regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, Lech Walesa will continue to enjoy a great authority. Undoubtedly, if the negotiations were broken off, strikes would break out here and there. In certain enterprises, the workers struck in August; in others they were preparing to, and in still others we succeeded not without difficulty in preventing strikes when the first negotiations were already underway.

For example, in the coking plant in the Lenin steel complex, a few days ago the Solidarnosc Organizing Committee had a hard time convincing the workers not to launch a strike, because they wanted wage negotiations above all. The people there finally accepted our arguments, and agreed to postpone their demands.

However, if the negotiations were broken off, new brush fires would flare up, because not only Solidarnosc would strike, but undoubtedly also the OPZZ [National Entente of Unions, the official unions set up by the regime during the state of war], which would try to improve their image by competing with us over wages. There would also be strikes in the plants that have not yet been touched by the movement, the smaller plants where the workers have drawn lessons from the fact that the army did not intervene with tanks and that the police did not break the strikes as they did in Nowa Huta in May. These workers have regained their confidence in collective action.

The workers would demand their due, es-

pecially since the country's economic situation is getting worse daily. Inflation is incredible, and people no longer have any savings, because only nuts would save zlotys, and not everyone has the means to buy and place dollars.

People are living from day to day; families have no hope of saving to buy furniture, washing machines, TVs. We are living as though in the African bush. What we get, we eat every day, and the next day the question arises again of what to do. This is shaping social consciousness and creating an explosive situation. Neither a new state of war, nor the army nor the police can keep such a situation under control.

**■ In your opinion, then, if spontaneous strikes break out, Solidarnosc should take the lead and try to coordinate them.**

Yes, absolutely. I think that if the regime denies Solidarnosc the possibility of cooperating in the introduction of economic reforms, precisely in the framework of the anticrisis pact, then the union will have no choice but to fight for material demands. Solidarnosc has to defend workers against the effects of what they call reform, which is digging constantly into the workers' pockets without their being consulted about such economic reform.

Solidarnosc will, therefore, have to coordinate such strikes in the name of defending workers' interests.

This will also be a means of pressure, and perhaps then, after a new wave of strikes, the group in the regime favorable to an understanding will cross the Rubicon and come out from behind the scenes to fight. ★



# "Walesa recognizes perfectly the mood of the masses"

**Interview with Zuzanna Dabrowska, Polish Socialist Party General Council**

TWENTY-TWO years old, a student and former member of the Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP), Zuzanna Dabrowska is one of the founders of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which was launched in November 1987. She led the party's Wroclaw regional organization. After the split of the group of moderate leaders from the party this spring, she became the secretary of the presidium of the PPS General Council.

**WHAT'S YOUR opinion of Lech Walesa's call for ending the strikes?**

It is hard to judge if the strike wave could have grown if Lech Walesa had not called for halting the actions. On the one hand, in the Polar factory in Wroclaw, for example, a strike was prepared for September 1. The same was true in the Lublin truck factory. On the other hand, the strikes in Upper Silesia were dying out.

Like any political gesture, Lech Walesa's appeal can be seen in two lights. There is the moral aspect. And from this point of view, the main trade-union leader's conversation with the country's number one policeman, the brains behind the state of war,

the strike-breaker, is at the least dubious. Minister of the Interior Czeslaw Kiszczak did not even try to create the illusion that the government or an ad hoc committee was negotiating with the opposition. After the strikes, it has become clear that Jaruzelski, Rakowski and Messner do not count. It is Kiszczak who played the leading role, and he clearly owes this to Walesa.

If you consider Walesa's call from the standpoint of its effectiveness, one thing is certain. It was heeded by the strikers. It is still hard to make a judgement about the reactions of the main leaders of Solidarnosc. But it should be noted that among the members of the delegation for the round table, you do not find certain important leaders of the union. That indicates that some leaders have given a mandate to Walesa but do not want to involve themselves personally in the game around the round table.

The workers have also given Walesa a mandate, while wanting the discussion to be kept within a strict framework. They have given Lech Walesa the go-ahead to negotiate the role of Solidarnosc as a union and not a club or association. It is too early to talk about the changes for a real entente at the round table. It is clear that this is a tactical gesture by the authorities. As Lampedusa says in *The Leopard*, when the system begins to break down, it is necessary to make the greatest number of changes possible so that everything remains as before. What Walesa can get will depend therefore on his and the regime's assessment of the degree of determination of society.

**Some Solidarnosc leaders and also certain representatives of the government camp have launched the idea of an anti-crisis pact. What do you think about that?**

The idea of an anti-crisis pact, which was raised before the August strikes, differs from that of the round table in that today the opposition delegation has a strong argument — the power of the strikers and their obeying Lech Walesa's call. If this argument were not fully utilized, that is if a second union [a new legal Solidarnosc] did not appear on some level in Poland, there would be new strikes and Lech Walesa's authority would suffer.

**The idea of the pact was to achieve a sort of quid pro quo. The union would accept austerity, and the authorities would grant some democratic freedoms in exchange.**

Recently in an article in *Der Spiegel*, Adam Michnik did not hesitate to make a parallel with the Moncloa Pact, which resulted in the collapse of the trade-union movement in the Spanish state.

The Moncloa Pact is a very bad precedent. I think that this sort of thing is impossible in Poland today. It is no longer just a small group that has become independent of the opposition leaders but in a certain way the masses of workers. This forms the



framework that has to be taken into account also by the leaders conducting the negotiations with the representatives of the regime. Everyone knows that during the recent strikes, Lech Walesa was on the brink of being disavowed, and that he managed only with great difficulty to get the strikes stopped.

The decisive element was not the acceptance of Lech Walesa's tactic, but the determination of everyone not to offer the regime a spectacle of divisions on the strike front. It is in this way that you have to understand Lech Walesa's words announcing that he would present his resignation if the talks failed.

He might not have any other choice. Unlike some of his advisors, Walesa recognizes perfectly the mood of the masses, and he has no illusions about his own situation. Therefore, if someone signed an agreement for austerity in exchange for legalizing the union, it would have no reality. As soon as the workers had their own union, they will do what they want.

**Can the young generation, which was in the forefront of the recent strikes, hope for anything from the round table?**

Yes, if it leads to an independent union getting the right to exist. Up until then Solidarnosc members in the factories concerned themselves with everything but trade-union activity. They printed and distributed leaflets, went to masses for the fatherland and took risks by bringing tons of underground printing materials into factories. Only in some cases did the Solidarnosc commissions take up social problems, organizing mutual aid funds for example (the trade-union activity at Nowa Huta here is the exception that confirms the rule). And this is to say nothing of the fact that in the underground there was no way to renew cadres. Those who got tired left, and their

places remained empty. There is a chance that that will change.

Legality for the union, the need to compete with the official unions — which they fear more than anything and give as their main reason for rejecting pluralism — will make it possible to train new cadres in the plants who will tackle the questions that are really the most important ones from the standpoint of the workers — wages, working conditions, social protection.

In this framework, the role of members of different organizations able to train plant activists, to provide them with the necessary materials and teach them how to wage the daily struggle for the workers' rights, will be crucial. This will lead also to a healthy polarization in Solidarnosc. Those members not interested in strictly trade-union questions will, in the natural course of things, find other forms of activity more attractive to them.

■ **The negative attitude of many strikers toward Lech Walesa's initiative has put in question the unity of the Solidarnosc movement, especially if the negotiations for the legalization of the union should fail.**

**Do you think that it is necessary to try to maintain this unity, which was symbolized by the recent strikes, and if so, how?**

The unity of Solidarnosc as a social movement is a myth. That was already true when it was legal, as is natural. Within Solidarnosc, there are many people who represent political options and do not stick to trade-union activity. These people are little by little breaking away from Solidarnosc, creating their own organizations or political parties. This is a healthy and positive phenomenon. Nonetheless, a number of Solidarnosc leaders and advisors still show a tendency to take on everything, to pretend to be the sole representatives of the society both on the political and trade-union level.

The workers have struck to get a free union. That is their main aim. Without its working-class base, Solidarnosc would have no reason to exist, or just become a small political club propagating the ideas of American democracy. So if we want to preserve the unity of Solidarnosc, it will be necessary first of all to determine what Solidarnosc must be, which does not at all exclude Solidarnosc playing a political role.

If the strikers manage to achieve their aim in the near future, that is, if through systematic pressure they force the regime to grant legality to the union in one form or another, the movement's unity will have to be rebuilt.

For its part, the Polish Socialist Party, as an independent organization and through its activists, is developing and will continue to develop links with the plant union structures in the name of such unity. And we start out from the idea that it is at the plant level where demands emerge naturally that unite the workers. ★

## **“This regime no longer represents anyone”**

**Interview with Piotr Niemczyk, Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP) leader**

**AT 26, Piotr Niemczyk is one of the main leaders of the Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP). Its action in support of the right of young people to refuse to pledge allegiance to the USSR led recently to a modification of the oath and to the creation of conscientious objector's status, a serious setback for General Jaruzelski.**

**During the recent strikes, WiP activists played an important role supporting the strikers from the outside. In August Piotr Niemczyk worked in a information commission of Solidarnosc, collecting and disseminating the facts about the strikes underway.**

**WHAT DO you think about Lech Walesa's call for ending the strike?**

Voices have been raised saying that this call was premature, because the regime had not given any guarantees about granting the demands. The criticisms especially stressed the firing and conscription of many strikers. In my opinion, however, the moment was well chosen, because the strike wave was beginning to ebb. In particular in Jastrzebie and Szczecin, where the strikes first got under-

way, fatigue was beginning to set in.

Although the strikers were very determined, there was a real danger of the movement coming to a halt. Lech Walesa's appeal took account of the fact that the strikers had forced the regime to negotiate, and got it to understand it would no longer ignore social pressure. The regime was confronted with an accomplished fact. In most big enterprises, Solidarnosc organizing committees have been appearing publicly, and at some point the authorities are going to face a public but illegal mass trade-union.

The regime has to realize that it is obliged to negotiate. The regime is in a trap today, because it has not only to take account of Solidarnosc but also of pressures of the power apparatus, especially the intermediary *nomenklatura* [bureaucratic hierarchy]. This sector perceives quite clearly that its privileges are under threat, because the power of bureaucrats at this level is often limited to the possibility of firing someone, which a legal Solidarnosc could prevent.

In fact, this regime no longer represents anyone, since it does not even really represent its own apparatus. This is a favorable situation for Solidarnosc.

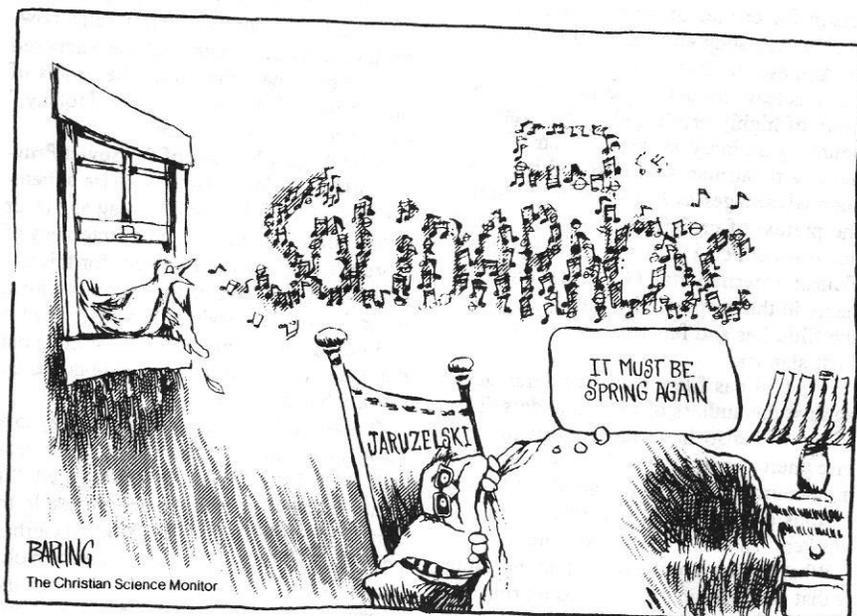
■ **Some Solidarnosc leaders and some representatives of the government have launched the idea of an anti-crisis pact. What do you think about that?**

A compromise is necessary, from the standpoint of two sides, the regime and Solidarnosc. It is essential as regards legalization of Solidarnosc. It is essential in the economy. In this country, the question is no longer what can be achieved concretely but what can offer people hope. People know that it will take them fifty years to get a home, and that they will never get a car or a color TV.

In this desperate situation, just the idea that people who really want to improve the situation can concern themselves with it is already a lot. On the other hand, as for the first fruits of such an endeavor, I don't think that in the situation of economic ruin we are in that we can hope for rapid improvement.

■ **In the economy, Solidarnosc's proposals today are rather far removed from those it adopted at its first congress in 1981. Then the question of self-management was central; today stress is being put rather on the market. The model proposed is more concerned with power for managers than with workers' councils.**

I would be tempted to answer both “yes” and “no.” It is true that you find such tendencies in the recent elaborations of Solidarnosc advisers. But if a more concrete program is to see the light of day, a program able to play the same role as that adopted by the Solidarnosc congress, it cannot emerge without the active participation of trade unionists. Such participation is



BARLING  
The Christian Science Monitor

impossible without legalization of Solidarnosc.

So, let us wait, because it is not at all certain that this elaboration will follow the lines of what is being written today, which is inevitably not very representative. On the other hand, the Solidarnosc experts, and more generally the activists of the democratic opposition, represent very varied points of view on this subject. Proposals concerning not only the market but also central planning co-exist. Points of view evolve.

I was surprised, for example, to read a position taken by Marcin Krol, who is generally identified with the market option in economic reform, in the last issue of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. He explained that a center endowed with substantial prerogatives was necessary to direct the economy as a whole. So, it is hard to say what could be involved in a compromise on economic questions with the regime in the framework of an anti-crisis pact.

■ Do you think that the negative attitude taken by many strikers toward Lech Walesa's call to stop the strikes could call into question the unity of the Solidarnosc union?

No. Commitment to Solidarnosc is too general for that. It is possible that questions of personalities may be raised, in terms of confidence in one leader or another. But this can be resolved by the democratic functioning of Solidarnosc. Whatever aversion there may be toward Walesa — and this can indeed be seen among the more radical activists — there is no question of envisaging an alternative to Solidarnosc.

■ The Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP) has managed to win the right to alternative civilian service. What perspectives for future activity does the WiP envisage today?

This is difficult question that most WiP

members are certainly asking themselves. The WiP is preparing for a congress on this. The WiP has demonstrated its usefulness as a pressure group able to get results.

I think that there is a multitude of questions that the WiP should take up. Just looking at the final act of the Helsinki Conference, you see that there is an impressive

number of questions concerning liberties and the fight for peace that remain to be settled in our country. Starting with the question of education, for example, in Poland beginning in kindergarten, we are inculcated with aversion toward other nationalities; beginning in primary school, we have to take military training. In this way, an unjustified feeling of danger is developed.

■ In Western Europe, some peace movements raise the question of democratic freedoms in the army. In the Netherlands, for example, draftees have won the right to have their own trade-union organizations. Are such questions being discussed within the WiP?

No. The Polish army is so hermetically sealed that it is virtually impossible to raise the question of democratic freedoms, which moreover are mocked every day outside the armed forces. I think that the first task for us will be to disseminate information and provide aid for conscientious objectors.

In fact, if the law permits conscientious objection, which is an immense step forward, it is still very restrictive and offers a considerable margin of maneuver to the military authorities. So, future objectors will need daily help. The WiP will have a great role to play in this area. ★

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# Stop the slanders against Petr Uhl

ON JUNE 17 the Czechoslovak news agency Orbis Press distributed an article in several languages to all the embassies that had been published on the first pages of *Rude Pravo* [the journal of the Czechoslovak CP] and *Pravda* [journal of the Central Committee of the CP in Slovakia].

ALAIN KRIVINE & ERNEST MANDEL

**T**HE ARTICLE was entitled "An adventurer of the so-called Fourth International." It was devoted to the activities of our comrade Petr Uhl, a co-founder of Charter 77 and one of the best known and most respected opposition communists in Czechoslovakia and abroad. The piece contains particularly odious personal attacks against Petr Uhl, who has spent several years in

prison for crimes of opinion. Because of this, he was adopted as a political prisoner by Amnesty International.

Let us leave aside the question of the morality of highly privileged bureaucrats denouncing ordinary workers — Petr Uhl is a heating repairman — for benefiting from such advantages as social security. Under the pretext of criticizing the writings and activities of Petr Uhl, Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International (we were cited by name in this respect), this article drags out the filth, lies and falsifications of old Stalinist slanders.

Petr Uhl has filed a suit for defamation against the authors of these slanders. This affair will also have legal consequences elsewhere, since we are cited by name. We are determined to fight to get these falsifications and lies finally banished from the workers' and democratic movement.

What throws a peculiar light on this affair is that *Rude Pravo's* article was reprinted in the USSR by the newspaper *Sovietskaya Rossiia*, which distinguished itself by publishing the notorious pro-Stalinist article by Nina Andreyeva [see IV 143].

## Is this part of a campaign against *glasnost*?

Moreover, the various publications of this article came shortly before the decision of the Nineteenth Congress of the CPSU to erect a monument in honor of the political victims of Stalin, who were murdered on the basis of the slanders reprinted by these three newspapers. They came shortly before the ruling of the USSR Supreme Court overturning the verdicts of the first and second Moscow trials, which were based on the same slanders (the verdict of the third Moscow trial had been overturned earlier).

On August 5, 1988, the Soviet *Pravda* published at the top of its first page a report of the commission of the Political Bureau of the CPSU on the rehabilitation of Stalin's victims. This explicitly said that all the charges of murder, attempted murder,

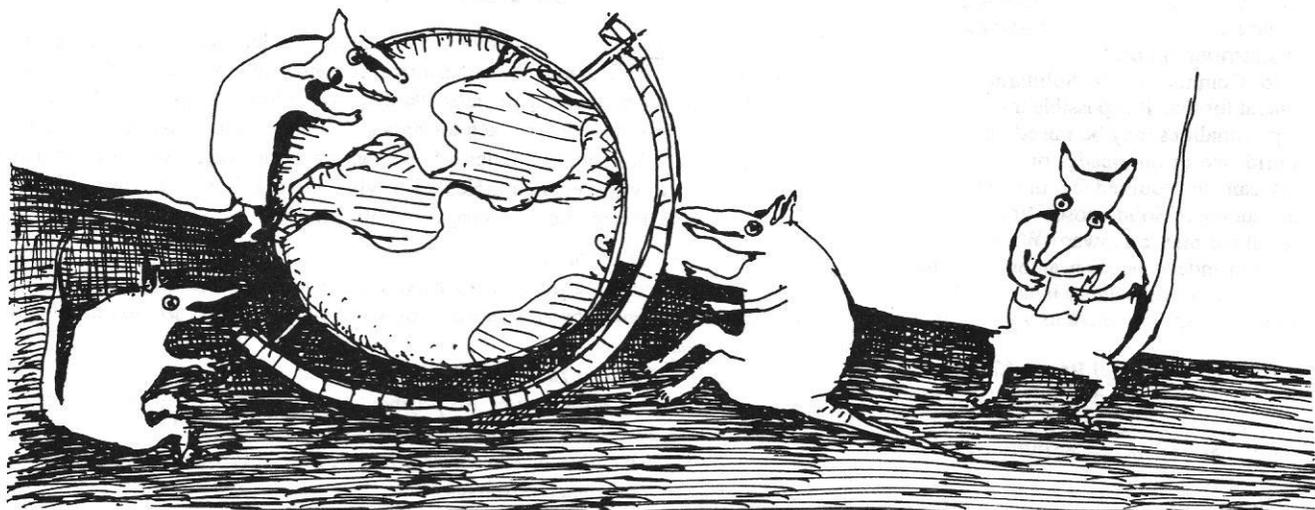
counter-revolutionary activity, spying, terrorism and collaboration with foreign powers, including the Nazis, that was supposed to have been perpetrated on the orders of "the enemy of the people Leon Trotsky," were made totally invented.

In the August 19 issue of the Soviet *Pravda*, Mikhail Solomentsev, likewise a member of the CPSU Political Bureau and chair of this commission, devoted an interview of more than a page (a rare event for this paper) to the question of the rehabilitations. After denouncing Stalin's responsibility for "crimes against humanity" and pointing out that the confessions were often obtained by torture, he specified:

"These trials are, if you like, the key to a correct evaluation of the events of the second half of the 1930s." He concluded: "It would obviously be more comfortable to simply ignore this past. But Mikhail Gorbachev has said that such an attitude is an obstacle to the development of revolutionary consciousness, of civic behavior, of courage and a strong sense of responsibility, that is, qualities that are so important for the success of *perestroika*. It is precisely for this reason that the party has summoned the courage to undertake this process of a critical review of the past, of reestablishing the historical truth, of rehabilitating the victims of unfounded political accusations and illegal actions."

The question can legitimately be asked whether the neo-Stalinists in Prague and Bratislava [the capital of Slovakia], as well as their counterparts in the USSR, have engaged in a desperate last-minute maneuver to defend Stalin and his torturers and hangmen, to block the rehabilitation of the Leninist Central Committee, including Trotsky? Is there an international factional struggle in the "socialist camp," or the "international communist movement"?

Is there a struggle in which Gorbachev's adversaries, or at least the radical wing of the "renewers" in the USSR, are using Stalinist anti-Trotskyist slanders as a weapon in fact against a deepening of *glasnost* in the USSR? ★



# "He is living among us"

AN OFFICIAL English translation of the June 18 *Rude Pravo* article by Jaroslav Kojzar attacking Petr Uhl was issued by the Czechoslovak central news agency Orbis and distributed through Czechoslovakia's embassies. Major extracts appear below.

## DOCUMENT

**H**E IS LIVING among us. He enjoys the benefits of our social security. He goes to the same shops as everybody else, perhaps, he uses the same tram, bus or train on the metro. He differs by having enough *tuzex* vouchers [for use in hard currency shops] all the time, and by the fact that he is often spoken about by some Western radio transmitters and that his name often appears in the bourgeois press. The talk is about Petr Uhl. He is one of a group of the so-called dissidents who call themselves Chartists, and he is given a hearing as though he were a spokesman of our public by some people from the West who come to our country.

If it were not for this artificially created and unmerited publicity, Uhl's name would become covered in dead leaves and he could ponder in privacy how to turn the world upside down, which is what he was dealing with particularly in 1968, when the emissaries of the so-called Fourth Paris International came to Prague to visit him, an unknown 27-year-old teacher at a secondary school. He was dreaming about a world revolution in the spirit of the "specific" programme of this International.

### "What is the 'Fourth International'?"

Allegedly, capitalism is a better basis for launching such a revolution. Thus, the first step must be the overthrowing of our political system, and the political system in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe — the socialist states, including Yugoslavia.

What is the "Fourth International"? Now and then, the name of Leon Trotsky (Lev Bronstein) is recalled from the history of the Soviet Union of the 1920s. He has been known for his opinion that it is impossible to build socialism in only one country and the so-called theory of permanent revolution.

In his book *Permanent revolution* published in 1930, he asserted that the full implementation of a socialist revolution was unthinkable within a national framework.

Therefore, he was for the elimination of socialist power at the place where such power had prevailed. Together with a handful of his advocates, he formed the so-called International Communist League, which he united into the so-called "Fourth International", the "world party of the socialist revolution", together with several other groups in September 1938....

### "Trotskyist absurdities during and after the war"

The advocates of Leon Trotsky adopted a plan called *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International*. They literally outlined, as one of their first and foremost tasks, the struggle against anti-fascist forces in conformity with the transparently provocative idea that fascism has to prevail because, allegedly, its later downfall will enable a world-wide revolution. This adventurous platform constituted the basis for another, already absurd step: The Trotskyites declared all governments which established contacts with the Soviet Union, this most consistent fighter against fascism, to be their enemy. They also opposed the French Communists — "pseudo-internationalists", as Trotsky himself called them — because of their appeal to the people of Paris to make an impregnable fortress of the city as a barrier against the Nazis at the time of the advance of Nazi troops. The Trotskyites even presupposed the formation of internal fronts that were to be targeted against individual left-wing orientated sections of the French Liberation movement. Perhaps this was the reason why the Trotskyites could legally convene their conferences in France, at the time of the occupation of that country.

After the war, Trotsky's posthumous followers performed similarly. They welcomed the war preparations of advocates of the so-called cultural revolution in China and their course of an atomic reckoning with their enemies. At the beginning of the 1960s English Trotskyites even wrote in their paper that a communist society could

be formed on the ruins as well. In a short time....a preventive war would enable us to be the first to deliver a crushing blow, and not to allow the attack to be prepared by imperialism. At a certain period Trotsky was also betting on war as an aid to revolution. The provocative character of such an approach is evident.

At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the advocates of the "Fourth International" became active again. Their emissaries went all over the place to establish new contacts....They burnished old slogans as is attested to by the "appeal" of the Secretariat of the "Fourth International" to the world public. The appeal said that broad masses throughout the world had to continue the struggle and prepare themselves to take power, prepare themselves for an atomic war and respond to it by proletarian revolution. Therefore, the peace efforts of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were called class collaboration and a betrayal of the internationalist interests of the proletariat.

In Czechoslovakia, too, the "Fourth International" had its advocates. One of them was, for instance, Sonnenschein, who even took the way of open collaboration with the Nazis. Zavis Kalandra and others were also in their ranks. After the February revolution in 1948, some Trotskyites formed anti-national organizations dealing with subversive activities and gathering political, economic and military information about Czechoslovakia.

There was a certain activation of Trotskyites after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) from February 14-24, 1956 and, of course, in the pre-crisis and crisis period (the 1960s in Czechoslovakia). At the time, the ranks of the Trotskyites included particularly the historian Bartosek, and teachers at the faculty of law in Prague, Pithart and Samalik. However, the said secondary school teacher Petr Uhl also pushed himself forward into the head of Trotskyism in our country.

### "The day-dream of Mr. Uhl"

The day-dream of Mr Uhl...is expressed in the book *The programme of social self-management* that was published in Cologne in 1982, in the fortnightly publication of the "Fourth International" called *Inprekor* (issues 6 and 7 of 1987<sup>1</sup>), and in some written works elaborated by him personally.

In all the said materials, he strongly opposes the socialist system and presents methods of struggle against it. However, in his programme, he also writes about his idea of a future society after "the victory". He misuses the slogan "a self-administrating society" in a demagogic

1. There is evidently a confusion here between Czech *Inprekor* and French *Inprecor*, both of which have recently published articles by Uhl. The issue numbers refer to Czech *Inprekor*, published quarterly.

way....

After a meeting with one of the leaders of the Fourth International, Alain Krivine, Uhl started to organize Trotskyite cells. In September 1968, their first act appeared — a policy statement/manifesto of a revolutionary youth movement — claiming that “we understand the revolutionary path as a permanent revolutionary process” and that the fight against the social order in Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries “can liberate all nations and begin a new epoch — a construction of socialism,” which taken together with the fight of the proletariat of the West will provoke a flare-up of world revolution. In one word — phantasmagoria.

Soon after that new-fangled Trotskyites began to prepare concrete actions. In February 1969, they considered a variant of an armed coup. In September of the same year after several other meetings they organized into the so-called Revolutionary Socialist Party and then decided to use code names. Petr Uhl was the main organizer. He even

government document — the so-called Charter, and founded the so-called Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted, the aim of which is to turn out information for the bourgeois mass media, and discredit judicial and other decisions.

He established contacts with the Polish illegal groups, and later on even with the leaders of “Solidarity” so that he could take advantage of their experience in Czechoslovak conditions. It resulted in the rise of the so-called Initiative of Social Defence, which was said to become the Czechoslovak “Solidarity.” He tried to get in where the “Charter” would not succeed, i.e., into the factories. He tried to extend the base of these dissenters, for the “Chartists” had not fulfilled the expectations of their foreign friends and had become a small enclosed group without any influence on the public.

However, Uhl does not stop at such intentions. He prepares thoroughly. “It is necessary...to get access to the power apparatus, to have a part of the army on one’s side or to neutralize it by a suitable

**“Groups with various code names issued leaflets, proclamations and established contact with foreign agents....The aim is to try to destabilize our society, and anyone will do to serve this purpose, even an adventurer like Petr Uhl”**

knew about the preparation of some members for terrorist actions. He took part in discussion on plans for taking over Czechoslovak radio and broadcasting an anti-government statement. Even the date of the action was fixed — December 31, 1969.

Groups with various code names issued leaflets and proclamations, they established contacts with foreign agents and were connected with the Trotskyite headquarters in Paris. Selected members were gaining experience abroad — Basta, Olsa, Stasa and others were in Paris negotiating with the representatives at headquarters. In West Berlin Uhl and Frolik met one of the top Trotskyite leaders, “secretary of the Fourth International,” Mandel. An indoctrination of selected members was planned to take place in Austria.

At the end of 1969 the organization had apparently 111 cells, each of them sent its representative into four legitimate associations and those four coordinators together with other chosen leaders arranged for the activity of the headquarters from there.

In 1970 the leaders of the organization, including Petr Uhl, were sentenced to several months’ imprisonment for their subversive activities.

After his release, Petr Uhl continued in these activities. For example he welcomed the organization secretary of the “Fourth International” who was visiting Czechoslovakia in the guise of a tourist. Uhl introduced him to other dissenters from our social order, and signed an anti-

political climate. To paralyze the centres of resistance — the People’s Militia (armed corps of the working class and other workers established to defend the achievements of socialism and the interests of working people. The general secretary of the Central Committee of the Czech CP is the commander-in-chief and the People’s Militia represents a part of the Czechoslovak armed force), national security corps, and commissariats,” he writes in the article from 1982.

He wants to be a leader. He does not have any army though, he only has his imagination, but why should his friends from the other side of the border not make use of his ambitions? He seems to want something other than just those with whom he corresponds through the mediation of Pavel Tigrid and other post-February (of 1948) or post-August (1968) emigres, or with the help of his friends from the “Fourth International.” But does he really want something else?

And here is the core of the problem. Under the pseudo-revolutionary phrases there are the same hidden aims as those pursued by other political castaways: The overthrow of the present socialist order at any cost. Their plans, however — and they know it — have no chance of success. Thus the aim is, at least, to try to destabilize our society, to hamper its development. And anyone will do to serve its purpose, even an adventurer like Petr Uhl with his “permanent revolution.” ★

## Petr Uhl’s letter to Sovietskaia Rossiia

The following letter was sent on July 10 by Petr Uhl to the editor of the Soviet newspaper, *Sovietskaia Rossiia*, one of the principal mouthpieces of the neo-Stalinist current in the Soviet Communist Party.

ON JUNE 28, 1988, the Czechoslovak newspaper *Rude Pravo* reported that on June 25 your paper had “published Jaroslav Kojzar’s article from *Rude Pravo* on the anti-Communist activity of Petr Uhl, a signatory of Charter 77.” The article in question was published in *Rude Pravo* on June 18. I have already sent a request for a correction to the editor of *Rude Pravo*. I am forwarding the complete version to you, with some small changes.

The article defames me in such a crude way that it is extraordinary even in Czechoslovak conditions. It contains many false statements about me and other people, as well as about the Fourth International and the political line of revolutionary Marxism (Trotskyism) to which I adhere.

Above all, the introductory part of the article creates a peculiar atmosphere. The author seems horrified that such a repugnant creature as myself rides in trams and goes shopping along with other people. The question seems to be posed, should not this monster be clearly marked and banned from ordinary trams and stores? As regards clear marking, Mr. Kojzar would take care of that sort of thing. He stresses Leon Trotsky’s Jewish origins by citing his family name, “Bronstein.” None of this is new. Anti-semitism has always been a distinctive feature of Stalinism.

I have no intention of arguing with Mr. Kojzar. Considering that your newspaper expresses a rather conservative and neo-Stalinist view of the contemporary history of the international working-class movement and the perspectives of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers’ states, I am not asking for a complete correction. I would consider it suffi-

cient if your newspaper published the following statement by way of a correction:

"Under the mask of pseudo-revolutionary phraseology." This headline on the article by Jaroslav Kojzar about Petr Uhl in Rude Pravo on June 18, 1988, was republished in Sovetskaya Rossiia on June 25, 1988. The article contains a series of factual errors. At the request of Petr Uhl, we inform our readers that it was quite incorrect, for example, to say that Zavis Kalandra collaborated with the Nazis and was involved in the founding of an anti-government organization after February 1948. Zavis Kalandra, as is well known, was sentenced to death in 1949 and executed (he was tried together with Milada Gorakova). The sentence was overturned by a decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Court of July 30, 1968.

### Positions of the FI are incorrectly presented

Likewise, the entire program and political positions of the Fourth International are incorrectly presented in J. Kojzar's article. As regards Petr Uhl himself, we point out some incorrect statements in the article. It is not true that he, along with other people, in February 1969, planned a sort of armed seizure of the Czechoslovak radio and a broadcast that would contain an anti-government statement, and that he was sentenced for this activity. In 1971, Petr Uhl was sentenced to four years deprivation of liberty (and not a few months, as J. Kojzar writes) simply for political activity of a non-violent character (discussion, writing and distributing political documents and leaflets, organizing an opposition group, the Revolutionary Youth Movement) carried out in 1968-69.

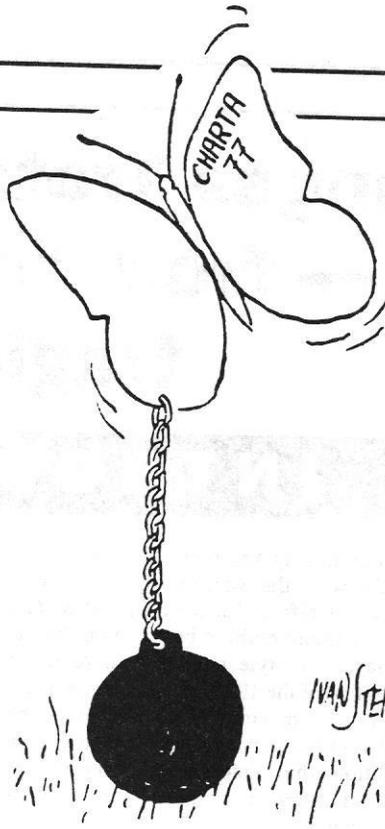
Later, in 1979, he was sentenced for activity on behalf of human rights carried out in Czechoslovakia in the framework of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted, in which he has continued to be active up to the present, as well as in Charter 77.

Petr Uhl has not been accused of, or tried for, terrorist actions or acts of violence or preparation for such acts. As a supporter of revolutionary Marxism (Trotskyism), he was and is a principled opponent of terrorism, and therefore his outrage at J. Kojzar's article is well founded. The editors apologize to their readers and to Petr Uhl for publishing Jaroslav Kojzar's letter.

Mr. Chief Editor, I am prepared to discuss with you you specific formulations in this correction, if details are unacceptable to you. If you do not publish this statement, however, I will demand a correction in another form.

Petr Uhl, Prague

[Copies to the editors of Ogonek, Znamya, Novoe Vremya, Moskovskie Novosti, with a request for publication if Sovetskaya Rossiia does not publish my request for a correction within two weeks.] ★



## Charter 77 statement

**THE FOLLOWING letter was sent to the editor of Rude Pravo from signatories to Charter 77. The translation has been provided by Palach Press Limited.**

ON SATURDAY June 18 your newspaper published an article by Jaroslav Kojzar entitled "Hiding under the mask of the pseudo-revolutionary cliché". The article was yet another instalment in the series of lessons of hate to which the Czechoslovak newspapers recurrently resort in an attempt to intimidate the independent-thinking citizens of this country....

Several times in the past 50 years, history has shown quite brutally to those of us who live in the area called Central or Eastern Europe that it is dangerous to stand idly by while anonymous forces are preparing for a pogrom against their ideological adversaries. Even the crimes of the so-called "cult of the personality", which are now being revealed and discussed in the Soviet Union with such passion, came only on the tails of demagogical and defamatory newspaper articles similar to the one by Jaroslav Kojzar.

This time, the target of the attack was Petr Uhl, father of three children, Charter 77 signatory and activist of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS), a man who has spent nine of the past 18 years in prison as a prisoner of con-

science. Just as in 1970, when he received his first prison sentence, four years (Kojzar says euphemistically "several months"), now as then Petr Uhl's "crime" is simply his incredibly consistent attitude, his high personal integrity, his civic responsibility, his willingness to help others and his human courage. Even those of us who disagree with Petr Uhl's ideological beliefs — with incomparably more qualified arguments than Mr Kojzar — have no doubts about Petr Uhl's moral qualities and intellectual honesty....

### A rhetoric that has led to too many gallows

Petr Uhl is directly and indirectly accused of terrorism, of conspiring to overthrow the government by a coup d'etat, of links with foreign "headquarters". In our post-war history, this kind of rhetoric has served as a justification for far too many gallows, for far too many instances of life imprisonment and for the destruction of far too many lives.

The victims were subsequently rehabilitated. Their cases were totally re-assessed. "Mistakes" were uncovered. Unfortunately, the dead could not be brought back to life, nor could the unjustly imprisoned be given back those parts of their lives which they spent under inhuman conditions. It is evidently one of the ironies of current *perestroika* Czechoslovak-style that while in the Soviet Union such practices are being publicly discussed and condemned, Czech journalists such as Kojzar unashamedly return to them, continuing unchallenged to spread an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty....

Until the selfless work and constructive civil stance of people like Petr Uhl cease to meet with cynical and violent responses like that of Kojzar, there is no point even pretending that a seriously meant restructuring and democratization of our society is under way. We emphatically protest against this type of policy and we wish to express our full solidarity with Petr Uhl.

Signed by: Petr Bartos, Ludek Bednar, Jan Bucharova, Josef Danisz, Bozena Devata, Stanislav Devaty, Pavel Dudr, Premysl Fialka, Ladislav Grebik, Jiri Gruntorad, Vladimir Hajny, Vaclav Havel, Marek Hlupy, Ludvik Hradilek, Anna Hradilkova, Ladislav Kaspar, Jan Kiss, Anna Kissova, Bedrich Koutrny, Ivan Lamper, Jan Machacek, Eliska Meissnerova, Robert Nebrensky, Kveta Markova, Dana Nemcova, David Nemecek, Jaromir Nemecek, Miroslav Odlozil, Petr Placak, Judita Prochazkova, Jan Ruml, Jan Schneider, Dusan Skala, Joska Skalník, Jaroslav Spurny, Frantisek Starek, Jaroslav Sabata, Ruth Sormova, Petruska Sustrava, Jachym Topol, Vladimir Trida, Jan Urban, Lucie Vachova, Robert Valik, Sasa Vondra, Martina Vondrova, Lubos Vydra. (The authenticity of the signatures is guaranteed by: Ivan Lamper, Rybalkova 27, Prague 10). ★

# Glasnost changes Trotsky's image — from “mad dog” to tragic “demon”!

PUBLISHING excerpts in its September 9 issue from General D. Volkogonov's book concerning the relations between Trotsky and Stalin, *Pravda* attracted the attention of international public opinion, and not without reason. The Western press emphasized the importance of the event with front-page headlines.

## LIVIO MAITAN

IT WAS SIGNIFICANT that Volkogonov's article and the introduction by *Pravda's* editors threw out the most monstrous accusations directed against Trotsky in the Stalin era and recognized what no one has ever doubted, that Stalin ordered Trotsky's assassination, as he was previously responsible for the slaughter of a good part of the exiled leader's family.

We cannot know whether Volkogonov based himself on some factual elements or worked only from imagination when he writes that it was after reading a translation of *The revolution betrayed* made exclusively for him that Stalin reached the conclusion that it was necessary to finish Trotsky off and liquidate all potential oppositionists.

But behind this literary image lies an elementary historical truth. Whether or not he read *The revolution betrayed*, Stalin understood very clearly what many “historians” still refuse to comprehend — that Trotsky represented the only real alternative to the options imposed on the Soviet Union by the bureaucratic caste. Volkogonov, moreover, recognizes explicitly that Trotsky “did not break, as many others did, before Stalin's dictatorship.”

## Factual errors and distortions

Nonetheless, simply reading the text indicates unmistakably that *Pravda's* operation was not exactly designed to reevaluate Leon Trotsky's role, as may have been suggested in some articles in the bourgeois press. On the contrary, it presents an essentially negative view of him, even if in the age of *glasnost* the arguments of the Stalin-era manuals can no longer be used.

There is no need to point out the many factual errors and distortions in Volkogonov's text. (He even gets some dates wrong.) The author did not go to much

## INTRODUCTION

trouble to acquaint himself even superficially with the writings of Trotsky to which he refers. For their part, *Pravda's* editors found nothing better to do than to replay, in a style not very far removed from that of the 1920s, the old game of exploiting the polemics between Trotsky and Lenin in the pre-revolutionary period. In addition, they made quite unscrupulous use of some passages from Lenin's testament.

In reality, the object of this exercise was to demonstrate to readers that Trotsky was no better than Stalin, and that in the last analysis Stalin only put into practice Trotsky's conceptions, especially as regards the collectivization of agriculture. Even the conception of socialist democracy is supposed to have been advanced by Trotsky only hypocritically, for tactical reasons. The article claims that in reality “he was much closer to Bonapartism, to caesarism, to military dictatorship than to the idea of genuine people's power.”

## Polemics against Trotsky have flourished

Worse still, this general, posing as a historian, wants to have people think that Trotsky's fight was inspired fundamentally by personal ambition. Even a work like *The history of the Russian revolution* evokes no comment from him other than a denunciation of the author's “egocentrism.”

There is no point in going any further into this. The level of Volkogonov's “artistry” is evident from the text we are publishing here. What needs to be stressed is that polemics of this sort against Trotsky — which are in fact by no means new, others having resorted to this kind of thing in the past both inside and outside the workers' movement — have flourished in the USSR in recent months, even before this piece appeared in *Pravda*.<sup>1</sup>

For example, a writer in issue 12 of *Ogonyok* equated Stalin and Trotsky, and *Nash Sovremennik* (issue 3, 1988) did not hesitate to write, “It is hard to imagine what would have become of the European nations if the power that Trotsky desired all his life and which he tried by every means to obtain had finally fallen into his hands.”

*Pravda* itself published the following statement by a writer on April 15: “Endless taxes, compulsory loans, dissolution of the cooperatives, confiscation of their property and finally repression, executions, prison sentences, deportation — all this came to mean Trotskyism for millions of peasant families.”

## All Trotsky's works must be published

The answer to operations of this type is clear. First of all, Soviet intellectuals and workers have to be able to make their judgments on the basis of knowledge. They have to be able to verify for themselves what Trotsky wrote and what his projects were. It seems that Trotsky's works will once again be accessible in the libraries. But I imagine that very few copies are available, and probably mainly of works published before his exile.

It is necessary for the purposes of the present debate to demand that all Trotsky's works be published, starting with the most important ones, and that they be made available in large popular editions. On this basis, the discussion that has begun can and must continue in far more serious terms than those employed in this sketch by Volkogonov and *Pravda's* introduction.

It goes without saying that this discussion will have to take into consideration the manifold experiences of the bureaucratized transitional society after Trotsky's death. In this area also, a real, first-hand knowledge of the reflections and programmatic formulations of the Fourth International is a *sine qua non* for the discussion to be more than an updated version of the old black propaganda.

For our part, we are ready to participate in such a debate without any reservations anywhere where it can take place without censorship or discrimination. ★



1. On the current practice in the Soviet press of trying to equate Trotsky with Stalin, see the article by Michal Reiman published in the Italian CP's journal *Rinascita* and reprinted in IV 147, September 19, 1988.

THE MANY-COLORED, ever unfinished carpet of history is woven by people. The "resultant" of the historical process is determined by the struggle of characters, of passions, of intellects. In fact, life advances through conflicts.

On the historical scene in the October days, along with V.I. Lenin there were various people, with unusual fates, views and capacities. One of the figures of that time was Lev Trotsky (Leyba Davidovich Bronstein), a former Menshevik. It is well known that already in 1911 Lenin had called him a "Judas." Only in the summer of 1917 did Trotsky join the Bolsheviks. Not unendowed with journalistic, oratorical and organizational capacities, Trotsky played a prominent role in the October armed insurrection and later in the years of the civil war, when he was people's commissar for military affairs and the chair of the Revolutionary Military Council.

In his political testament, "Letter to the Congress," Lenin called Trotsky and Stalin "the outstanding leaders of the present CC," and directed the attention of party members to their serious negative personal characteristics. Their relations with each other, as Lenin foresaw, constituted a danger for the party. The struggle between them came to make up one of the dramatic pages of our history.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky showed outsized pretensions to the leadership of the party. Lenin's assessment of him as a self-satisfied, erratic political faker was confirmed. In exile, Trotsky slid into anti-Soviet, anti-Marxist positions.

We are offering our readers a selection from the book *Triumph i Tragediia* by General D. Volkogonov, in which he gives an account of the relations between Stalin and Trotsky. [All emphases are from the original.]

## DOCUMENT

ON AUGUST 21, 1940, J.V. Stalin came to work as usual at around midday. He greeted Poskrebyshev, went into his office, sat down in his chair and routinely picked up papers. His aide did not give his usual report about current business, telephone calls and urgent meetings, but with a smirk silently handed him a telegram: "Trotsky mortally wounded; maybe killed. Details later."

It was a long-awaited but nonetheless unexpected report. The dual between two "outstanding leaders" of the Russian revolution that had lasted for nearly 20 years was over.

The report from the other side of the ocean was confirmed. On August 24, *Pravda* returned again to Trotsky, to close his case. In an editorial entitled "Death of an international spy," it said, "A man has gone to the grave, whose name is pronounced with contempt and abomination by working people throughout the world, a man who for many years has fought against the cause

of the working class....Trotsky's closest associates have acknowledged that they, along with their chief, *already in 1921 were agents of foreign intelligence services, were international spies.* They, led by Trotsky, eagerly served the intelligence services and general staffs of England, France, Germany, Japan....He was finished off by the very same terrorists whom he surreptitiously instructed in murder, betrayal and evil deeds against the working class, against the land of the Soviets. Trotsky, the organizer of the foul murders of Kirov, Kuibyshev and M. Gorky, fell victim to his own intrigues, betrayals, acts of treachery...crimes"

Stalin carefully read the article. He frowned. It was all reduced to "spying." Had he been fighting all these years just against a spy? And, why be so outspoken about who killed him? As if the murder had been committed in Moscow, and we were reliably informed about everything....As if it all could be slurred over with a few unfortunate phrases....Stalin put the paper



Trotsky's nickname was "The Pen" — all illustrations in this article by Evans from *Trotsky for Beginners*, Tariq Ali and Phil Evans, published by Writers & Readers, London, 1980

down. For some reason, he remembered his first meetings with Trotsky.

### Stalin and Trotsky's first encounter

At that time, in the London congress, Trotsky simply did not notice the taciturn man from the Caucasus. They did not actually meet; it was a superficial chance encounter between the two men, whose conflict was to be marked by mutual hatred throughout their lives. The facile way that Trotsky was energetically discussing the difference between poetry and philosophy with a group of young people and a beautiful woman during a break made a painful impression on Stalin. "Poetry," the man with a shock of dark hair said, making elegant gestures "looking at a drop of dew, sees its greatness, through which the entire world can be perceived. But philosophy, spreading a drop of dew on the canvas of life, seeks definite properties, definitions about moisture in this world."

The participants in the discussion looked on Trotsky with admiration, hardly aware that the sage was repeating graphic obser-

vations made by L. Feuerbach. Trotsky was a brilliant verbal artist....

Their second meeting took place in the winter of 1913, between Stalin's two arrests. Stalin did not meet Trotsky in St Petersburg, but in Vienna, where he came on Lenin's orders to organize the printing of material for a Bolshevik meeting in Cracow. Stalin, known in party circles more as Dzhugashvili, stayed in a cheap hotel. In the evening, taking a cup, he went down to the snackbar for tea. There was no one there except for two people, who were conversing agitatedly by the samovar. One of them Stalin immediately recognized, a thin, short man with wild dark hair and blue eyes framed in glasses.

Silently and intently, he gazed at Trotsky from head to foot, with unblinking eyes like those of an anteater, poured himself tea and left. Could Trotsky guess that two decades later he would come to write about this person, "The process of Stalin's rise took place as if behind an impenetrable political curtain. At a certain moment, his figure came down from the Kremlin walls in the full panoply of power."

Historians today are looking for causes. Why did none of the alternative figures, contrary to Lenin's will, prevent Stalin from "coming down from the Kremlin wall." But the future *gensek* [general secretary] should have been "blocked" not by one figure but by the Central Committee, the whole party. Today reading off the names of Bukharin, Frunze, Rudzutak and other Bolsheviks of the Lenin school, we do not come across one who could have been a collective leader. Trotsky was tormented to the end of his days by the thought that his passivity had helped Stalin successfully "come down from the Kremlin wall."

Why did Stalin now recall the start of the history of his relations with Trotsky, this demon of the revolution? Why has so much always been said about this person? Why, finding himself outside the country (how many such people there were!) did he remain the center of attention? It was 1940, war was on the doorstep. Why did he think about Trotsky?

Stalin understood that Trotsky's death meant the end of one of the most dramatic stages of the fight that began in the first years of this century. Setting up a bureau of the Menshevik party in Geneva, Trotsky — together with Axelrod, Dan, Martov and Petresov — called Lenin a "dictator," a "usurper." He repeated the clichés of the West European reformers. Going over to anti-Bolshevik positions, up until 1917 Trotsky tried to attack the party, sometimes from the left and sometimes from the right. Not without reason, in assessing these ideological somersaults, Lenin exclaimed in February 1917, "That's Trotsky! He is always consistent with his character — he

equivocates, fakes, poses as a left, helps the right as long as possible..." Now as regards anti-Sovieteering, Stalin thought, the question is quite clear. Virtually everything that has been created in this country in the more than 20 years since October is only an expression of a "thermidor."

### "Trotsky Involuntarily Increased Stalin's authority as leader"

Stalin had poured so much energy into the struggle with Trotsky that he now felt a feeling of emptiness, a vacuum, which did not provide the expected satisfaction. In essence, in the fight against Trotskyism and other deviations, Stalin had become the leader of the party, its "theoretician." People often said that Stalin did not join any opposition, not seeing that the *gensek* in



fact created an opposition to Lenin himself, consigning many of the latter's ideas and conclusions to oblivion. From the drafts of reports, it is apparent how carefully Stalin prepared his exposure of factionalists. For the Fifteenth Party Conference and the Seventh Expanded Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), Stalin carefully systematized all the "sins" of the opposition.

At the ECCI plenum, his report "Once again on the social-democratic deviation in our party" (along with its conclusion) lasted for five hours! Stalin essentially waged his fight against the opposition in terms of "Leninism or Trotskyism." Collecting together all the previous mistakes, oscillations, all the many "platforms," the *gensek* pushed the oppositionists into a hopeless position of inarticulate defensiveness. The *gensek* did not criticize but "struck," growing more and more violent.

After 1925, Trotsky's aura as a "hero of

the revolution" definitively "faded" and became extinguished. In the eyes of the party and the international proletariat, he increasingly appeared as a phrase monger, a political intriguer, a failed would-be dictator. Stalin still remembered how outraged he was by Trotsky's activity as commissar of military affairs traveling around from front to front in a special train, accompanied by one and sometimes two armored cars, filled with young supporters of the "proletarian leader" wrapped in leather coats. He was sickened by the fact that, shortly after the revolution, Trotsky surrounded himself with a big staff of assistants. Glazman, Butov, Sermuks, Poznanski and other secretaries helped Trotsky build up big files, conduct correspondence, prepare theses and materials for endless articles and speeches, and not infrequently gave him creative inspiration.

Imposing discussion after discussion on the party, Trotsky involuntarily increased Stalin's authority as the leader of the party.

This conclusion is paradoxical, but perhaps no one so much helped to reinforce Stalin's position at the head of the party's ranks as much as Trotsky. The *gensek* led the charge under the flag of defending Lenin, whom Trotsky in the early years of the century had called "Maximilian Lenin," hinting at the dictatorial ways of Robespierre. The *gensek* literally nailed Trotsky with the fact that his early pamphlet *Our political tasks* was dedicated to the Menshevik P. Axelrod. Stalin triumphantly read Trotsky's dedication to the roar of the audience: "Dear teacher Pavel Borisovich Axelrod." "Now, what is this?" Stalin ended his speech. "Good riddance to this 'dear teacher Pavel Borisovich Axelrod'! Good riddance to him!"

Trotsky, a great master of intrigue and metamorphosis, felt that this withering tirade by Stalin heralded his own political end. As he wrote

later in Mexico, after Stalin's speech he palpably felt the guillotine blade over his head.

Trotsky ended up a "general" without troops. The party was hostile to him. It was tired of his intrigues. Trotsky finally became convinced that when the civil war ended, the high point of his life was over. Everything had ended.

In his fight with Stalin, which broke out after Lenin's death, Trotsky tried to make use of the ideas of socialist democracy as weapons, although they were alien to him. He stood closer to Bonapartism, to caesarism, to military dictatorship, than to the idea of genuine people's power. He and Stalin were the same age (they were born in 1879 about a month and a half apart). But Trotsky's intellect was better honed, richer. A lively mind and a solid European culture, indomitable energy, wide-ranging erudition and a brilliant speaking style were characteristic of him, according to many biogra-

phers. But because of overestimating his own importance, Trotsky was always arrogant with everyone (except for Lenin), insolent, authoritarian, categorical and intolerant of other views. The absence of firm Marxist convictions made him "a shooting star," a naive prophet, a fizzled out would-be dictator. Stalin gradually probed all the weak points of Trotsky's nature and exploited them with the utmost thoroughness.

## Trotsky's speech to the October 1927 plenum

Stalin remembered that at the October 1927 plenum, Trotsky made his last speech as a party leader. The speech was confused and demagogic. Later Trotsky wrote that he wanted but did not entirely manage to warn the "blind" that "the triumph of Stalin would not last long and that his regime would collapse abruptly. Momentary victors rely too much on force." Stooped behind the podium, Trotsky read the entire speech hurriedly word for word, trying to shout down the noise in the hall. It was hard to hear him. He was interrupted with shouts of "slander," "lie," "windbag." Trotsky rushed to unload everything that he had written about the weakening of revolutionary principle in the party, the domination of the apparatus, the formation of a "ruling faction" that was leading the country and the party to a thermidorian degeneration. In the speech there were no arguments, no clear theses about socialism. There was apparent hatred for the leadership of the Central Committee, resentment of Stalin. But this, to the glee of the *genssek*, touched no chord with the participants in the plenum.

The attempt by Trotsky's supporters to hold a demonstration on the tenth anniversary of October was a challenge that put him outside the party. The slogans of Trotsky's forces were such that their oppositional meaning was comprehensible only to the initiated. "Down with the kulaks, Nepmen and the bureaucrats!"; "Carry out Lenin's Testament!"; "Down with opportunism!"; "Preserve Bolshevik unity!"; They tried to carry portraits of Trotsky and Zinoviev. But Stalin had already taken the "appropriate" measures. The police dispersed the small groups of Trotskyists. Zinoviev, who had come specially to Leningrad, and Trotsky in Moscow (driving around streets and squares in the center of the capital) were definitely convinced that they had no following other than individuals. The game was lost.

Trotsky could let himself remember that ten years earlier, to a thunderous ovation, he hurled after Martov as the latter was walking out of the Hall of the Soviets, "depart into the garbage can of history!" Now the same words resounded, directed at him, when he tried to address the column of demonstrators in Revolution Square marching to Red Square. Stones flew at Trotsky. The windows of his car were



broken. With bitterness, he realized that Stalin was already pushing him into the sewer of history.

Stalin had not forgotten how, at the time of Trotsky's exile to Alma Ata, supporters of the fallen leader tried to stage a protest action. Trotsky refused to go. They carried him to the car and then onto the train. His oldest son was shouting all the time, "Comrades, look how they are carrying Trotsky!"

## "Fascism is finding its best helper in Stalinism"

In the Kremlin at the time, Stalin maintained an intense surveillance on the process of exiling Trotsky. He got frequent telephone calls. The *genssek* silently listened, and at the end, threw out, "No kid gloves! No concessions! Cut off Trotsky's helpers! Quickly and without no messing about." He stopped speaking and nervously walked around the office, intensively thinking something over. Several years later, sitting at a table in a *dacha* with his associates after discussing a report of Trotsky's latest speech, he said:

"Two mistakes were made then. He should have been kept in Alma Ata. He should never have been let out of the country. And what is more, how was he allowed to take out so many papers with him?"

Getting up from the table, Stalin walked around the office, picking up a number of issues of the magazine published by Trotsky, the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. He found issue 65 for 1938, opened a page, which he folded back, and standing there

he concentrated on reading an editorial by Trotsky. Few people can come back to the lines in which they are defamed and abused. Stalin was not like that. He read and got a blast of hatred. "What, is Stalin still snickering behind the scenes? Fascism is going from victory to victory and finding its best helper in Stalinism. Terrible war threats are knocking at the gates of the Soviet Union, and Stalin has chosen this moment to tear the army apart. The time is coming, and not he, but history will judge him." Stalin slammed the *Bulletin* shut, threw the magazine on the floor, and walked along the conference table. "Can anyone believe such rubbish? Haven't the Trotskyists and their accomplices publicly admitted their crimes?"

The *genssek* remembered that when the fight was underway around NEP, Trotsky told the Politburo, "The working class can advance toward socialism only through great sacrifices, by straining all its forces, by giving its blood and sinews." His defeated foe then did not tire of repeating that without a "labor army," without a "militarization of labor," "full self-limitation," the revolution might never break out of the "realm of necessity into the realm of freedom."

Almost the entire fifteenth volume of Trotsky's works is devoted to "the militarization of labor." Trotsky called for transforming production regions into multi-millioned divisions, for fusing military districts with units of production, for assigning "shock battalions" to especially important targets so that they could raise productivity by personal example and by repression. In fact, Stalin was also impressed by the idea

of posing the question in such a way that people would be prepared to willingly "give their blood and sinews." Perhaps that is why Trotsky often wrote about Stalin as an epigone, implying that the *genssek* lacked originality in his social methodology.

Stalin always resented the fact that during the years of the revolution and the civil war the future exile was closer to Lenin than he, the future *genssek*. Even judging by the published correspondence, Lenin sent 78 letters and telegrams to Trotsky and 62 to Stalin. Lenin more than once protected Trotsky, valuing his organizational and propagandistic talent. At that time, when their relations were tolerable, Stalin took an attitude of silent approval for some of Trotsky's adventurist ultra-leftist ideas.

Stalin never opposed Trotsky's ruthlessness. In his memoirs, Trotsky presented his credo as follows: "You cannot build an army without repression. You can't lead masses of people to death unless you have the death penalty in your arsenal of command. You have to place soldiers between 'possible death ahead and certain death be-

hind'." But Trotsky did not think that way only with respect to the army. "In order to beat the Whites, we plundered all Russia." Earlier than others Stalin grasped the fact that Trotsky's adventurist nature had one incurable weakness. The demon of the revolution was convinced that he was a genius and made little effort to conceal it.

### Stalin's dictatorship was resisted by Trotsky

The *genssek* found it hard to admit even to himself that in the years of the revolution and the civil war the next most popular leader after Lenin was Trotsky. In the lists of names — in those days the "alphabetical" principle was not used — Trotsky always (or almost always) came in second place after Lenin. But Trotsky's popularity was not reflected in a large number of followers. A paradoxical picture took shape. Stalin was not personally popular but in a way he personified the "line" of the party. Trotsky, a notably more popular figure, at the same time acquired the stamp of a "factionalist," which could not increase the number of his co-thinkers. No one knows what Trotsky would have been like if Lenin had lived.

Of course, the author expresses many suppositions, remembering the words of J. Jaurès that a researcher has the right to a hypothesis about an already concluded fate. However, there are grounds for considering that in the years when he was an active figure in the party (1917-24) Trotsky was not an enemy of the revolution and socialism. But at that time he was already an *enemy of Stalin*. Trotsky cannot be denied his due. He did not break, as many did, before Stalin's dictatorship. To the end of his days, he maintained a respectful attitude to

Lenin. But we have already said that

Trotsky loved himself more than the revolution, more

than the revolution itself. The

source of his

tragedy lay not

so much in the

battle with Stalinism as in his struggle

with Stalin for power. The undying bitterness at not getting to the top of the pyramid of political power put personal interests to the fore on Trotsky's scale of political and social priorities.

While Stalin consolidated his autocratic power, Trotsky wandered around the world. The Prinkipo islands in the Sea of Marmora, France, Norway and finally Mexico were milestones on the path of the deported leader of the oppositionists. In the beginning Trotsky hoped that he would soon be going back to the Soviet Union... he did not believe that Stalin would hold on

for long. It seemed to him that Stalin's intellectual inadequacies, rudeness, blunders, brutality and cunning were so obvious that by themselves they should generate new opposition, throw up more and more opponents of the *genssek*.

Once again, for the umpteenth time, Trotsky erred. Wandering among the brown boulders of the tiny island lost in the Sea of Marmora, Trotsky pondered on the capriciousness of human fate. Once this island was a place of exile for Byzantine notables. Now, one of the "architects of the Russian revolution" had turned up there.

The four long years that Trotsky spent on the Prinkipo islands were a time of waiting and determining the future roads of the struggle. Gradually Trotsky's confidence that he would be "called back" to Moscow faded. More and more he came to the conclusion that the only way to stay "afloat" was to continue the struggle with Stalin. He still did not fully understand that his third emigration will be his last, and that he would never again set foot on the soil of the fatherland.

### The revolution betrayed

Sitting in his room in the evening, with windows facing the sea, listening to the sound of the surf Trotsky sorted and leafed through the volumes of his works. In general, of what Trotsky wrote, he considered that the best thing was his *History of the Russian revolution*. The book was written already after his break with Stalin. The outstanding feature of the book was the unveiled egocentrism of the author. It is hard to believe it, but in 1927 Trotsky published 21 volumes of his works! Leafing through the pages, he himself was struck by how fast he wrote. Take the eighth volume, *Political silhouettes*. He wrote about everyone imaginable, about Adler, Kautsky, Bebel, Jaures, Vaillant, Plekhanov, Martov, Rakovski, Kolarov, Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Witte, Azef, Nikolai II, Sukhomlinov, Mil'yukov, Pirogov, Hertzen, Struve, Sverdlov, Litkens, Nogin, Myasnikov, Sklyanski, Frunze and many, many others. There is no work specially about Lenin, but he often mentions him in accounts about others.

Beginning in 1936, still in Norway, Trotsky wrote the book *The revolution betrayed*. In it, he says that he knew that around Stalin there were people who did not share his politics. In his prognosis, the idea is expressed that if Germany unleashed a war against the USSR, Stalin could not avoid defeat.

The *genssek* read this book in one sitting, the last by the failed would-be dictator, from a translation of which only one copy was made for him. Stalin seethed with spite. Two "points" of a long pondered decision came to a head. Stalin seldom took steps that he had not thought over for a considerable time. In the first place, it was necessary to remove Trotsky from the



**24** "This cook will only cook peppery dishes!" — Lenin

political arena. The caesarism of the leader could not be complete as long as the distant exile still lived. Secondly, he was even more convinced of the need to remove once and for all those who might potentially be hostile to his autocracy.

Stalin remembered the half-forgotten case of Blyumkin. Yes, precisely that S.R. Blyumkin who killed the German ambassador Mirbach in order to scuttle the peace treaty. Then he was sentenced to be shot, but thanks to Trotsky's intervention, the death sentence was commuted to "redemption in battles to defend the revolution."

Blyumkin served long in Trotsky's staff, and then went to work in the GPU. He returned in the summer of 1929 from India via Constantinople, where he met Trotsky. When Blyumkin returned to the USSR, he was arrested. Either he was followed in Turkey when he got on the train for his trip to the Prinkipo islands, or he imprudently shared the secret of his meeting with Trotsky with someone in Moscow. After a brief trial, Blyumkin was shot. Fate was not disposed to smile a second time on a condemned man.

It was not by chance that the "leader's"<sup>1</sup> mind turned to Blyumkin. Maybe some "Blyumkins" instructed by Trotsky were somewhere around him. In fact, they killed Mirbach. How many of them were there? Who were they? How could he know the scope of the real danger? How far had Trotsky spread his tentacles? Doubt, concern, spite, fear, irritation and hatred of Trotsky filled Stalin. For him, Trotsky became a personification of universal evil.

### "Trotskyism was no longer a serious danger"

In reality, it was not quite like that. Even at the time of its greatest influence, in the mid-1920s, Trotskyism had very few adherents in the party. After Trotsky's exile, only a few of his supporters remained loyal to him. But these were individuals, maybe a few dozen, hundreds at most. Many felt that for a long time Trotsky was no longer fighting for ideals but waging a personal struggle, smacking of anti-Sovietism. Others withdrew from political activity or, condemning Trotskyism, started to do constructive work. Trotskyism, in other words, no longer constituted a serious danger.

But Stalin needed a reason in order "once and for all" to do away with all those who did not totally share his views, or who might in the future act against him. In fact, he could not permit the realization of Trotsky's prophecies, the memory of which disturbed him. Especially after Trotsky's latest screed, which "rolled in" two or three months after the January 1937 political trial in Moscow against Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebryakov and others. Its title alone, *The crimes of Stalin*, was enough to arouse his ire.

He already knew from an interview that Trotsky gave to a correspondent for a bour-

geois paper in 1938 that the latter had begun to write a book with the laconic title *Stalin*.

But in deciding to become the biographer of his mortal enemy, Trotsky condemned himself to failure. Nothing other than revenge, malice and bile could flow out of his pen. With a great exertion of will, Trotsky managed to write seven chapters of his projected book. In its center was a Cain, wearing the mask of Soso, Koba [Stalin's nicknames], a revolutionist, a powerful man at the head of the party and a great people. But as Napoleon once remarked, "everything has its limits, even hatred." Exceeding these limits, you have to lose something — the truth, reason, serenity.

### "Trotsky swung in the tortuous noose of contradictions"

Between the covers of his unfinished biography, Trotsky left the last drops of objectivity; he did not show even elementary respect for his fatherland, the people to whom he had once belonged. In his works, Trotsky did not balk at including mocking passages about the Russian people. In his view, "no one governmental figure in Russia ever rose above the level of a third-class imitation of the Duke of Alba, Metternich or Bismark."

According to Trotsky, followed by many chroniclers of historic events, Stalin was born an evil-doer, from his youth he was a moral monster. It is not necessary to prove that such an approach, which we not infrequently encounter even today, is unscientific. *A priori*, no one can be considered a criminal. And no one is born an evil-doer. The presence of negative traits — suspiciousness, secretiveness, a thirst for power, vengefulness — is not always or immediately expressed in crimes.

Stalin cannot be viewed in the same way in 1918, in 1924 and in 1937. He was both the same and not the same person. Clearly, under the impact of objective and subjective causes and circumstances, Stalin changed greatly. He did many things that cannot be forgiven. At the same time as fighting for the ideals of socialism (which, to be sure, he understood in a distorted, vulgar and dogmatic way), he perpetrated both crimes and errors.

Trotsky had time to evaluate Stalin. He swung tortuously in the noose of contradictions. Totally rejecting Stalin, he could not at all separate from him what remained proletarian, working class and Marxist. Trotsky asserted that Stalinism was not the result of a historic law but a "historic abnormality." At the end of his life, not knowing when his death would come, Trotsky erred, claiming that the USSR "remained only potentially a workers' state."

The Confederation of Mexican Workers, the Mexican CP and its leader Lombardo Toledano fiercely protested against Trot-

sky's coming to Mexico. The exile had a solid reputation of being an "enemy of socialism."

Stalin remembered that [GPU chief] Beria had reported to him that the Trotskyist organizations, with the help of the Mexican authorities in the locality of Coyoacan, had acquired a big house for the exile, which they turned into a veritable fortress, surrounded by a high concrete fence with a watchtower. It was a building with steel-reinforced doors, with a system of signals, guards with machine guns. Trotsky was constantly guarded by no less than ten policemen and special agents. He even had a bulletproof vest, which could be used when he went outside the courtyard.

In his refuge, Trotsky drew up anti-Soviet declarations, gave interviews in which he predicted the collapse of the USSR, the end of Stalin, the inevitable victory of the Fourth International. In his last two years, Trotsky shifted over entirely to ideological warfare with his former fatherland. In April 1940, he prepared a message to the Soviet people entitled "You are being deceived," which in practice called for overthrowing Stalin on the eve of the war.

### Two attempts made on Trotsky's life

Two attempts were made to kill Trotsky, the last of which resulted in his death. The first was in May. Early in the morning, a group of unknown persons in police uniforms disarmed the guards and attacked the rooms where Trotsky lived with his wife, Natalya Sedova, and his grandson. But the couple managed to hide in a corner behind the bed. A few dozen bullet holes were found in the place where they had just been. Many shots into closed and locked rooms had no result. Neither Trotsky, his wife nor their grandson were hit. But they considered every new day a gift of fate. They knew that they were the targets of a serious hunt. Trotsky lived like a condemned man in the rooms, not knowing when the moment of execution would come.

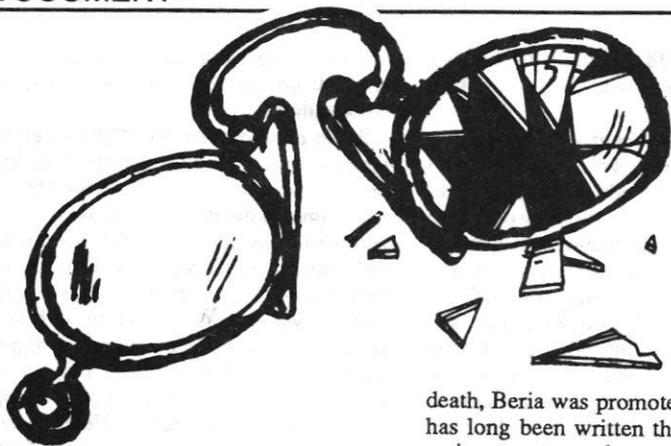
A policeman who came to investigate asked: "Does Mr. Trotsky suspect anyone in particular of this attack?"

"Of course," Trotsky answered. Leaning toward the policeman's ear, with a certain irony, he said, "the author of this attack is Joseph Stalin."

However, the killer had long been at his side. Already in 1939, he was a guest in Trotsky's home under the name "Jacques Mornard", a friend of the American Trotskyist Sylvia Agelof, who was working as one of Trotsky's secretaries. Mornard was involved in the movie business. In business circles, he still went by the name of Jacson.

At the beginning Jacson became acquainted with Trotsky's friends, Alfred and Margarite Rosmer. This eventually facili-

1. The term used here is *vozhd*, a title identified with Stalin, in the style of *führer* or *duce*.



tated his access to the carefully guarded Trotsky. Finally, in May, Jacson met Trotsky personally. After that, he was occasionally in Coyoacan, and in private conversations let it be known that he was "sympathetic" to Trotsky. He proposed various plans for improving the financial affairs of the Fourth International. In one way or another, as later became known from the American press, Jacson gained Trotsky's confidence. More than once, he made speeches about "strong personalities" and "a firm hand." Trotsky, as his wife remembered later, even developed suspicions. Was this businessman a fascist?

Thus, in mid-August Jacson asked Trotsky to correct an article of his on some small question. Trotsky made a few remarks. On the evening of Tuesday, August 22, Jacson came into Trotsky's study with the corrected article and asked him to look at it. Trotsky was working on the manuscript of the book *Stalin*. Entering, as Jacson testified later, "I put my coat on the chair, imperceptibly took an ice-pick from under it, and, closing my eyes, hurled it with all my strength at the head of Trotsky, who was absorbed in reading." The victim, Jacson said in the trial, gave a "terrible, horrible, penetrating scream. I will hear that scream my whole life." Trotsky's death agony continued for twenty-four hours.

The white obelisk on the grave in the courtyard of his last refuge in Coyoacan is thousands of kilometers from Yanovka pod Bobrintsami in the Ukraine where Trotsky, one of the future "outstanding leaders," was born.

Yes, Stalin wanted Trotsky's death. While Trotsky was alive, he remained a reminder of that long-ago time when the "leaders" [vozhdi — see footnote] coldly shook each others' hands, listened to Lenin, argued and quarrelled with each other. Trotsky knew Stalin better than Kaganovich, Molotov, Voroshilov or Malenkov, although they worked alongside him at the time. Trotsky could understand Stalin *from the inside*, his motives and intentions. They both wanted and strove to become number one. To the great misfortune of history and the people, Lenin's old guard, left without Lenin, removed one of them from the helm but left the other at the helm of the party. Both of them should have been removed.

After Trotsky's death, Beria was promoted. In the West it has long been written that Beria was the main executor and organizer of the decision concerning Trotsky. I think, however, that in the foreseeable future we will not be able to get any authentic documentary evidence confirming or refuting this.

After Trotsky's death, his testament was published. The fundamental part of it was written on February 27, 1940. The prisoner of Coyoacan tried to write in the spirit of Lenin's last letters. But he did not succeed. Lenin's last thoughts and will were devoted to the people and the party. Solely and exclusively! Trotsky constructed his testament from various documents and various addenda, writing in them mainly about himself, his "honor," his wife, his personal principles. In the testament, he did not even mention his "child," the Fourth International. But he found room for Stalin.

Trotsky even thought about suicide. "I retain the right to determine the time of my death." Those were the final lines of Trotsky's testament. But the time of his death was determined by others.

### **"Both Trotsky and Stalin should have been removed"**

The members of Trotsky's two families drank their cup of bitterness to the dregs. Trotsky's first wife, Alexandra Sokolovskaya, and her two daughters, Zinaida and Nina, as well as their husbands, were enthusiastic acolytes of Trotskyism. Trotsky had already abandoned his first family in 1902, when his younger daughter was only four months old. In the beginning, he wrote Alexandra Lvovna from abroad, but then time and a new family removed Sokolovskaya and his two daughters, in his words, to "the region of no return."

Trotsky was always concerned about what history would remember of him, what aspects of him would remain in history. He knew that people would remember about his first wife. Getting the jump on the historians, he wrote in the first volume of his memoirs, "Life separated us, while preserving an unbroken union of ideas and friendship." After the revolution, both his daughters were surrounded by the glow of their father's glory. Then, after a few years, they found themselves in a position of severe ostracism. The fate of Trotsky's first

family in the following years was sad. For belonging to a "family of enemies," they were all dealt a terrible recompense.

Trotsky's second wife, Natalya Sedova, also began as a "revolutionist." At one time, she and Trotsky lived in St Petersburg under the name of "Vikentyev." In subsequent years, Sedova was constantly with her husband, sharing his rise in the years of the revolution and the civil war and his endless wanderings abroad.

### **Order given to "liquidate the Trotskyists"**

From his second marriage, Trotsky had two sons. The oldest, Lev, was always at his father's side; he became an active Trotskyist, and died in mysterious circumstances in Paris after his father's exile. The younger son, Sergei, left the family home when the family lived in the Kremlin, declared that "politics" was "repugnant" to him, and buried himself in science. Refusing to go into exile with his father, as "Trotsky's son" he was naturally a condemned man. In January 1937, an article appeared in *Pravda* titled "Sergei Sedov, Trotsky's son, tried to poison workers." Exiled to Krasnoyarsk, Sergei Sedov was declared an "enemy of the people."

Natalya Sedova outlived her husband by 13 years, dying in the same year as Stalin, her husband's "inseparable enemy." Some of Trotsky's more distant relatives survived and live in Moscow. I managed to meet them. They naturally go by other names.

Soon after the news was received about Trotsky's murder, the order was given for the "liquidation of the active Trotskyists in the camps." And on the eve of the war, there was another small, quiet wave that swept away the last people condemned as "active Trotskyists." Pechora, Vorkuta, Kolyma were the mute witnesses to a vengeance exacted in "hot pursuit" of the assassinated leader of the Fourth International. Stalin did not want to recognize that killing someone is an ineffective means of combating ideas.

Trotsky called himself "a citizen of the planet without passport or visa." He tried to play the role of "second genius." He said, "Lenin was taken to the revolution in a sealed train through Germany. Against my will, I was taken on the steamship *Ilyich* to Constantinople. So, I do not consider my deportation as history's last word." Trotsky always remained an actor who only wanted to play the leading roles. But he did not learn that it suits history to put things in order in its own temple, in which, according to Homer, demons are occasionally born, gods that become evil spirits.

Stalin stopped walking around his office, smoked his pipe and sat at his table. He put aside the newspaper with the report about the "death of the international spy," and picked up a file entitled "Documents of the People's Commissariat of Defence."

War was on the doorstep. ★

# Military resorts to bloody repression of mass movement

**MASSACRE** is the response to the mass anti-dictatorial movement that the military has finally opted for. A London *Sunday Times* journalist has reported that the crematoria in country's main cities are running at full blast to dispose of the army's victims. The official death toll in Rangoon is 200, but unofficial estimates put it at over a thousand. Perhaps even bloodier repression is underway in the provincial cities, but little is yet known about this.

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**T**HE REAL MEANING of the direct military takeover was simply a decision to try to beat back the mass movement by force. The military had never withdrawn from power. No one doubted that dictator Ne Win continued to pull the strings from his retreat.

The decision to crackdown apparently offered two advantages for the military. It has momentarily at least dispersed the mass movement, and probably halted the erosion of army discipline. But it has also widened the river of blood between the active opposition and the rulers, especially the student vanguard of the demonstrations.

Summary executions of students have been reported. Several hundred young Burmese have reportedly gone to join the Karen guerrillas. A flourishing black market in hand grenades is developing in Rangoon. Immediately following the military crackdown some police stations were overrun and weapons taken.

At the same time as the bloody repression got underway in Rangoon, reports began to come out about the massacres carried out by the military in provincial cities in August, where the army is estimated to have killed 3,000 people. For example, a British traveller has reported that in Sagaing, a town near Mandalay, the army opened fire on a demonstration, killing 300 people. Given this precedent, there is reason to fear that the slaughter in the provinces may be worse than in the capital, in particular since alternative governments were set up in a number of provincial towns.

It is unlikely that the military's new massacres can halt the breakdown of the dictatorship. The mass rejection of the regime has been building up for a long time, fueled by the decay of an economy bled white in

the grip of corrupt and incompetent military rulers. The disastrous economic decline has been steadily undermining the ability of the military chiefs to maintain the loyalty of their subordinates.

Furthermore, the regime has been exhausted by decades of warfare against nationalist and Communist guerrillas who are reportedly able to keep 26,000 fighters in the field against a Burmese army of about 180,000. That is a favorable ratio for insurgent forces. With an actively hostile population at their back and an extension of the guerrilla organization into the Burmese cities, the army's morale and military position could deteriorate rapidly.

## Ne Win risks destroying the army

In effect, a military dictatorship unable or unwilling to recognize its political defeat and make a strategic withdrawal from the political scene has gone for double or nothing. It risks destroying the armed forces in a civil war, and opening up the way for an uncontrollable radicalization. It was probably this possibility that the bourgeois opposition leaders had in mind when they accused the military of creating anarchy rather than order.

The bourgeois opposition is anxious, in fact, to prevent any breakup of the army. Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of one of the historic Burmese nationalist leaders and a leading bourgeois opposition personality, declared in August:

"My father, General Aung San, created the Burmese army under extremely difficult circumstances, unity must be maintained within the army."

The *Guardian's* Bangkok correspondent

commented in the September 25 issue of the London daily, "A unified army, opposition leaders recognize, will be a crucial asset for whichever government eventually has the task of sweeping away the corrupt one-party state and creating the framework for a new multi-party democracy." That is, a unified army will be necessary to maintain bourgeois order during a transition to parliamentary democracy. The inflexible old dictator Ne Win has now put this in danger.

## Protests needed against the massacres

In a decisive confrontation with the military, however, the question of determined leadership in the opposition now becomes decisive. It is clearly not going to come from the bourgeois forces anxious to preserve the "unity of the army." It can only come from those who are prepared to fight to break up the army by all available means, that is apparently the rebel student movement and the insurgent forces in the peripheral regions. The scattered information that comes out of the country indicates that at least sections of the student movement are determined to fight. What remains to be seen is whether the various militant opposition forces can combine effectively behind a program that can rally the urban masses against the regime.

The stakes in Burma are high, and have been decisively upped by Ne Win's desperate gamble. This is a major country between China and India and bordering on Thailand, international capitalism's last great fortress in South-east Asia. The collapse of capitalist order in Burma could substantially change the regional and even the world relationship of forces.

That is why the authoritative capitalist press has been taking an understanding attitude toward the new military regime, despite its bloody repression. For example, the British *Economist* wrote in its September 24 issue, "General Saw Maung [the new military premier] cracked down fast, and to some extent understandably: anarchy was at hand, as demonstrators armed themselves with *jinglees*, darts made from sharpened bicycle spokes." In fact, the demonstrators were only responding to the military takeover.

For some time, in the best of circumstances, the anti-dictatorial opposition is likely to remain on the defensive. It is essential to focus attention on the military's outrages and to build protests against the connivance of the imperialist media and authorities with the bloody dictatorship. This is particularly important given the long isolation of Burma and the Burmese opposition.

It will also be important for the international workers' and democratic movement to offer concrete, material support to representatives, in particular, of the militant student movement in exile. ★

# Deepening of movement against national oppression

**T**HE NEW UPSURGE of demonstrations and strikes by Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Armenian SSR seems to have been provoked by attempts by the Azerbaijani authorities to resettle Azerbaijanis in the disputed territory. About 2,000 Azerbaijanis leaving the Armenian SSR were reportedly encouraged to settle in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since the autonomous oblast' has a total population of only about 170,000, resettlement of even this first group would significantly change the ethnic composition of the territory. Armenians still make up about 75% of the population, but under Azerbaijani rule, the proportion has been steadily declining. According to Sergei Grigorianz, editor of the unofficial magazine *Glasnost* in Moscow, the Azerbaijani authorities allotted three million rubles for resettling their compatriots in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Strikes resumed in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, at the end of the second week in September. But this time they were apparently more or less limited to that city and in support of immediate demands. The most important was that the resettlement policy be ended. Others were an end to proceedings against Armenians involved in the previous protests. The protesters also demanded an end to what they considered discriminatory investigations of economic corruption by Azerbaijani police aimed against Armenians.

## Protests "encouraged by corrupt officials"

Since the start of the Armenian protests, the Soviet central authorities have consistently tried to suggest that corrupt officials afraid of *perestroika* are encouraging them. When *Pravda* began finally to report the new wave of unrest on September 20, it took the same tack:

"At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the process of recovery that has been going in Armenia and Azerbaijan is obviously not to the liking of those involved in corruption, bribe-taking and robbery. Fearing exposure, they are trying to draw attention away from today's problems of *perestroika* and the real struggle with negative phenomena, and to concentrate it entirely on questions of national relations, using any pretext to whip up nationalistic passions."

The article ended with the argument: "Further deepening of socialist democracy is inconceivable without strict observance of the law, as well as civic and social

**WITH MORE THAN 800,000 demonstrators flooding Erevan, the Armenian national movement has incredibly become even more massive. The great rally of September 22, moreover, was preceded by a new round of smaller but still massive demonstrations that showed a radicalization of the movement, expressed by a more and more widespread raising of the slogan of "independence." Nearly a third of the entire population of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic united in effect to demand national survival and a national future for the Armenian people.**

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discipline."

This argument implies two types of threat. First, the people behind these protests are fundamentally corrupt, and will be dealt with as such. Secondly, if you want reforms, you must not have anything to do with these protests.

After the July 18 Supreme Soviet decision rejecting the Armenian demands, it was clear that the Moscow was going on the offensive to reconsolidate the Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh Communist parties as instruments of its policy and to build a wall between the leadership of the protests and "responsible elements." The new upsurge of protests has, at least for the time being, shattered this attempt.

In fact, Gorbachev himself has apparently been forced to try to appeal to, and presumably negotiate with, the leaders of the formally banned Karabakh Committee, and even the exiled hard-line nationalist leader Parouir Airikyian. Visiting the US, the Soviet foreign minister met for a half-hour with the anathematized nationalist

leader.

"It was learned yesterday," *Libération's* Moscow correspondent, Pierre Briançon, wrote in the September 24 issue of the Paris daily "that Mikhail Gorbachev personally appealed to members of the Karabakh Committee, asking them to use their influence to calm the population in Erevan. This appeal reportedly came on Monday when a delegation from the committee was received by the first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, Suren Aroutiounian. Since Gorbachev was on the phone to the Armenian leader at the time, he asked him to transmit his request to the committee present in the office."

## Soviet authorities fear resort to direct repression

The Karabakh Committee, on the other hand, reportedly responded by saying that it could not calm the people without "guarantees" from the central government.

Moscow sent troops into both Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian SSR and decreed a curfew in Stepanakert and the Agdam region. But in the face of such a massive mobilization, it cannot resort to direct repression without an extremely dangerous confrontation. A TASS dispatch in the September 22 *Pravda* quoted a statement by A.I. Volski, a representative of the Central Committee of the CPSU and of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet sent to the territory:

"Unauthorized rallies and marches have been held. An attack was provoked on the local prosecutor's office. Insults against the organs of power have been permitted. There have been instances of denigration of the honor of MVD [Ministry of the Interior] soldiers and police workers maintaining public order."

In Erevan, Western correspondents have reported that the security forces have not tried to intervene in the protests, and that non-Armenian soldiers and police have not been in evidence.

Not only have the Armenian protests become even more massive, they are less and less isolated. Proportionally the September 11 rally of 300,000 people in Tallin, the Estonian capital, where many speakers called for independence, was as large as the September 22 one in Erevan. And representatives of the Karabakh Committee have been appearing in the Baltic demonstrations. There are also important signs of stirrings in Ukraine. Clearly, a major movement is developing against national oppression. ★